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Robin Bridges

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NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT

Student-run newspaper since 1962

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New provost plans for NEIU

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Photo by Frammie Mendoza

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LET US KNOW!

Next issue is out AUG 29. Our office is located in E-049 at the main campus.

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New provost's plan for NEIU

Rebecca Denham

News Editor
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As NEIU's new provost, Dennis Rome's responsibilities on campus include "overseeing everything academic on campus. From programs to course schedulings to classrooms - anything academic falls in this office."

Rome started his position as provost and vice president of academic affairs on June 17 after a semester-long search committee selected him from a pool of candidates.

Born and raised in Chicago, Rome has worked all over the country in the past 30 years.

He has been employed at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, Indiana University Bloomington, University of Wisconsin Parkside, Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia and now he is back in Illinois.

Working at several different locations and campuses has made Rome feel more prepared to assume the roles of provost at NEIU.

"Any type of institution, industry or business has to be careful not to keep likeness to a degree that it does not promote necessary change. By having experience at different types of institutions, I know the contrast of students. Those experiences have given me a tool box that I can draw from," states Rome.

While he does have plans to implement changes and renovations at NEIU, Rome thinks that, "it would be a mistake to come in and start making changes right off the bat." He first needs to do what he refers to as a

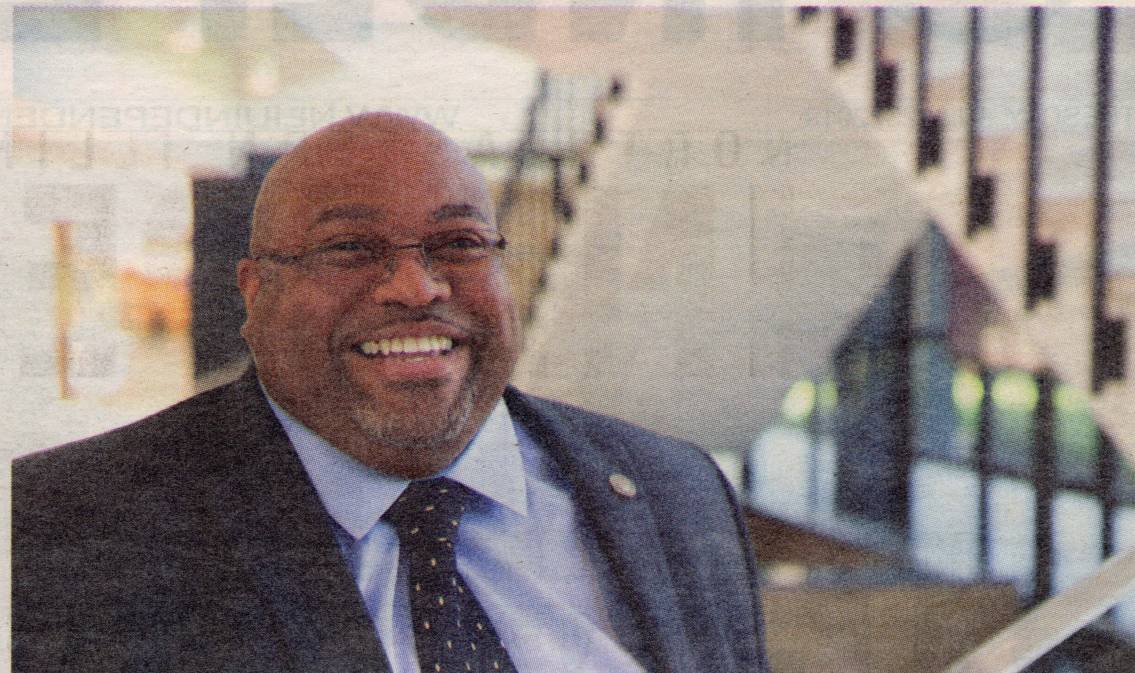


Photo provided by NEIU

'listening tour,' where he introduces himself to all the different departments around campus.

"After I have visited as many places as I possibly can, we will look at areas where we can strengthen what we do to promote students' success," states Rome.

He continues, "And I say 'we,' because it is not just the staff here in this office, I mean students and faculty too. This is an institutional effort. I have to create those relationships and earn that trust and after we have done that we will start looking at areas to improve our retention rates and things like that."

As far as his future plans for NEIU, Rome wants to focus on making classes more accessible for our diverse student body.

He noticed that "although we offer over 230 individual online / hybrid courses, they are not packaged together where [students] can receive a degree in a specific program or earn a certificate just online."

He concluded that the way NEIU's online classes are currently organized is, "adversely affecting enrollment because it is not really drawing any new students."

Rome also acknowledges the portion of the student body that are returning students.

He plans on addressing the time frame in which students can enroll for classes, seeing as how the demographic has shifted and there are not as many students registering for the traditional fall semester.

"More of our students have

families or larger responsibilities. We have to make sure that we are meeting that need by offering more entry points in the school year. So we are looking at shorter time periods, utilizing the time between semesters, looking at how we can best offer summer classes," Rome said.

While he has many ongoing obligations and roles to fulfill on campus, Rome wants the students a NEIU to know that he is "very approachable. [He] would love to be invited to some of the student activities to learn more about our students and who they are and what their challenges are and how [he] may better serve them."

"My door is always open," said Rome.

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Media and democracy in danger

Ankush Vyas

Online Editor

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Common Cause Illinois partnered with Adlai Stevenson Center for a town hall meeting to address the importance of a free and fair press at Northeastern Illinois University on June 13.

According to their official website, Common Cause Illinois is a nonpartisan grassroots organization which works to create an open, honest and accountable government that serves the public interest by promoting equal rights, opportunity and representation for all.

The event featured the following speakers: former U.S. senator Adlai Stevenson III, former FCC commissioner Michael Copps, communications strategist Tracy Sefl, editor of the Center for Illinois Politics Kerry Lester and Common Cause Director of Media & Democracy programs Yosef Getachew.

Georgia Logothetis, the assistant director of Common Cause Illinois and alumni of Northeastern Illinois University and Terrie Albano, also an alumni and a member of the Alumni Advisory Board at NEIU, were the opening speakers at the town hall.

They used their past experiences working as writers for the Independent in order to prompt questions such as what the future of journalism might look like and why establishing faith in the institution of a free and fair press is important, especially today.

Logothetis asserted that the belief in a free press has waned and has put the people in a dangerous situation as a nation. She added, "It's not just about people thinking that everything is fake news.

"It goes far, far deeper than that. It impacts who we are as a democracy, as a nation and more importantly it's about believing in the ability of journalists who are ordinary citizens just



Panelists (Left to Right): Yosef Getachew, Tracy Sefl and Kerry Lester spoke to the dangers facing democracy today. | Photo by Trudy Leong

like us."

Terrie Albano highlighted the reason for a decline in access to higher education caused by lessening in grants and an increase in student loan debt from when she started college in 1980.

This was not the only change she saw during that period in terms of limiting democratic rights. The Federal Communications Commission had also eliminated the fairness doctrine in 1987.

FCC fairness doctrine was a federal policy introduced in 1949 in the US requiring television and radio broadcasters to present differences between viewpoints on issues of public importance in a manner that was honest, fair, and balanced according to FCC's view.

She spoke about why critical thinking skills are important more than ever today and how the student journalists are the future of journalism and a functioning democracy.

The town hall meeting was moderated by Common Cause Illinois Executive Director Jay Young. He

spoke about how power was at the center of all of our affairs and holding power accountable is the only way to ensure a fully functioning media and a healthy democracy.

Former U.S. Senator Adlai Stevenson III spoke about the Adlai Stevenson Center's Agenda for Political Reform, a platform which calls for reforming all branches and levels of government, saving democracy, abolishing the electoral college, shortening campaign and the electoral college, ending gerrymandering by non-partisan commissions and other important actions which can be found on their website.

Former FCC Commissioner Michael Copps talked about how the merging of media has decimated more than half of our news rooms since the early 2000's.

He added, "Investigative reporters, instead of walking the beat, looking for stories, are walking the streets looking for a job." He further discussed that media corporations need to re-establish the news rooms and regain journalists to provide local

news.

He concluded that media corporations need to stop the merging of the traditional media and new media, start investing in consumer privacy protections and restore the Federal Communications Commission, fairness doctrine, net neutrality and corporate accountability standards in order to restore faith in media and democracy.

A short video by the US Press Freedom Tracker was shown to the audience from their executive director and staff on the importance of monitoring attacks against the press in the United States.

According to the video, the message was that the journalists have been under attack and are getting stopped at the border like never before which eventually impacts the public's right to be informed and the reason they track these issues is because it's never been more critical for our citizens to be informed about what our government is doing and the only way to hold them accountable is to document them and publicize them to

document the state of press freedoms across the US.

Kerry Lester spoke on the impact of shrinking newsrooms at Daily Herald and the Associated Press, how the industry is changing and why she joined the Center for Illinois for Politics. She said her newsroom at the Daily Herald and Associated Press got reduced, which led to fewer people having much higher workloads and eventually leaving when the internet and 24 hour news cycles became the norm.

She concluded that alternative and different news outlets like Center for Illinois for Politics are meant to offer assistance to the traditional newspaper outlets that have reduced budgets by taking political data, collecting information and creating content.

Communications strategist Tracy Sefl introduced herself and her work associated with the presidential campaign cycles. She pointed out that she had worked on five presidential campaigns and while all of them have different characteristics, they have all also had a constant thread of her interaction with the National Political Press.

She also indicated that there is no more social media, but simply digital news that hits the phones all the time impacting the current campaign which is already being shaped through those channels. Lastly, she shared her opinion about listening to a story New World Health Organization report on burnout on the radio.

She said, the media should leverage the resources in the news in the media and should stop repeating stories on burnout and talk about what will sustain the United States.

Yosef Getachew surveyed the audience by a show of hands. He asked how many of them watched local news on television or radio, which was answered with a majority

NEIU cleans up Foster Beach



Volunteers at the annual beach cleanup hosted by the Alumni Association. | Photo by Rebecca Denham

Rebecca Denham

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On the morning of July 13, a total of 31 students, staff, alumni and families of the NEIU community arrived at Foster beach to collect and dispose of litter.

Organized by the Alumni Association on campus, this year's annual beach cleanup had the best turn out of the past three years.

The assistant director of alumni relations, Ashley Agron, said, "We

had triple the amount of volunteers this year than we had the last two years! Many are looking forward to participating again next year."

Some of the volunteers were current students looking to help out with NEIU, like Sophomore accounting major Gabriel Salceda.

"It's all about keeping the area clean and looking out for the people of Chicago. While we are not relaxing on the beach today, we might be next week. So we want it just as clean as the

way we left it," Salceda said.

Other participants were members of organizations on campus fulfilling their volunteering responsibilities. Current student Maria Gomez, a senior social work major, and Dulce Garcia, a 2017 alumna with a bachelors in Spanish, are both involved in the Sigma Lambda Gamma.

"Community service is one of our principles at the sorority, and we try to live our principles every day," said Gomez.

Another portion of participants were alumni. Brothers Jeff and Chris Laufeneerg graduated in 2018, both with business management degrees.

"We walk these type of beaches along the Chicago lakefront trail and we figured we would do our part and try our best to clean it," stated Jeff Laufeneerg.

Chris Laufeneerg followed by saying, "now that we're out of school, we're trying to give back."

The volunteers worked in groups

to more efficiently track the amount of garbage that was collected.

"In total we collected 15 bags of trash, that collectively weighed about 40 pounds and filled an entire trash can," reported Agron.

She followed by discussing future cleanup plans.

"We may possibly also plan another clean up for this year at 41st Street Beach since it is so close to the NEIU Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies campus."



Satisfied volunteers with their collected garbage. (Left to Right): Maria Gomez, Dulce Garcia, Jeff Laufeneerg, Chris Laufeneerg, Jennie Lasko and Gabriel Salceda. | Photos by Rebecca Denham

Democracy

Continued from 4

of hands in the air.

He then asked how many members of the audience knew what was going on in their community in regards to town hall, school board, state legislature, housing authority or less officials, far fewer hands were raised in response.

Getachew explained that this was because of the variety of reasons given by Michael Copps earlier and there is misinformation on social media platforms due to a lack of regulation policies to regulate the free flow of authentic information online.

He concluded that the more people watch local news and get information, the more likely are they going to make informed decisions

about democracy.

In the end, the event was opened up for questions. The audience asked about the kind of stories that are not covered in the media and what lessons were learned by the panelists during the 2016 election.

The panelists responded that the media does not represent a diverse set of people and the civil rights issues that are present in their local communities.

The panelists added, the best way to repair media and democracy is to actively participate in the issues that are important by speaking up against the major conglomerates, supporting local news and by critically thinking about what is beneficial and harmful to democracy.

NEW BUSINESS PITCH NIGHT

August 21, 2019

Wed. 6:00 PM

LWH 1002

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Chicago, IL 60625

Entrepreneurs from NEIU Business Innovation and Growth (BIG) Center's business planning cohort are pitching their business plans in a Shark Tank style to potential investors, government officials, community leaders and prominent business owners.

Launching a business is a risky venture, but is less so with community support. Your presence at the pitch night is requested to give feedback on these exciting new business ventures. If possible, please help them connect with customers, suppliers, industry experts and access to financing.



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POLICE BLOTTER



The following incidents occurred on NEIU campus property between the dates of May 22 to July 18.

05/22 - NEIU

NEIU PD assisted outside agency regarding social media posts by possible former student.

05/24 - Fine Arts Building

Unknown offender wrote graffiti on the classroom whiteboard. Facilities cleaned it up.

05/27 - The Nest

Officers and fire department responded to a call from a student who was stuck inside the elevator. Student refused emergency medical service after he was freed.

05/31 - Student Union

Officers responded to reports of subjects throwing chairs. Subjects were gone when officers arrived.

06/01 - Student Union

During patrol, officers conducted sweep of building after finding a door ajar. Subject was located and issued a trespass warning then escorted off campus.

06/03 - COBM

Officers and engineers responded to call of people stuck in office unable to open door due to lock being jammed. Everyone was freed without incident.

06/04 - CCICS

Subject attending alternative school program was escorted out after mumbling and talking to self. Subject was not deemed a threat.

06/06 - E Building

While on routine patrol, officers encountered subject sleeping. He did not have 24 hour authorization. Officers transported him home.

06/08 - Student Union

During routine patrol of locked buildings, officers encountered a subject and issued a stop card. The subject was escorted off building.

06/10 - Bernard Brommel Hall

Building evacuated due to fire alarm. Dust in smoke detector may have set off alarm. Fire department reset alarm.

06/12 - Library

Unknown offender etched graffiti onto elevator wall. Facilities was notified for clean up.

06/12 - Fine Arts Building

Building evacuated for fire alarm. No sign of smoke or fire. Panel shows fire alarm pulled on first floor by an unknown person. Fire department reset alarm.

06/15 - Fine Arts Building

Unknown offender pulled fire alarm. No sign of smoke or fire. Engineers and officers responded. Fire department reset fire alarm.

06/18 - Off Campus

Student reports road rage incident on her drive to NEIU. Subject that cut her off on the road followed her onto campus and was taking pictures.

06/18 - NEIU

University staff provided police an order of protection form against a former romantic interest who was abusive towards victim.

06/18 - Testing Center

Officer observed broken windows on three separate university owned properties on Bryn-Mawr Ave. Offender unknown.

06/21 - Off-Campus

Officers patrol area looking for missing five year old. Child located by neighbor who reports child wanders off unattended often. Report filed with DCFS.

06/23 - Off-Campus

Former student reached out to NEIU PD regarding domestic abuse situation. Police report was filed and other resources were provided.

06/25 - Parking Lot J

Unknown offender stole the axle off front hub of victim's bicycle while secured to bike rack.

06/30 - The Nest

Student reports dispute and verbal threat made by room mate over purchase of cleaning supplies. Room mate will be moving out of unit to resolve the matter.

07/01 - COBM

Officers received reports of unknown subject who has been defecating on the toilet seat, walls and floors in handicap stall for the last three weeks.

07/01 - B Building

Cash was stolen from safe inside office area. Offender is unknown at this time.

07/08 - CCICS

Two students horse playing in hallway caused a hole in the wall after one student shoved other student into wall. No physical injuries were reported.

07/09 - LWH

Unknown offender defaced a paper flyer advertising a social club on campus. No threats implied.

07/10 - El Centro

Suspicious note found in an empty classroom inside of an unattended binder resolved. No threats made against NEIU community.

07/11 - NEIU Police Dept.

Person came in feeling faint asking for an ambulance. Ambulance was called. Subject refused services.

07/12 - Physical Ed. Complex

A juvenile from the day camp was having a medical episode - ambulance was called and the juvenile was transported to the hospital.

07/12 - LWH

A laptop was found. The owner was identified and contacted.

07/17 - LWH

Fourth floor bathroom and elevator were vandalized. It was cleaned up.

07/17 - NEIU Police Department

Student came in to report that a former acquaintance was stalking her. Report was taken and is under investigation.

07/16 - E Building

Elevator alarm. It was reset by engineers.

07/16 - Physical Ed. Complex

Two unlocked bicycles stolen from the day camp. Suspects are unknown.

07/17 - Physical Ed. Complex

Day camp counselor was having a medical episode. Ambulance was called. Person transported to the hospital.

07/18 - Parking Facility

Suspicious persons were found in the garage. Persons were juveniles driving erratically and had open liquor in the vehicle. Citations issued and parents contacted.

07/18 - LWH

Cell phone charger was found.

On the birth of our nation: A Letter to the Editor

Stewart E. Brekke, PHD

Alumni

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Unknown to many, the first patriot casualty of the Revolutionary War was a mulatto person, Crispus Attucks, part American Indian and part Negro, killed by a British Redcoat at the Boston Massacre. In Boston, after our Independence, a statue of Crispus Attucks and three other Boston Massacre patriot protestors who were White was erected after 1800.

Black patriots also fought for independence at Concord, Lexington at Bunker Hill.

At Bunker Hill, the first military engagement of the American Revolution, especially noteworthy was the heroic performance of a former Black slave, Salem Poor, who shot and killed a high-ranking British officer and was commended by Congress at the behest of a number of his White superior officers. Salem Poor may be our country's first military hero.

Just before Yorktown our struggle for independence from Britain was threatened because the barefoot, raggedly

dressed and hungry Continental soldiers threatened to mutiny. Credit could not be obtained from anywhere in Europe.

The Spanish leaders of Cuba asked the people of Havana to donate money for the American cause and the Cuban women, mostly well to do ladies belonging to cultural and patriotic associations joined with Cuban merchants to raise the money.

The Cuban Creoles donated jewelry and diamonds worth over a million pounds sterling--just what was needed to fund Washington's distressed soldiers. Later, first going to Puerto Rico and Haiti to obtain funds for funds to give to the Continental Army but not getting nearly enough, essentially bankrolling the American and French victory at Yorktown, after a call by the Spanish government, some Latinos of Havana, specifically 27 men and 1 woman, provided 500,000 silver pesos for our fight for freedom.

Besides Latino contributions of money, In the South as in Florida and what is now Louisiana, our Spanish allies' Army led by the famous General Galvez, and assisted by Oliver Pollack, an Irish Catholic,

also a millionaire after coming to America who went bankrupt giving much of his money to support our independence, were about 330 Mexican recruits, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mulattoes, Blacks both free and enslaved, Chickasaw Indians, Acadian and German soldiers.

By the end of the War for our Independence about 1/4 of Washington's army were Blacks many of whom were promised freedom from slavery for their military service. Unfortunately, this promise of freedom was not kept by American leaders.

Also, about 1/3 of the Revolutionary Army were Scotch Irish, some Irish Catholics, many American Indians, often in uniform, as well as about 2,000 Germans, and even a contingent of about 40 wealthy Italians came to America, buying their own guns and uniforms to fight for American independence.

Hayam Solomon, a Polish- Jew, coming to America poor and becoming a millionaire, went bankrupt by backing the bonds of the almost worthless Continental Congress and died in

poverty. Also, although for profit, the mainly Jewish merchants of the Dutch St Eustace Island near Cuba were the main source of weapons and war materials for Washington's army.

Apparently, these Jewish merchants were so important to the American military success that before returning to England, they completely destroyed every building on St Eustace.

All kinds of people and religions, White, Black, Hispanic Red and mixed race, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Pagan and Deist are involved in the founding of our great nation.

Our country was founded by both majority and minority people. Therefore, all Americans should always be treated with dignity and respect and given equal treatment by everyone.

A letter to the editor and NEIU community from alumni, Stewart E. Brekke PHD. He retired from the Chicago Public School as a physics, chemistry and mathematics teacher.

Restorative Justice Through Education

Edwin Gramajo

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Currently, about 2.3 million people are being held in the U.S criminal justice system. Many of these people will eventually be released therefore it would be better for society to educate them academically as much as possible. NEIU has been doing its part.

In May, seven students incarcerated in Stateville Correctional Center graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in University Without Walls. Stateville Prison is a maximum-security prison located in Crest Hill Illinois.

In 2017, Tim Barnett and Erica Meiners founded this program with the assistance of Prison+Neighborhood Arts Project.

“Having taught through Prison and Neighborhood Arts Projects (P+NAP) for several years, Erica Meiners and I realized that some of the students had accomplished so much through their prison and pre-prison educations.” This made them perfect UWW students.

NEIU has an alternative degree program named University Without Walls (UWW). UWW allows students to use professional work experience towards earning a degree.

Crime impacts people on both sides negatively, victims and offenders. Former prisoners have a difficult time when they are released back into society because of negative labels. Negative labels such as “ex-convict” cause people to go into a never-ending cycle of going in and out of prison.

Having a degree is seen by many as a sign of success. This can help former prisoners get a job when they get out.

Many people form a great part of their identity by how other people classify them. This is commonly known as stereotyping and self-fulfilling prophecy. If you tell someone that they are smart they will embrace it and act in accordance with this label.

As a result, these seven men can use this great accomplishment to inspire others to do the same.

Incarcerated men and women should not be forgotten about. Education should not be kept away from any American. Prison disconnects people from the real world. As a result, they miss out on technological advances.

Education exposes people to new worlds. Education gives men and women new tools. It does not matter where you are. Programs like this help incarcerated people keep up with technological advances.

The primary purpose of the prison system is to punish. However, in my opinion, the time spent in prison should be used to better people.

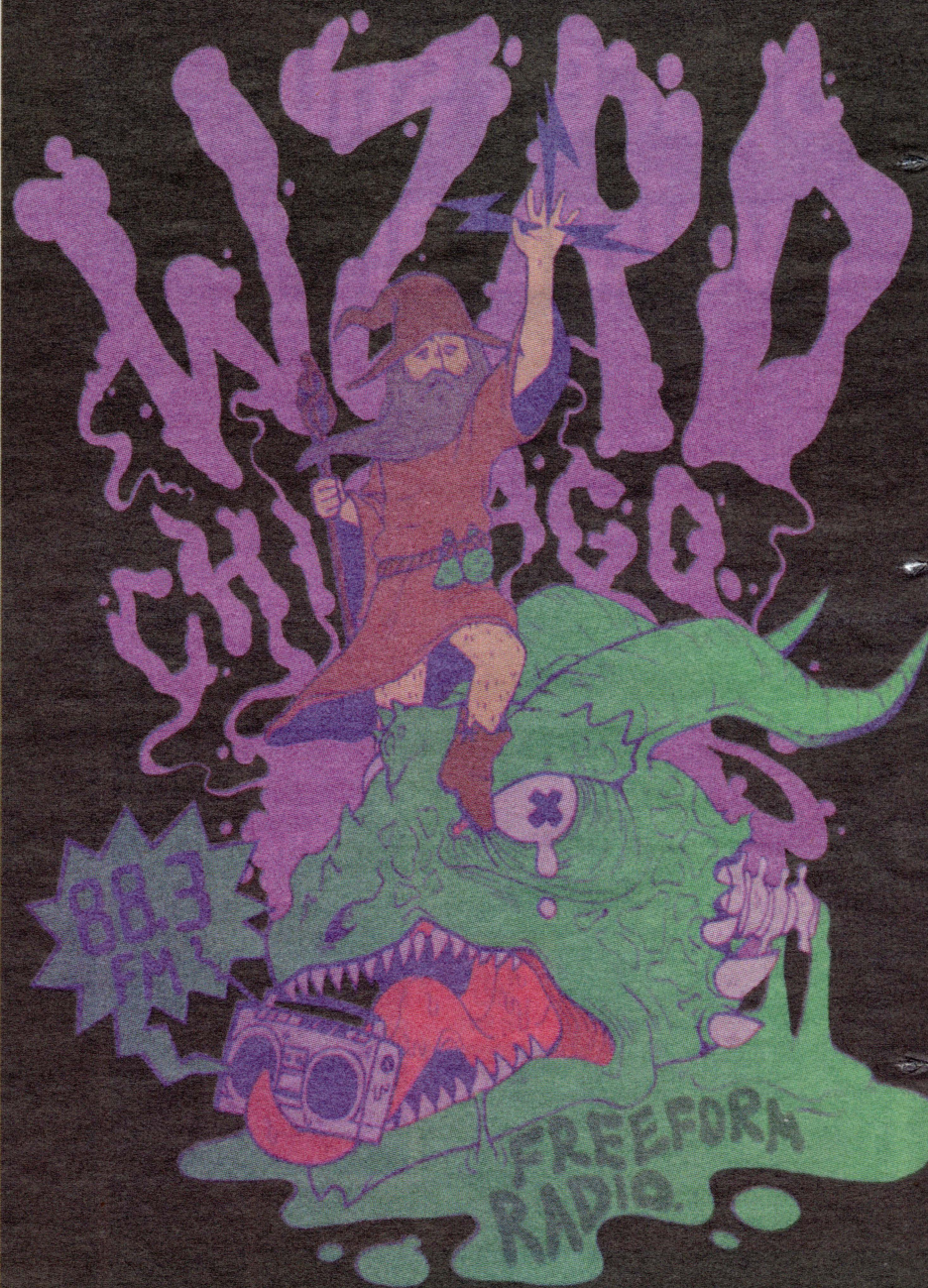
Education in prison reduces recidivism. Recidivism is the propensity of a convicted criminal to recommit crimes after being released.

According to Dennis J Stevens and Charles S Ward, “results show that inmates who earned associate and bachelor degrees while incarcerated tend to become law-abiding individuals significantly more often after their release from prison than inmates who had not advanced their education while incarcerated.”

This will save taxpayers money, lower crime and change lives for the better.

For more information about this program visit: prisonstudiesproject.org

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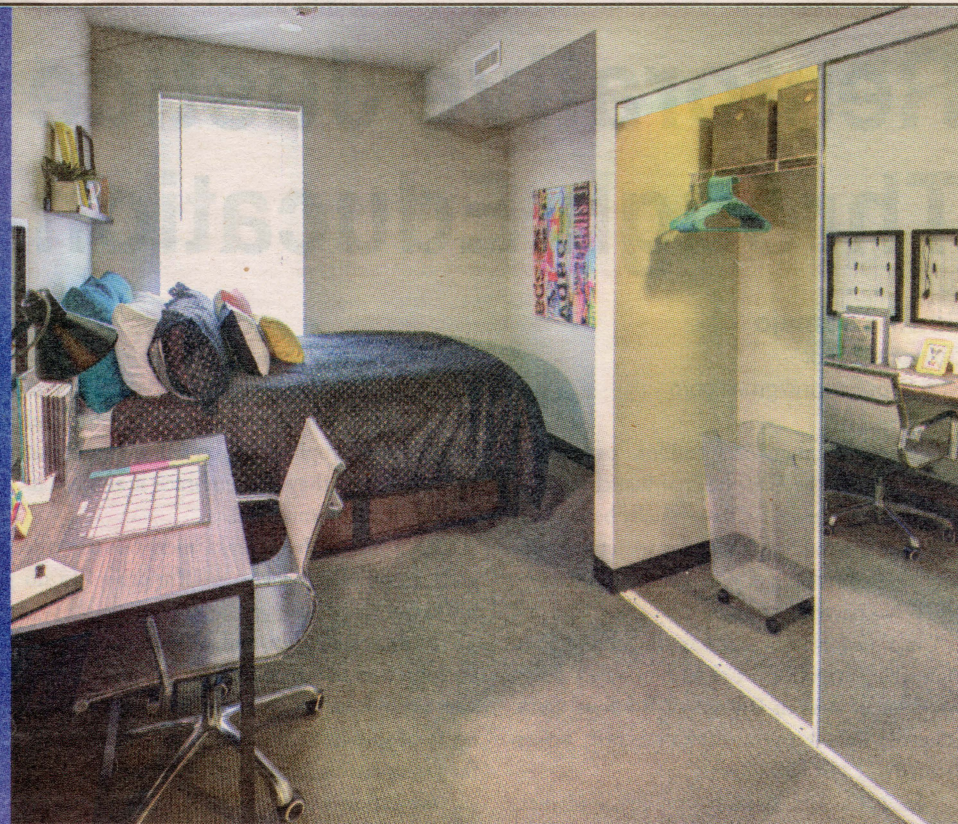
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Won't need a Neuralizer to forget this one

Abbey Cruse

Writer

Charles Sipp

Arts & Life Editor

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Abbey and Chuck went to a press screening of Men in Black International (MIBI). Rather than do a normal review they decided to have a conversation. This is the transcript of that conversation.

Chuck- So, Abbey. What are your top level impressions of the MIBI?

Abbey- So I am a complete newcomer to the MIB universe, and to be honest I had really low expectations.

I was expecting an overblown action movie, and of course there was a lot of action, but there were a lot of sweet human elements and humor. So overall I liked it! Can I ask you what your immediate impressions were?

C- Yes you can. I thought overall the film was forgettable. Not bad, not good, but passable.

They tried to have a lot of banter, not all of it worked.

What did you think of the character dynamic between Chris Hemsworth and Tessa Thompson?

A- Hm. Truthfully I didn't feel a "spark" between them in a romantic sense. It seemed like they were more like close friends.

I think they were cute as friends, though, especially because he was such a "bad boy" and she was so straightlaced and innocent. What about you?

C- If you've seen Thor Ragnarok, the last film they starred in together, they had a fair amount of chemistry, but I agree that didn't carry though as strongly this time.

Another thing that I didn't think carried through was the villains. The twin electric pulse dancers. They were too overpowered and suffered from classic, I can do anything the plot needs me to do, except kill the hero.

A- That's true. I hadn't really thought about them in that way. I guess they weren't very "realistic," even within a world where aliens roaming free on planet earth is realistic. (sidenote--I actually remember the twins from a show I watched, I think it was called "World of Dance." They won the competition. Just didn't know they were involved in the film world)

C- Yeah, I saw that yesterday while researching the film. I think they were visually interesting but their character motivations were ill-defined. In fact I think a lot of the motivations were muddy.

A character tells Chris Hemsworth that he has changed, we never learn how. Tessa Thompson struggles her whole life to join MIB, and when she does she's amazing at it immediately.

She doesn't struggle and we never really get to know either of our leads as much as I'd like.

Even the main villains of the film, an alien swarm called the Hive is severely underdeveloped.

A- Yes. It seems like the writers/director/producers are cashing out on the idea that we all know the basic structure of an

action movie, and as long as they fill out the skeleton, they've made a complete film.

Which of course isn't the case, if you are looking for something more profound. But if you go in expecting that formula, you'll get exactly that. I have to respectfully disagree with you about Tessa Thompson's character being initiated into MIB, though.

I think she does struggle at first, especially in the first club scene where she doesn't speak Vungus' language and realizes that Chris Hemsworth is trying to pimp her out.

C- See, I disagree. She talks her way into MIB and then gets instantly sent out into the field, somehow talks her way to partner with the classic "I don't need partner" cop, and isn't overwhelmed in the least by all these aliens.

In truth, I was a bit underwhelmed by the aliens. I thought they all looked pretty blah. None really stood out.

A- I absolutely second your opinion about Tessa Thompson being sent into the field way too easily. Emma Thompson's character was surprisingly enthusiastic about this strange woman who had a crim-

inal record and breached the organization's security.

So I'm not sure that was believable. I did like the "girl power" vibe between them, though, and Emma Thompson's snubs about the "MEN in Black" title. As for the aliens' appearance, I truthfully cannot remember clearly what any of them looked like, and we saw the movie yesterday.

So that probably is not a good sign. I'm curious what your take was on the feminist twist at the beginning of the film.

C- I didn't think there was a real feminist bend to it. There was what, three female characters in the film? Two of which are absent for most of the runtime.

I don't know, I thought I enjoyed this movie more, until I had to talk and think about it. So don't talk or think about it, and I think you'll get my enjoyment out of it.

Or be that lady who laughed during every scene, living her best life.

A- That was me. Living my best life, as always.

C- Oh yeah, that's why I don't sit next to you.

What are you watching, reading or playing?
Talk about it with our Arts and Life Editor.
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Something strange this way comes

Charles Sipps

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SPOILER ALERT!

'Stranger Things 3' launched on Netflix over the July 4th weekend and with it comes a huge change in the status quo.

The world of Hawkins Indiana grows larger and larger with more characters being introduced and new parts of the world being unveiled.

The show maintains its momentum with season 3 even though it still leaves many questions unanswered.

For fans looking for answers to the plans of the Mind Flayer and what exactly is the Upside Down, prepare to be disappointed.

For whatever reason, the showrunners, the Duffer Brothers, refuse to go into detail what exactly makes the strange things within 'Stranger Things' tick.

While this does make sense, a show like 'Stranger Things' needs its mystery, but the lack of teases leads to an alarming thought: Do the showrunners know the answers to the mystery?

It wouldn't be the first time a shows ambitions outpaced its writing but only time will tell.

With all that said, the highlight of the show is still the Hawkins Gang. Watching the kids grow and develop is a joy and it leads to all the emotions.

In this season we see what happens as puberty dawns in the small town of Hawkins. Relationships change and gone are the days of playing

D&D in the basement. Instead, the opposite sex is at the forefront of the kid's minds, at least until the Mind Flayer rears its ugly head again.

Despite the lack of answers around the Mind Flayer's motivation, it does make an interesting villain in terms of

visuals and threats.

This time around, the Flayer has infecting the inhabitants of Hawkins ala 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' so anyone and everyone can be a threat to the Hawkins gang. With the introduction of the Starcourt mall and the revelation that it is a secret Russian facility, there is a lot happening in the sleepy town of Hawkins and a lot for our young protagonists to handle.

Thankfully the kids aren't alone as Hopper and Joyce are back on the case and ready to kick the Mind Flayer back to the Upside Down.

Unfortunately, the Mind Flayer isn't alone either, as the face of its human horde is the charismatic Billy. While Billy hasn't been the most likable of characters, he is a man of much tragedy. Learning his history, that his abusive father forced Billy's mother to abandon him, leads to some heart-wrenching moments.

Add to that the knowledge that Billy is forced to do some horrendous deeds in the Mind Flayer's name and it's impossible to not sympathize with Billy.

On the note on that horrendous deeds, a lot of nonessential characters die in service to the Mind Flayer. It is a bit odd to see our characters killing the Mind Flayer's thralls, knowing they are not in control of their faculties.

No time is really a spent morning or sympathizing with these characters and maybe this will be touched on in the next season. Speaking of next season there are many interesting threads left open and there are numerous theories of where the show will head next.

The speculation is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the show and the wait for season 4 will be a long one.

Now onto the meat and potato of the season, the "death?" of Hopper. Once again, the naughty government is trying

to open the gate to the Upside Down and allowing the Mind Flayer to wreak havoc in our world.

Hopper and Joyce blow the machine that is reopening the fissure in our world, but in the process, it appears

Hopper was caught up in the explosion. However, we never actually see Hopper's demise, and as any TV watcher knows, if there is no body, he is not dead.

Could Hopper have escaped the explosion by retreating into the Upside Down? Is he the mysterious American, we hear the Russian talk about in the post-credit scene?

An interesting note is a musical one. The show reuses the song "Heroes" as the soundtrack to Hopper's death. The last time "Heroes" was used in on the show was in season one when the police discovered the fake corpse of Will.

Could this be a subtle nod that trickery is once again afoot or a red herring to lead viewers down the rabbit hole? We will have to wait to see.

Overall "Stranger Things 3" is a rewarding and nostalgia-filled trip back to the 80's. It receives 1985 potatoes on my potato scale.

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