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Frannie Mendoza

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NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT

Student-run newspaper since 1962

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2019

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President's State of the University Address

Cassidy Schmidt

Staff Writer

Address when she was interrupted by members of the audience yelling, "Step plan!" The address was attended by many faculty, staff and students on Tuesday, Oct. 22 in NEIU's main auditorium.

Gibson was accompanied on stage by her cabinet, including Pro-

vost Dennis Rome.

Gibson began her time at the lectern by saying how appreciative she was to be able to address the university community. However, she was quickly interrupted by audience members sitting in the front row.

In response to the yelling, Gibson asked "Is that what this is going

to be?" She then made her way back to her seat.

Vicki Byard, Chair of the staff senate at NEIU, asked the audience to limit their disruption and give the president the time and respect to present her address.

Gibson took a few moments to collect herself in front of the silent audience before greeting the crowd

again.

Gibson acknowledged awards, grants and honors received by staff as well as many achievements the university had garnered as a whole in the past year.

These included high rankings for low student debt, social mobility and security. Gibson also highlighted that "The Chronicle of

Higher Education ranked Northeastern second in the nation among the four-year public institutions for diversity among managers."

Meaning NEIU ranks second in the nation for having the most diverse managerial staff.

Access, opportunity and stu-

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INDEPENDENT

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The Independent is a public forum for all of Northeastern Illinois University's campuses and surrounding community. The Independent is entirely student-run and is published bi-weekly, except during summer and semester breaks. The editor-in-chief is responsible for the content of the Independent, and views presented do not necessarily represent those of the administration, faculty and students. The Independent is a member of the ICPA, CMA and ACP.

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All photos by Frannie Mendoza

Gibson addressed the University

dent success remain Gibson's primary goals as president, as well as inclusion and equity. However, the most important question NEIU faces is how does it reach potential students of all backgrounds, Gibson said.

NEIU hopes to have a five percent increase in first-time, full-time freshmen recruitment in the year 2020.

Gibson highlighted her enrollment initiatives to reach this goal. These include increased usage of technology, increased outreach to diverse communities and an aggressive recruitment calendar to notify students of acceptance and financial aid packages.

Freshman retention rates were another big topic of the address. NEIU is currently at a 59 percent freshman retention rate, which is a 10 percent increase from 2017. The university is looking to raise that to 64 percent in 2020. As of 2018, NEIU's highest freshman retention rate is among white students at 72.3 percent, while the lowest is among African American students at 49 percent. However, all categories are at least at approximately 50 percent.

Another big part of the address focused on Transition Committee Initiatives. These included creating a Student Success Center which will act as a student and family oriented one-stop-shop for incoming freshmen and transfer students. Also included were strengthening connections between Career Development and Alumni Relations to foster career pathways, developing eight week classes, creating a self-designed interdisciplinary major and many more.

Before thanking the university, Gibson also said one of her dream goals would be to investigate re-establishment of Division 3 or National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) athletics for women and men.

For more detailed information on what was talked about in the address go to, <https://www.neiu.edu/about/university-leadership/president/state-of-university-addresses>. The slides presented during the address are located here.

Gibson's presentation was followed by a question and answer section. Students and faculty used

microphones to address the president.

A graduate student who works on campus told the president that while she felt that NEIU has transformed her life for the better, she explained that her interactions with students have revealed some things that are concerning to her. "I feel like I get a lot of feedback from students I've worked with about bias from instructors and other university resources," she explained to the audience.

She continued with two requests for the president. The first was that all student resource staff be informed of the language variations used by NEIU's diverse student body. She explained that this would facilitate communication and reduce the perceived bias against a student's personal dialect. She also requested that the administration make an effort to seek insight from student resources staff on student concerns and frustrations as they are the people who are working closest to students.

Gibson responded to this by saying, "I would ask you to please encourage students to participate in

our climate study because that will give us the temperature, if you will, on our campus and what kinds of things students are going through." She added, "No student should feel less than on our campus."

The climate study refers to a campus climate assessment that the university is currently conducting with an outside consultant, Rankin & Associates Consulting. The hope is that the results of the study will help to facilitate a healthy and inclusive learning environment. The data is collected through surveys taken by students after visiting student resource centers throughout the main campus, El Centro and the Carruthers Center.

Following this, Isaura Pulido, associate professor and department chair for the College of Education commended the president on her leadership and support for the institution as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and for almost reaching the threshold for being considered a Minority Serving Institution. Pulido also gave the president and her cabinet the following

POLICE BLOTTER



The NEIU police blotter is requested from our campus police for every issue of the Independent because this publication exercises its right to do so, courtesy of the Clery Act. The Clery Act is a federal statute requiring all higher education establishments that participate in financial aid programs to maintain records of campus crime and campus security information.

Any case that is considered ongoing may not be listed in the blotter. For this reason, there may be updated reports published retroactively once the cases are closed. For more information about the Clery Act, visit the NEIU police department's webpage.

10/16/19 - NEIU

Employee walked into the police station to report seeing bugs in building that triggered his phobia, making him very upset. He returned to work after calming down.

10/16/19 - LWH

Faculty reports suspicious person who came to her office wanting to leave a bag for safekeeping. Officers made contact with the subject. The bag contained a jacket and Tupperware.

10/16/19 - E Building

Employee reported that he slipped on liquid on the floor, landing on his back. He refused medical assistance.

10/16/19 - NEIU

Supervisor reports an on-going issue among two of his employees

with claims of bullying and intimidating comments. Matter was referred to human resources.

10/18/19 - Student Union

Employee called NEIU police regarding a student who said that he was suicidal via email. Contact was made with the student. He is reported to be okay and will be receiving assistance at the Student Counseling Services office.

10/19/19 - Parking Garage

Four teenagers were brought to the station after it was reported that they were yelling profanities from the garage rooftop to passerby's below. They were escorted home to their parents.

10/19/19 - E Building

An employee walked into the police station to report issues with bugs bothering him while he worked. Police stayed with him while he completed his immediate work duties.

10/21/19 - COBM

Police received several reports of a verbal altercation between a staff member and an elderly woman who was waving a large cane and threatening people. Police were unable to locate the woman.

10/22/19 - Library

Student admitted that he altered the Student Government Halloween Movie Night flyers because he was tired of other organizations covering up his organization's flyers.

10/24/19 - Village Square

Four windows appear to have been shot out. No evidence of casings were found. NEIU had held an event earlier in the day where darts were thrown in the same direction as the windows.

10/24/19 - Library

Police responded to a call of a person with a knife. Subject reported using the knife to remove staples from paperwork. Subject was told to put the knife away. He complied.

10/24/19 - B Building

Subject released without charges after being questioned regarding a report of printing 40 dollars worth of credit on victim's student ID. Victim claims she loaned subject her student ID to print only a couple of copies.

10/27/19 - The Nest

NEIU PD and Chicago PD received information about a student who possibly wanted to harm himself. Student was located off campus and will receive assistance from the Student Counseling Services office.

10/28/19 - Parking Lot F

Staff member reported that an unknown person left a note on her vehicle's driver's side door telling her to harm herself.

10/29/19 - Parking Garage

A possible hit-and-run was reported in the parking garage. NEIU PD was unable to positively identify and contact the victim.

10/30/19 - NEIU

An individual attempted to get the class schedule of a student. NEIU does not disclose student information and/or schedules due to various regulations and policies.

10/30/19 - COBM

Officers responded to a person who was possibly hit by a car. Victim was taken to the hospital.

10/30/19 - B Building

Graffiti was reported in men's restroom.

10/31/19 - Fine Arts Building

Officers responded to an individual who fainted. Victim was taken to the hospital for evaluation.

Apartments For Rent

Rent Special - One Month Free!

Central Park on the River

5047-49 N. Central Park
Chicago, IL 60625

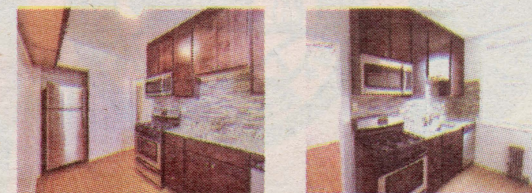
Turn-key units along the river!! Be the first to enjoy these newly rehabbed, sun-filled, spacious apartments located along the tranquil and beautiful riverfront in the quiet neighborhood of North Park. Brand new Kitchens and Bathrooms, along with refinished hardwood floors and plenty of closet space. Storage and new laundry located in the basement. Blocks from Northeastern Illinois University and a few blocks from North Park University.

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Address

Continued from 2

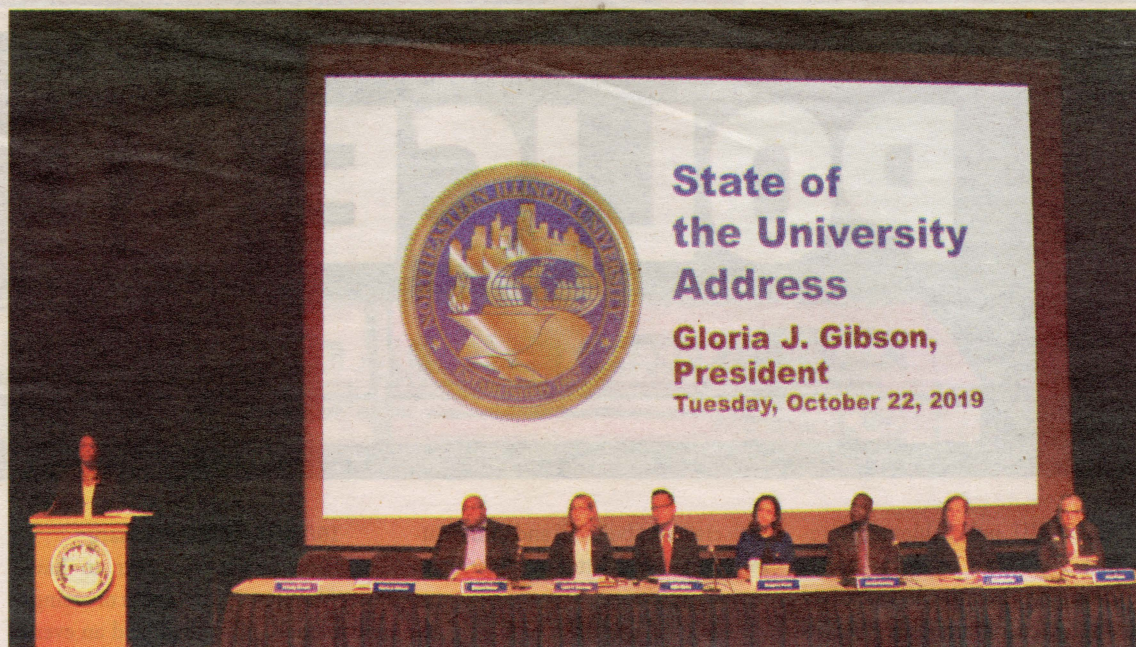
also note that we are looking at who today's college students are."

Pulido gave informative statistics on the makeup of college students today, highlighting the prevalence of minorities, adult learners, first-generation college students and students caring for children. She said, "So as we think about the kinds of initiatives that we undertake, I would really want us to work together and be mindful of who we're serving."

Gibson responded by acknowledging that half of our students

are part-time and they average in age from 27 to 28. "We are a little unique in that way and that's great. But our job is to provide an education for all students who come to our university," she said. Gibson also stressed that reestablishing athletics is a dream goal and that sports can be for everyone.

Gibson said after the event, "I thought this State of the University Address went very well. There was great attendance by students, which shows that the campus really cares about the institution. And I'm very hopeful as we move forward with a number of the initiatives that were discussed."



Nov. 19-21, 2019
11:00AM-6:00PM
at Village Square

For only \$5 you can leave a graduation shoutout to the graduates and we will print it on the December 3rd issue!



Kids Out of School Take on NEIU

Grace Yu

Campus Life Editor

NEIUCampusEditor@gmail.com

As a result of the ongoing Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) strike, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has enacted its district contingency plan during normal school hours, giving children a place to go during the day as well as breakfast and lunch while classes are cancelled.

However, as a result of after-school program cancellations, the Student Union at NEIU has decided

to offer provisional, supplemental support to CPS parents in the form of after-school campus activities for children ages 5 to 13 years old outside of normal school hours.

Historically NEIU has offered such supplemental programs during CTU strikes to support the many parents that work at and attend the university.

Any NEIU affiliated parents are free to send their children to campus activities during class times or scheduled NEIU-related obligations

between the hours of 2 and 6 p.m. on school days.

Participation has varied, from zero to about a dozen children per day.

"We have had a fairly consistent use of the program by NEIU students, faculty and staff. Those who have brought their kids to participate in the program have been very appreciative of the service we are providing," said Kyle Burke, Director of the Student Union, Events, and Conferences.

Children participating in campus

activities have many options available to them, from streaming movies or television programs on the projector screen, to coloring pages, board games, large-size Jenga blocks and a large-size Connect Four game.

The "overseers" of the activities are all NEIU employees or students looking for volunteer, service, or event hours.

"Full-time staff and faculty from across the university are volunteering to help with the program. Some students, particularly those involved

with student organizations, are also volunteering to help interact with the kids," continued Burke.

Parents with children in CPS are able to take advantage of this program as long as the strike persists. Those with more questions or needing more information may contact NEIU Student Union, Event and Conference Services staff at suecs@neiu.edu or (773) 442-4630.

UPDATE: As the CTU strike has ended, these services are no longer being offered.

10th Annual Arts in Response to Violence

Michael Gross

Writer

On Thursday, Oct. 17 and Friday, Oct. 18, NEIU held its tenth annual Arts in Response to Violence conference. Each year, speakers from all over the world as well as NEIU faculty members come together to speak about violence and show artwork in response to various acts of violence. There are workshop events where students can come in and create their own artwork in the spirit of this cause.

This conference is put on for three reasons. The first reason is because the art helps people to understand violence, especially those whose lives have been affected by it.

The second reason is that the artwork shows how others have coped with the violence that has affected them personally.

The final reason is the conference and artwork calls attention to violence in hopes of ending or, at the very least, reducing the cycle.

One of the events that occurred during the conference was a speech by director and master papermaker Drew Matott of the Peacemaker Papermaking Project, who spoke to an

audience about his craft. He stated "Papermaking can be a therapeutic way to cope with violence, especially for those who have experienced violence personally."

He went on to discuss how the papermaking process allows individuals to "take control of a situation they had no control over and turn it into something productive."

“This gives the families a way of healing and coping with a lost family member due to gun violence,”

- Christine Ilewski, Faces Not Forgotten Director

Matott also showed the audience photos of art created by papermakers. A couple of the pictures he showed were about his brother going through a near death experience when he got caught in a fire.

He explained how papermaking helped his brother cope with a deeply traumatic moment in his life. One way that Matott hopes to reduce violence is by "disrupting the cycle of violence," using papermaking as a therapeutic alternative to binge

drinking or turning to drugs.

He also said that they have 40 studios around the world with approximately 100 people working on the Peacemaker Papermaking Project.

"The individuals that work on the project represent a variety of different people, from art therapists to social justice activists," said Matott.

Another speaker was Faces Not Forgotten director and founder Christine Ilewski, who spoke about the organization's part in helping parents of children lost to gun violence grieve. "Faces Not Forgotten is an organization that calls to attention to violence in particular when it comes to children," she said. The organization tries to bring comfort to the families who have lost children as a result of gun violence by painting and displaying portraits of the victims for

the families.

Ilewski presented faces on a cloth with the images of eight children who were killed by gun violence. "This represents the fact that eight children per day lose their lives as a result of gun violence," said Ilewski.

The families of victims who were under the age of 20 get the opportunity to make a quilt with a picture of their child and then send it to Faces Not Forgotten. "This gives the families a way of healing and coping with a lost family member due to gun violence," stated Ilewski. She went on to discuss the importance of art therapists in schools.

Ilewski said, "We could have an art therapist in every school to work with these children that are traumatized by all kinds of things -- poverty, victimization, cultural racism and a lot of other things."

She believes this would be a unique way of healing and processing their trauma. Three of the people who helped put the event together this year were Michelle Kane, a retired professor who has a Masters of Arts at NEIU, Lauren Meranda, an NEIU Arts and Design professor and Nan Giblin, who works in the Department

of Counselor Education at NEIU.

Giblin said the reason for putting this conference together is for "people to be able to handle violence in a positive way rather than a negative way."

Meranda touched on the issue of not just physical violence, but also mental violence and finding ways to cope with that as well. Giblin believes that the art helps reduce the amount of violence by using an alternative way to cope so that people who have been affected will have better memories to look back on as opposed to just the violence that occurred.

When it comes to future goals for Arts in Response to Violence, Meranda said "The hope is to share this message even more and to invite more people and voices into the discussion."

Meranda added that this was the first conference with installations of public art on campus. She went on to mention that there is a legacy wall across from the Students With Disabilities Office where people will be able to access the artwork.

"With the legacy wall, this will give students the opportunity to visualize the art and cope with violence all year round," said Meranda.

Halloween Hang-out at Pedroso Center

Ana Peres Bogo

Staff Writer

The Pedroso Center had a Halloween Hang-Out so that students would be able to celebrate the holiday inside the school. Which, due to the weather, was a very interesting and fun option. The event had food, a screening of the movie "Scream", creative activities and even a costume contest.

The center was complete taken over by Halloween. Spider webs, pumpkins, monsters, even the decapitated head of the university's mascot, these were only a few things that implemented the scary feeling that we all love. In the center of the room, you could sit and decorate mini pumpkins, with paint, glitter and even glue eyes on them. If you did not want to do that, there were cookies that could also be decorated.

As always, when The Pedroso Center has an event amazing food is involved. There were options for all preferences, spicy Buffalo wings as well as regular ones, tortillas,



A look inside the spooky festivities.

Ana Peres Bogo

meatballs and a few more vegetarian options. Everything surrounded the holiday, even the name of the foods; the meatballs were called "Michael Meyer's eyes". Of course, that was not all; there was a lot of candy spread

through the Center, from Reese's to Jolly Rancher's, everyone could have a taste of their favorites. There were a lot of people in costume, and that was due the fact that there was a costume contest. Spider-Man, M&M's,

Samantha Manson, Michael Jackson, Woody, Kiki, were only a few options in the very diverse group. The students who did not participate voted, by the means of shouting and clapping, who was the winner. In third place was Sweeney Todd, second an alternative universe Poison Ivy, and first place went to a person from the psych yard.

If you weren't wearing a costume, there was a few options to take photos with, and a Instagram framing was also available. Although, taking the picture may come with a few scares. There was a big chance that Michael Meyers could photo bomb your picture, scaring you in the process, obviously.

Overall, it was a very fun event that had a strong Halloween feeling to it. From the candy to the movie, everything surrounding the students screamed of Halloween. A very good alternative to go trick or treating in the freezing snow. As always, the Pedroso Center did not lack in any aspect, continuing their ongoing productions of amazing events.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA ORGS

Submissions are now OPEN for our Seeds Spring Journal!! This is not a themed publication, send us your best poems, prose, and visual art. Visit neiu.edu/seeds for more details and submission guidelines. Deadline: January 6, 2020. We cannot wait to see your work!

Que Ondee Sola magazine is also accepting submissions! Please email queondeesolamag@gmail.com for more information, or visit their office, E 041 (under the bookstore and across from the student lounge) to say hello and pick up the most recent copy.

In order to make **SEEDS: ARS A Reading Series** accessible to more people it will be moving to **TUESDAY evenings! 5:30-7. Location TBD.** There are 3 opportunities to attend: **NOV 5, NOV 19, and DEC 3.** If you are interested in reading please reach out to **Leana at l-okeefe@neiu.edu** for more details and to reserve your spot.

Save the date: **WZRD and Que Ondee Sola present Las Americas "Para La Cultura" Celebración!**

This event will celebrate cultural wealth and resilience of las Americas y el caribe by bringing together artists, musicians, poets, entrepreneurs and activists from Chicago communities. All proceeds will benefit The Alliance 98. **DEC 5. Doors open at 630, Art Reception 7-8, Celebración 8-midnight. \$5, \$3 for NEIU students.**

EVENTS FUNDED BY STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE FOR THE WEEKS OF NOV 5TH-NOV 19TH

Chemistry Club - Candle and Soap Making

MONDAY, NOV 11TH
Student Veterans Club - Veterans Day Celebration and Luncheon
Alumni Hall - 12pm

THURSDAY, NOV 7TH
ASSW - Transferable Skills & Networking
El Centro - 6:00pm-8:00pm

SLD

Alternative Spring Break Info Sessions (If you are interested in applying for an ASB trip, please attend one of the following 30 minute info sessions in the Pedroso Center lounge)

Tuesday (11/5): 11am; 5:45pm

Wednesday (11/6): 10:45am; 4:15pm

Thursday (11/7): 1pm; 5:45pm

Friday (11/8): 12pm

COBM-SAC

SATURDAY, NOV 16TH
Etiquette Gala
Alumni Hall - 6pm-9pm

NORTHEASTERN PROGRAMMING BOARD

MONDAY, NOV 11TH
I LOVE MONDAYS
Village Square - 12:30-3:30pm
#WeLoveVeterans

SGA/SENATE UPDATES

Student Appreciation Day at **El Centro-Tuesday, November 5, 2:30-5pm. El Centro lobby.** Come play UNO, pick up a goodie bag, and enjoy some free nachos.

There are still open seats for SGA Senator and SGA Council of Clubs Representatives. If you are interested in being part of SGA, please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/NEIU-SGA-InterestForm>

Student Government Association members are part of various committees aimed to better NEIU. If you have any concerns or issues please visit the SGA offices located in the lower level of the E building near Health Services.



Veronica Gerber Bicecci's 'Empty Set'

Grace Yu

Campus Life Editor
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As part of the Lit & Luz Festival organized by MAKE Literary Productions, the NEIU campus was recently graced with a visit from Argentine-Mexican artist and author Verónica Gerber Bicecci.

While in the Pedroso Center on Tuesday, Oct. 15, students were treated to Gerber Bicecci reading from her 2015 book, "Empty Set," in both English and Spanish.

After her reading, Gerber Bicecci participated in a lively conversation with NEIU English major and student writer Natalie Valentin-Espiet.

Trained as a visual artist who attended art school, Gerber Bicecci considers herself a "visual artist who writes." Moreover, she conceives of her life in México as resulting from her own "exile" from Argentina, and in the most elegant way.

While Gerber Bicecci's parents were

political exiles from Argentina to México, Gerber Bicecci stated that she, too, considers herself an exile because she "was supposed to be born elsewhere."

Gerber Bicecci admits to a fascination with doubles, a motif that recurs throughout "Empty Set." The book is a fragmented story cleverly narrated through both words and illustrations about a woman, also named Verónica, who reflects on losses from her childhood while undergoing the pain of splitting from a partner.

While resembling her author in some respects, Verónica is not an exact copy of her author but represents a reflection, or her twin.

Furthermore, "twin" versions of the story were produced in English as well as the original Spanish with the collaboration of translator Christina MacSweeney.

The toughest translation decision for Gerber Bicecci between the Spanish and English versions was how to symbolize her protagonist, who speaks in the first person,

as a single letter; in the book, characters are referred to by their initials, read like they are written into lines of a legal document.

They become abstract signs symbolizing their role in the protagonist's life and narrative. Gerber Bicecci eventually settled on "I" for Verónica (Y[o] in the original Spanish version). On the other hand, Mother (M), Brother (B) / Hermano (H), Grandma (G) / Abuela (A), her new man Alonso (A), the former romantic partner Tordo (T) and Her (H), Tordo's new partner, all have a role to play in Verónica's life.

The effect isn't depersonalizing; rather, these characters' actions intersecting with the life of "I" / "Y" and the ramifications of those actions are somehow felt with greater magnitude.

Illustrations from the book demonstrate Gerber Bicecci's fascination with diagrams. In addition, for the Lit & Luz Festival's Live Magazine Show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Gerber Bicecci's collaboration with Cubano choreographer Michel Rodri-

gues Cintra produced a dance piece inspired by diagrams she had drawn.

Venn diagrams in "Empty Set," for another example, create a simple, deft visual representation of "I's" relationship and subsequent break-up with her former partner, "T." Gerber Bicecci uses two overlapping Venn diagrams (three circles total) to form T's relationship with I, as well as T's relationship with the other woman, H, but the shaded area where I and T intersected becomes an "empty set." A void is created where the two were at another time one.

A further diagram shows a once whole circular I with the section that remained with T sliced off.

"Events always had a dark side, a shaded area we couldn't make out, one that, despite being empty, always meant something more," reflects Verónica.

"Empty Set" is a wonderful, shrewd tale, a fine literary treat for the NEIU community to have listened to and engaged with.

**Find your campus calendar online at
NEIUINDEPENDENT.ORG**

**Want to see your event on our calendar?
Email Grace at
NEIUCampusEditor@gmail.com**

My personal practice in pronouns

Grace Yu

Campus Life Editor

NEIUCampusEditor@gmail.com

I don't want people to make assumptions about who I am. I may look like a middle-class Asian American woman who is good at math, bad at driving ("bad" at driving), studious, quiet and, for the most part, will not bother other people just so that I don't make too much noise and ruffle anyone's feathers. And I am. And I do. But I also am and do many other things.

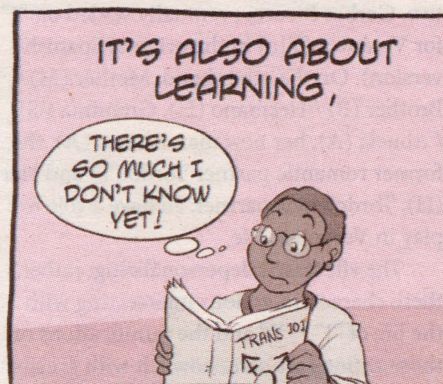
Hence, every chance I get to throw people off, I will, even if only for fun and even to the point where I have started to think that my habit of making jokes about being Asian in front of non-Asians may in fact be some sort of complex that I've developed from unprocessed, internalized racism.

**BEING
AN ALLY
ISN'T JUST
ABOUT BASIC
DECENCY.**

But hey, it's hard being human in the modern world. We all regularly have to question and reexamine, in both others and in ourselves, assumptions, prejudices and neuroses caused by the desires repressed by the late capitalist social formation in which we live.

A random East Asian-looking woman in a stock photo used in NEIU ads? It is me. I am every Asian woman, ever. Every East Asian professor on the faculty of NEIU? My dad. In a group chat, my friend asks, "How

can you be every Asian woman if Scarlett Johansson is already every Asian woman?" Well, that's a very good question. And the answer is that Scarlett Johansson is also



me (and to follow that answer to its logical conclusion, I am also every person, every tree and every animal). Does my social world assume and perpetuate the anonymity, interchangeability and painfully loud, stifling silence of speechless Asian women? Well then, I will only lean in further (as a joke, anyway).

We live in an incredibly complicated world and everyone has a complex interior life. We all know this. It's fun to be full of surprises, even when they are stupid, trivial and meaningless, only if to remind others around us that a human being is not an appearance, a type or a cluster of unspoken, unexamined beliefs projected onto oneself by our social world.

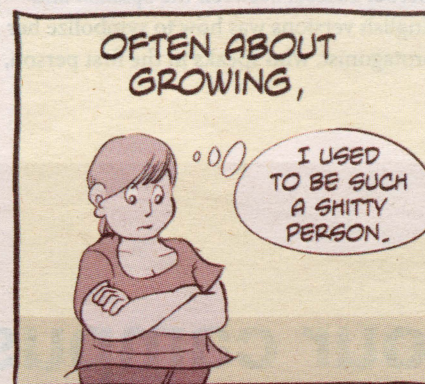
Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2018 marked the inaugural celebration of International Pronouns Day. We continue to observe this day annually on the third Wednesday of Oct. both here at NEIU and around the world (on Oct. 16 this year).

Luca Maurer wrote for Advocate.com that "International Pronouns Day seeks to take one small yet important step to build awareness and action about the protective and positive outcomes of using pronouns

that individuals determine for themselves."

To normalize the use of sharing third person pronouns is to lessen the effects of stigma and discrimination faced by the transgender community that contribute to their marginalization and invisibility. The consequences of stigma and discrimination are dire; aside from material discrimination, such as physical violence and socioeconomic hardship, marginalized transgender people are at greater risk of mental health problems to the point of suicidal ideation.

Communicate your third person pronouns. We do this to notify others how to perceive us. My choice to do so currently only manifests in listing "she/her/hers" in my email signature. But I do it because there is no reason to assume that my passing for cisgender heterosexual (the most vanilla gender-sexuality combination possible) means that someone can make that as-



sumption about me prior to getting to know me.

There is also no reason, in many daily interactions, for people to know how I identify in terms of gender and sexuality. I can choose to tell others my pronouns ahead of time, but if I don't, I expect to be asked. I know others don't have it as easy as I do in terms of presentation and inner reality because I understand gender and sexuality are not a choice.

This sort of self-naming can seem like a purposeless form of political correctness. But if you think it is courageous in a rebellious way to throw political correctness to the wind, you end up advocating for political



wrongness. Political wrongness? What would the point of that be? Does political wrongness require an extraordinary fearlessness?

Would you get the sense that you are exceptional, unusually brave for making assumptions about how people identify themselves so that they can be coherent to the social world? Reading people as they appear and not as they tell you they want to be interpreted is not taking the hard road, it's simply refusing to take people as they want to be taken and instead insisting on taking them how you want to take them.

I use pronouns in order to stand firm in my solidarity with the transgender community. But what does this small act of solidarity imply for me? It reminds me that in being heard in one's self-expression, both one's personhood and one's agency are acknowledged, and that in the complications of humanity, I share with the transgender community the insistence that we will be seen and embraced in the way that we know ourselves, in the way that we are-- and only in the way that we are-- and in the fullness of our dignity.

Photo by Sophie Labelle

Have an opinion? Email Ata at NEIUOpsEditor@gmail.com

Chicago Teachers Union Strike

Matthew Rago

Sports Editor

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The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) decided to go on strike in pursuit of higher compensation, smaller classroom sizes and increased access to academic and counseling resources. In response, the City of Chicago offered hundreds of additional support staff workers and a 16% salary increase, which would amount to an additional \$19,000 per year on average. According to Mayor Lori Lightfoot, this proposal is the most generous in the history of the union.

CTU and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) came to a tentative agreement Thursday that will end the strike after 11 missed school days, following a two-hour negotiation between representatives of CPS and CTU.

The agreement includes both limitations on class sizes and an assurance that nurses and social workers will be made available at every school five days a week. However, CTU representatives' quest for all 11 of the missed school days to be made up for reimbursement purposes was rejected in favor of redeeming five of the missed school days. Additionally, elementary school instructors will not receive the 30-minute prep period that operated as a sticking point during negotiations.

According to the CPS website, the district offered a 16 percent pay raise in addition to a \$35 million investment toward reducing class sizes, \$10 million more than their previous offer. CPS also promised an additional 209 social workers and 250 nurses by the year 2023. The agreement will be voted on by the 25,000 union members in the upcoming weeks.

There seemed to be a clear division between factions who supported the strike and those who did not. Opponents claimed that the strike was a selfish maneuver that served only to disrupt the school year and, by extension, our children's educational process.

Many contended that the original compensation package offered by the city was a fair concession and that indefinite cancellation of classes would cause a spike in juvenile delinquency, particularly in Chicago's most vulnerable neighborhoods. Finally,

they pointed at the median \$75,000 salary for teachers, which remains higher than 60% of college-educated Chicago workers. They said that teachers were demanding a salary increase that taxpayers simply can't afford.

Proponents of the strike cited how teachers have been historically undervalued.

They nurture our children while instilling the discipline necessary to evolve into a productive adult. These are the men and women who have invested years of their lives in pursuit of knowledge and an education, the same education they are relaying to the next generation. If an entire city's worth

them. Simply put, the burden of childcare is not theirs to bear, yet they valiantly accept it anyway.

Second, these demands are going to benefit Chicago's youth. Sure, the CTU strike might have been a short-term inconvenience, but long-term, it is our children--the same ones enrolled in school today--that will benefit. A thorough examination of the demands put forth by the CTU shows that our educators asked for more affordable housing near public schools. They advocated for our children to be educated by role models who look and sound like them, which is an often overlooked aspect of educational engagement. Ignoring long-term benefit for short-term convenience is how chronic issues persist.

Finally, it is important to remember that strikes have never been universally embraced. When law enforcement went on strike in the early 20th century, they fought for many of the amenities we take for granted today, including the right to unionize, minimum wage, standards for workplace regulations and overtime pay.

Those strikers were demonized by the media and dismissed as socialist and Bolshevik by their own leadership. When the United Mine Workers of America asked for safer working conditions, health benefits and better pay, they were met with a \$3.5 million fine (adjusted to \$46 million today) and forced to resume work.

Our educators did not march in sub-40 degree weather for issues they deemed inconsequential. They attempted to reform a system that has ignored both their needs and the needs of our children. They stood outside because the City of Chicago has routinely exploited them from a financial perspective. But as history has shown us, the radical demands of today are the amenities and standards we take for granted tomorrow.



Manuel Martinez/WBEZ

Chicago teachers and their supporters march downtown.

They pointed at insufficient financial compensation, oftentimes averaging out to less than minimum wage considering the hours teachers invest in their profession outside of school.

Furthermore, they argued lack of secondary resources, such as nurses and bilingual educators, further disadvantaged vulnerable demographics. They also supported a hard cap on class size so that students can receive a more concentrated education.

American educators are severely undervalued. These are the men and women responsible for socializing our children and shaping their minds. These teachers are instrumental in teaching our children both the basic and advanced knowledge required to excel in the world, all while exhibiting a patience many of us are incapable of.

of educators--over 25,000 to be exact--are adamantly contending that they are concurrently underfunded and overwhelmed by the current standard in class sizes, perhaps it is time we listen.

We need to dismiss the notion that our schools operate a de facto daycare. Sure, it is nice that schools afford parents the opportunity to go to work unharassed, but the primary purpose of our schools is, has been and always will be to educate our youth.

By demanding that our educators remain in a financially compromised situation so that we can go to work is essentially a declaration that our financial security is more important than theirs. It also insinuates a disconcerting expectation that teachers and staff should assume a parental responsibility others are eagerly trying to displace upon

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'Daybreak' review

Chuck Sipps

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'Daybreak', a meta look at a post-apocalyptic world, is a Netflix original that is more hit than miss. It borrows heavily from pop culture, and while at times its teenage cast speaks with the voice of a 40 something TV writer as opposed to an actual teenager, there are plenty of laughs, surprises and emotions to go around.

After a never fully explored biochemical attack is launched across the world, seemingly all of the adult population was either killed or turned into a horde of zombie-like ghoules. Only teens have survived this apocalypse, which gives Netflix another show to explore the question; But what if like, all the adults are gone?

We follow the main trio of Josh (Colin Ford), Angelica (Alyvia Alyn Lind) and Wesley (Austin Crute) as they discover what it means to be a family in a post-apocalyptic world.

Josh has lost his love, Sam (Sophie Simnett), and he is on a hero's journey to get her back. Angelica, a ten-year-old mad-genius, is searching for acceptance in a world that has otherwise rejected her. Wesley is seeking redemption as a wandering ronin, looking to atone for an undisclosed past misdeed.

Each of the trio has been liberated by the end of the world, the apocalypse wiping their proverbial slates clean, and while they feel a sense of freedom in their new normal, there is also pining for the world that was before, particularly in terms of familial and romantic bonds.

Unfortunately for them, it would appear that "Mad Max" is just as popular in 2019 as it was in its heyday, as roving gangs of jocks are

basically ripping off the biker gangs of "The Road Warrior." The show is full of homages, some subtle others not so much, and frequently addresses the audience as a living being. It's an all-in style that you will either love or hate.

Despite its zombie-ridden and post-apocalyptic setting, the show is more of a farce than a thriller. That's not to say there aren't dramatic beats, the show has plenty of heart, but none of the "threats" of the world ever feel that threatening. There were also some frustrating character choices that didn't quite add up.

Not to get specific but there were multiple times where a character's past misdeeds were seemingly forgotten or forgiven despite them being truly horrific. The show also posits a world that descends into extreme violence very quickly. We are only six months into the apocalypse and it feels like no one gave peace a chance.

The show is filled with violence and vulgarity, almost like an angry teenager when mom and dad aren't around. There are some enjoyable fight scenes, but most of the memorable moments come from character interactions as opposed to over the top violence.

There are a few experimental episodes that were a nice change of pace, and while the story drags a smidge in the middle, there is something fun in each episode.

"Daybreak" doesn't reinvent the wheel, nor does it need to. It's a bombastic series that has a few surprises up its sleeve and sets the stage for an intriguing season two. It's a good blend of soapy teen drama with an apocalyptic flair, even if it isn't the most original.

"Daybreak" is awarded 5318008 potatoes on the Sipps' Potato Scale.

'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil' review

Susana Acevedo

Assistant Arts and Life Editor

(Spoilers)

Disney has made a name for itself over the past few years with live-action adaptations of classic animated blockbusters. Back in 2014, Maleficent, added to the live action movement as well as created inspiration for Halloween costumes for years to come.

Considering the film brought in \$758.5 million at the box office, its surprising it took Disney so long to release a sequel. Maleficent: Mistress of Evil hit theaters on Oct. 18 with Angelina Jolie returning to portray the titular role of Maleficent, as well as Elle Fanning returning as Aurora.

Five years after King Stephan's (Shantel Cooley) death, Aurora has been declared the new queen of the Moors and Maleficent serves as its protector. Despite Maleficent having saved Aurora from her own curse in the first movie she is still seen as a villain by the neighboring kingdom of Ulstead, home to Prince Phillip (Harris Dickinson).

The film starts off with Phillip proposing to the Queen, she accepts, and soon enough Maleficent finds out from her trusted servant, Diaval (Sam Riley), and cannot accept the sudden news. Lashing out in rage, Maleficent seeks out her surrogate daughter and tells her the union cannot and will not happen because 'love doesn't always end well', but Aurora insists she and Prince Phillip can prove her wrong.

Maleficent wants to please her and travels to the neighboring kingdom to meet Aurora's future in-laws. While there, Queen Ingris (Michelle Pfeiffer) turns out to be a conniving queen who creates a plan to destroy the land of the fairies.

Hoping to stop her, Maleficent joins forces

with a group of outcasts to battle the queen and her powerful army.

The sequel was a wonderful experience full of mesmerizing special effects, action, adventure and love. A definite elevation from the first movie both story wise and artistically. In the sequel the audience learns who Maleficent is and where she comes from.

The extension of her origin adds another level of power to the character, which deepens the sense of fantasy. New landscapes as well as a broader array of colors and effects added a new magical feeling to the movie.

The attention to detail was astonishing. New fairy creatures were created and made up formations of trees, flowers and other natural forces. From start to finish, there is rarely a scene or shot lacking fantastical creatures, magic spells, or storybook settings.

The cast was terrific, with Angelina Jolie proving once again that she was born to play the role. Jolie manages to find new ways to both amuse and scare us. For all of the visual treats and relatable analogies of the story, she is the key ingredient to make it all work.

Her all-in performance is so powerful that makes everything else on screen seem to fade into the background every time she appears.

Elle Fanning's Aurora radiates a mix of youthful naivety and immaturity, alongside determination and independence.

The differences between Fanning and Jolie provides contrast that compliments each other and makes their scenes together work well.

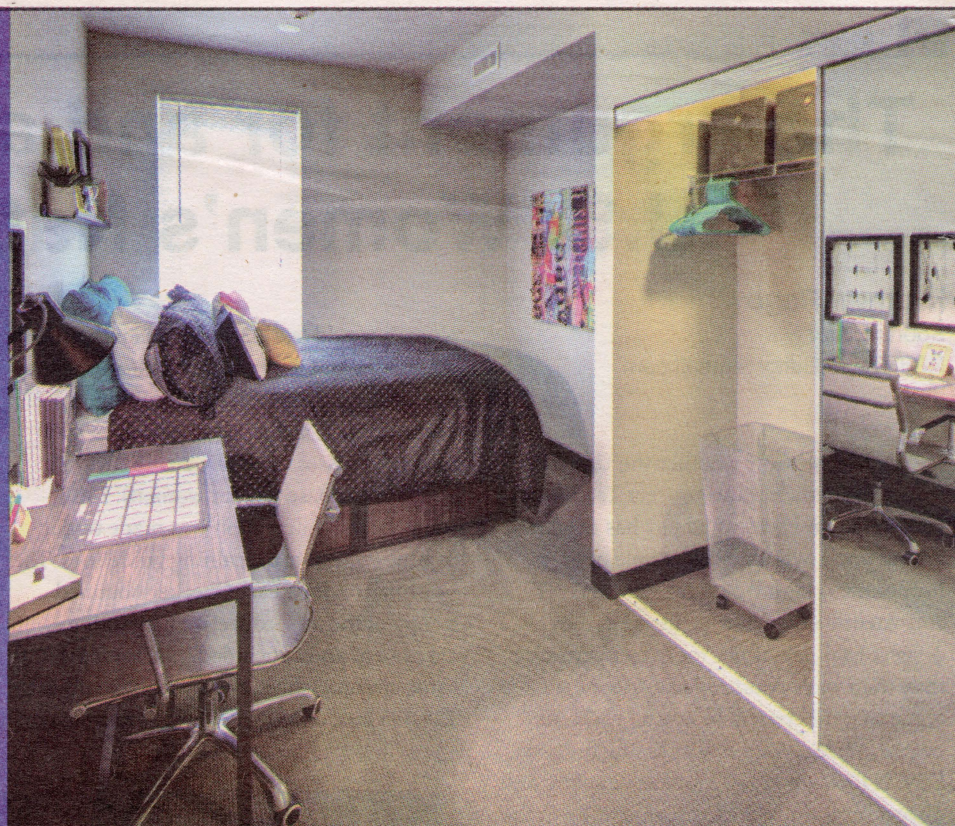
Maleficent: Mistress of Evil overall is a big improvement from the first film, offering more to enjoy.

A true testament to the power of mythology and storytelling, and a big win for audiences.

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The argument for and against equal pay for the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team

Matthew Rago

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The debate over whether the United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) deserves equal pay has reached a fever pitch over the past couple of years. Proponents claim that since the USWNT consistently outperforms the men, they deserve as much, if not more compensation than their male counterparts. Opponents argue that differences in revenue and skill negate any legal arguments put forth by the USWNT's team of lawyers. Let's explore and dissect both sides of the argument. First, the facts:

The U.S. Men's National Soccer Team (USMNT) and U.S. Women's National Soccer Team operate under contrasting compensation structures under the current collective bargaining agreement. Where the women earn a base salary of \$100,000 (plus performance based incentives), on the men's side, players exclusively earn bonuses in lieu of an actual salary.

Additionally, the USWNT and the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) have offered conflicting narratives on the pay gap. The USWNT contend they are routinely paid less than their male counterparts, whereas the USSF state that the women have outpaced the men in pay over the past eight years. In fact, from 2010-2018, USSF representatives state that the women outearned the men by a total of \$34.1 million between both salary and in-game bonuses.

Unfortunately, constructing a straightforward comparison between the pay for the women and the pay for the men is more complex than one might anticipate. Second and tertiary variables such as games played, qualifications relative to year, sponsorship money and outside mandates skew the figures.

In the official lawsuit put forth by the USWNT, the USWNT cites an example that compared compensation between male athletes and female athletes should each team win 20 games. The lawsuit states that, should each team win 20 consecutive games,

women would learn 38% less than their male counterparts. However, if each team were to lose all 20 games, each team would make the same amount, as the men receive a \$5,000 bonus for losses (\$5,000 x 20 = \$100,000, which is the base pay for women). Unfortunately, this calculation was made under bygone collective bargaining guidelines. The Washington Post Fact Checker obtained a copy of the new collective bargaining agreement and concluded that, under the same circumstances, the women would earn \$28,333 less, or 89% of what the men make.

top two in either the FIFA World Cup or Olympic games, with their best finish being a third place finish in the 1930 FIFA World Cup. In short, the USWNT has enjoyed exponentially more success in international competition than the USMNT.

Furthermore, in the three years following their 2015 World Cup victory, the women brought in slightly more revenue than the men, earning \$50.8 million to the men's \$49.9 million. However, in the two preceding years, the men brought in an aggregate \$20.02 million more than the women.



ProSoccerUSA.com

The USWNT has dominated competition. The men? Not so much

Arguments In Favor

Quite frankly, the USWNT is more successful relative to their field. While the men's team recently failed to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, the USWNT have won two consecutive World Cups (2015, 2019) and four since 1991 (1991, 1999, 2015, 2019). Furthermore, they've captured four of the last six Olympic Gold Medals (1996, 2004, 2008, 2012) and eight of nine CONCACAF Gold Cup Championships (all but 2010).

Meanwhile, the men have never won a FIFA World Cup or Olympic Gold Medal, though they have captured five CONCACAF Gold Cups (1991, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2017). In fact, the men have never finished

Though sponsorships are sold collectively, and therefore unattributable to either the men or women, the timing of the increase in sponsorship revenue--sponsorships surged immediately after the USWNT sued the USSF--suggests that the women's brand is enjoying a boost in popularity.

Argument Against

Opponents to equal pay between the U.S. National Men's Soccer Team and the U.S. National Women's Soccer team emphasize two points: difference in skill and difference in FIFA World Cup revenue. From a domestic standpoint, we can reference a Supreme Court case *Cullen v. Indiana*. In this case, the female Director of Respiratory Therapy,

Deborah Cullen, was paid less than the male Director of Physical Therapy, Sandy Quillen. The Supreme Court determined four standards that dictate whether equal pay is warranted: skill level, workplace conditions, effort and responsibility.

The USWNT contends that they operate under adverse and disadvantaged working conditions due to a lack of marketing investment from the USSF. However, skill level is where the argument gets complex.

While the USWNT is much more successful in their field than their male counterparts, highly ranked women's squads have a history of losing to amateur boys teams. For example, in a scrimmage game in preparation for a match against Russia, the USWNT lost to the U-15 (under 15 years of age) Dallas FC boys' squad by a score of 5-2. Additionally, three months prior to winning the World Cup, the USWNT was defeated by the U-17 USMNT by a score of 8-2.

The USWNT team isn't the only national women's organization to lose to a team comprised of teenage boys. Australia's Women's National Team, at the time ranked no. 5 in the world, lost 7-0 to the U-15 Newcastle Jets.

Finally, revenue generated from the FIFA World Cup poses an enormous obstacle in the women's quest for equal compensation. The total prize money afforded to field in the 2015 Women's FIFA World Cup was \$15 million, 40 times less than the \$576 million earned by the men's side. The women's champion, the USWNT, brought home \$33 million less than the men's champion, Germany. However, women actually netted a higher percentage of sponsorship revenue than men. The women's tournament earned \$17 million in sponsorship revenue. From that, the USWNT earned 11% compared to the 6.6% of the \$529 million in sponsorship revenue pocketed by the Germans. However, because of the disparity in sponsorship revenue, the Germans still made exponentially more money. However, considering that the men failed to qualify for the upcoming World Cup tournament, this particular point will have to wait another four years for a follow-up comparison.

The Chicago Wildfire set the sporting world ablaze

Rachel Willard

Staff Writer

Since its inception in 2012, the American Ultimate Disc League (AUDL) has expanded from eight teams to its current 21-team format in an effort to penetrate the U.S.'s four-sport monopoly.

The league, comprised of 18 U.S. franchises and 3 Canadian franchises, commences its season in the spring and concludes in the summer with a three-round playoff system which ends in a final four-style showdown known as the AUDL Championship Weekend.

The AUDL's Chicago Wildfire were afforded the opportunity to showcase their brand before 62,306 fans against the Indianapolis AlleyCats during the halftime intermission of the Chicago Bears vs New Orleans game. The Wildfire came out on top, defeating the AlleyCats 4-3. More importantly, ultimate disc took center stage, gaining exposure for a budding sport eager to prove its merit under the brightest of lights.

The Chicago (formerly Windy City) Wildfire were founded in 2013. Since its inauguration, the franchise has been consistently competitive in the AUDL, participating in the 2013 AUDL Championship Weekend after a 14-2 regular season record and qualifying for the playoffs in three other seasons. I sat down with Jeremy Burril of the Chicago Wildfire to discuss his thoughts, aspirations and vision for ultimate disc.

Q: What is ultimate disc for those who are not familiar with the sport?

A: Ultimate frisbee is essentially a mixture between basketball and soccer all combined into one, except you play with a frisbee on a football-sized field. There are seven on the field for each team. Basically, you pass the frisbee between your teammates. If the disc at any point touches the ground or is intercepted by an opposing player play continues, and it goes the other direction and you are trying to score in an endzone. It's a lot like basketball in the way that once you have the frisbee in your hand, you can't run with it.

You have a pivot foot that you have to keep on the ground. It's a lot like soccer in the way that the disc moves, so you can move it in any direction.

It's a lot like the way that you're trying to score in the endzone.

Q: Why is ultimate disc a sport more people should be tuning into and watching? What sets it apart from other sports?

A: I think what really sets the sport apart is that it is technically a non-contact sport. It is just like basketball--non-contact. There is a little bit of contact but there is not really supposed to be. So in that way it kind of eliminates a lot of concussion issues that a lot of other sports may have.

I know football is under quite a bit of scrutiny because of their concussion issues. Our sport warrants just as exciting plays. It is incredible to watch people throw these frisbees. The amount of throws and distance people can get with a frisbee is just awesome to watch. It's just a good experience for not only the players but also the spectators themselves.

Q: Where can people come to see the Chicago Wildfire play and get involved?

A: The Chicago Wildfire home field is at Langhorst Stadium in Elmhurst. It is actually at Elmhurst College. We have six home games between June and August.

Q: What was it like to showcase your talents at the Bear/Saints halftime show this past Sunday?

A: That was an absolutely incredible experience. Being in front of 60,000 people is something that very few things compare to or prepare you for, so it is awesome just to be out on that field in the first place. But then to be playing a sport that you love and be playing for a team you love is even better. It was incredible to interact with fans and see how excited they would get during our exhibition game. As little time as we had, I think we had a pretty good impact on those people. I actually live in Chicago. I live near Wrigley Field, so on my way home, I took the train and had people coming up to me saying that was the most exciting part of the game. They were asking about where we could get more, where they can buy jerseys, and just asking more about the game itself. It was truly incredible to see how just a short amount of time can have such a big impact on so many people.

Q: What response were you guys hoping

for? Do you guys feel like you met that goal or do you guys feel that you actually exceeded it?

A: We were really just trying to entertain the people and show them that ultimate frisbee can be cool. A lot of people view ultimate frisbee as something that they did in gym class one time. A lot of times we're confused for frisbee golf, so we wanted to show people that it is much different than frisbee golf. We are actually athletes. We run, we jump, we dive, we do all those kinds of things and I think we definitely hit those goals. We wanted to entertain people and have them asking, "Where can I get more of this?" I think [we] definitely hit that goal if not exceeded it.

Q: Your league expanded from eight teams to 21 in a relatively short period of time; I believe eight years, to be exact. How were you able to expand so rapidly?

A: That is a testament to the sport itself. There are facets of the sport, so it starts down in middle school. There are sixth and seventh graders that are playing so they grow up and there are high school teams, college teams, club level teams and ultimately professional teams. So I think just the growth of the sport itself warranted the expansion of those different teams.

Q: Do you think the AUDL doesn't receive the same fanfare as other American sports teams? What do you think it will take to change that perception?

A: I think it is just going to be a matter of time. I think people are going to realize that we are just as exciting as these mainstream sports. It's going to take some acceptance from other sports teams. I think once they see us on those Sportscenter Top Plays, once they see us [and] see the highlights of the sport, they'll realize that it is really, really cool to see somebody going all out for a frisbee that you would have thought nobody could get near. I think it is just going to be about exposure.

Q: Do you think that the issues with the NFL and CTE will open the door for more non-contact sports?

A: Absolutely. That is already a main factor as to why a lot of people come over and play our sport. While it is still a dangerous thing to do because it is a sport, that's just something that comes along with playing

a sport, there is far less contact, or far less purposeful contact. That's actually the main reason I came over and played this sport. I played baseball and football through high school and had to quit those because of concussions so that really strikes home with me. I think that's going to be a huge building block for our league.

Q: What would you like to communicate to potential audiences, clientele and players that might want to invest in the sport?

A: I would say the one thing I want to give out to most people is to give it a try. Whether it is from a players' perspective [or] from a fan's perspective, come out to a game. See what the top-level players are doing and notice how exciting and fun it is.

From a player standpoint, I did not think I was going to be a frisbee player let alone a professional frisbee player. But once you start playing the sport, once you start seeing the sport, seeing how exciting it is, it just becomes addictive. Once you give it a shot, you're going to be hooked.

You can follow the AUDL on Facebook or Twitter (@theAUDL).

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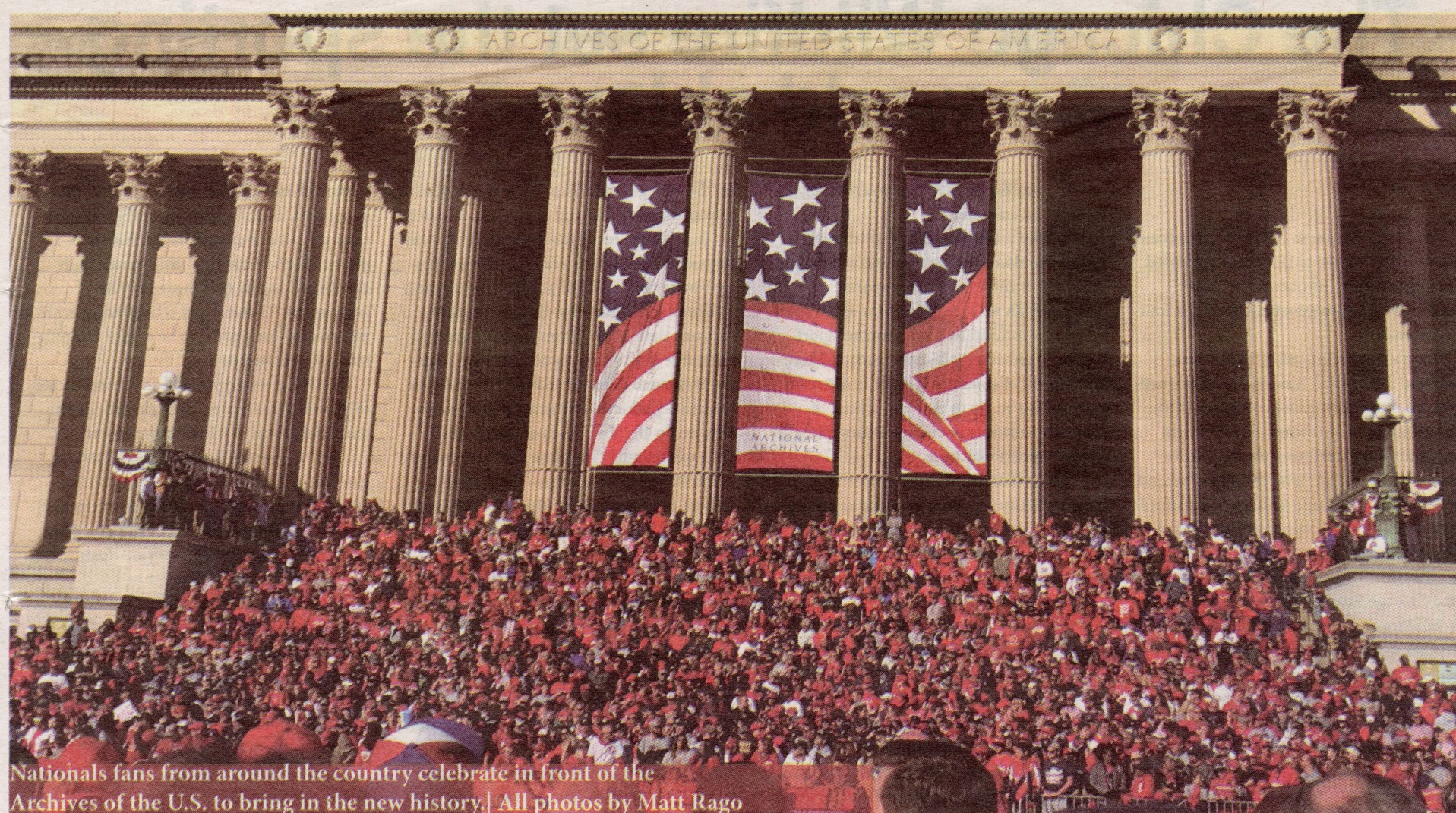
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Nationals fans from around the country celebrate in front of the Archives of the U.S. to bring in the new history. | All photos by Matt Rago

Keep Calm and Rend-on

Matthew Rago

Sports Editor

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I remember 14 years ago when Major League Baseball (MLB) announced that the Montreal Expos were relocating to Washington D.C., where they would be rebranded as the Washington Nationals.

Though I had adopted the Expos as my second team—I was a childhood fan of former Expos' slugger Vladimir Guerrero—I was excited for the move. Change was coming and I would be among those who embrace it.

My friends and I had played baseball within the Chicago Park District's semi-travel baseball league, where our juvenile over competitiveness fueled us to place every game, rivalry and decision on a pedestal.

Of particular importance was our team

name. We wanted to represent winning teams, but also jealously guarded our desire

to be unique. Seemingly every park district in the Chicagoland area had a Cubs or White

Sox team.

The Yankees and Red Sox were fairly common too.

In seventh grade, my friends and I became the first team in the Chicagoland area to claim the Nationals moniker. That's when I fully embraced the Expos' transition to the Nationals.

Fast forward to 2019 and I was fortunate enough to witness the first World Series Parade in the 50-year history of the Expos-Nationals franchise.

The parade began at the intersection of Constitution Avenue NW and 15th Street NW before embarking on a slow progression down Constitution Avenue NW. Manager Davey Martinez and general manager Mike Rizzo postured for fans, holding the World Series trophy high above their heads while exchanges pleasantries with fans stationed





near the beginning of the route.

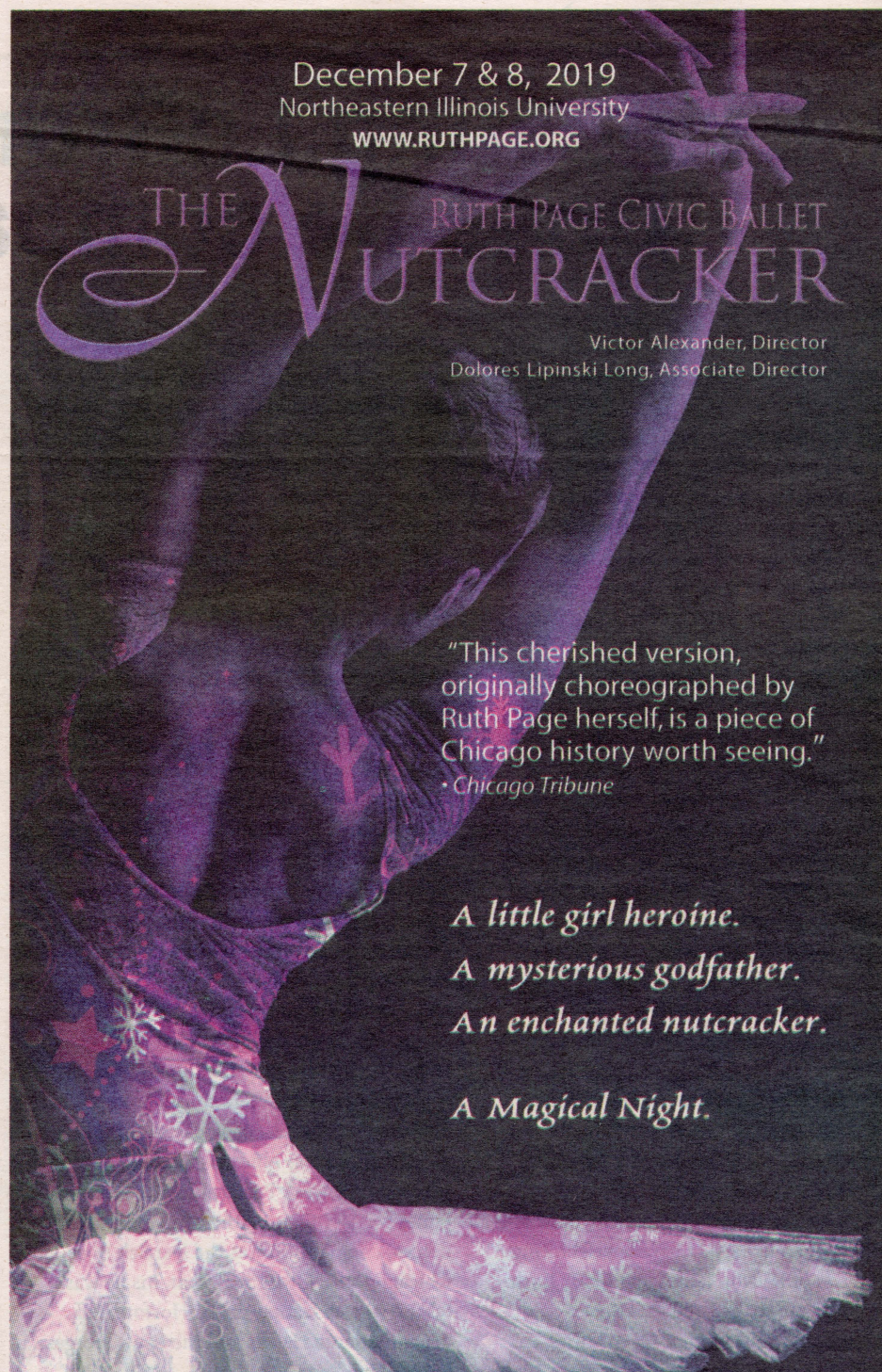
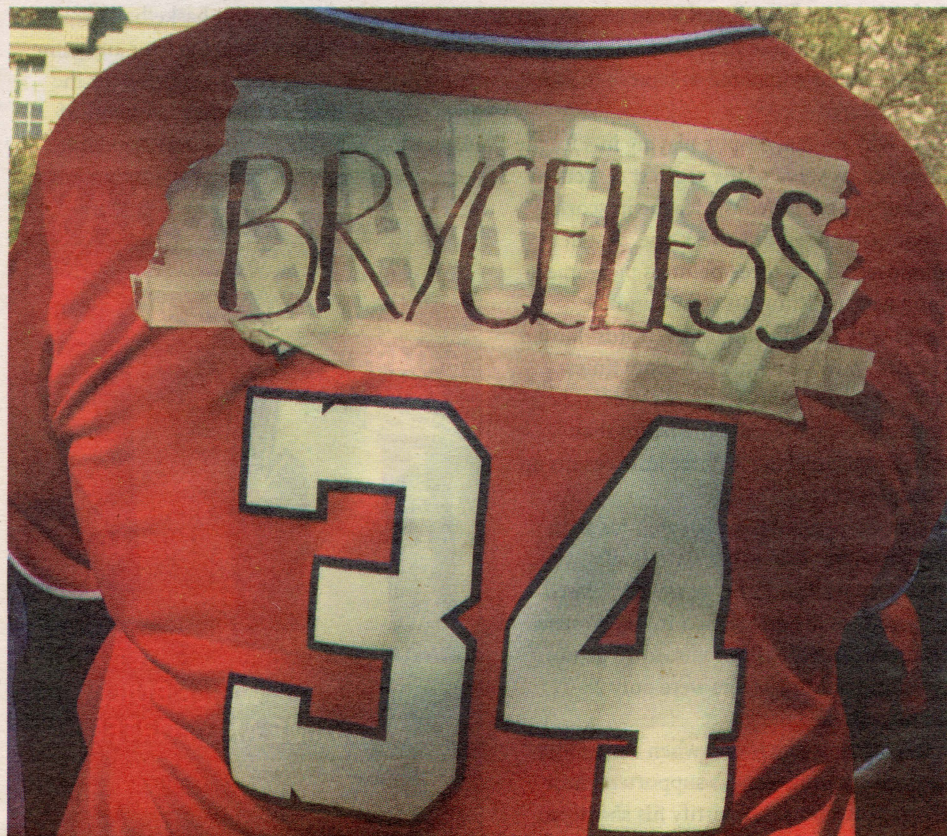
Fans flooded the streets, waving signs emblazoned with the Nationals' championship slogan, "fight finished." We gleefully exclaimed for Nationals' third baseman Anthony Rendon, starting pitcher Max Scherzer and manager Davey Martinez.

We chanted in unison as World Series Most Valuable Player Stephen Strasburh floated by, bashfully waving at us with his

trademark timidity.

Over the course of a single season, a roster that was left for dead following the departure of Bryce Harper has been transformed into a cast of heroes, persevering through adversity and ridicule to stand atop the proverbial mountaintop.

The entire ordeal was fittingly energetic for such a monumental occasion. Fans ascended trees and fences to get a glimpse



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Evaluating LeBron James's legacy: Does he compare to Jordan?

Matthew Rago

Sports Editor

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From the moment he was drafted first overall in the 2003 NBA Draft, it was apparent that LeBron James was a special talent. Anointed "King James", James elevated a desolate Cleveland Cavaliers franchise to previously unseen heights, bringing a desperately needed credibility to a city that was mercilessly mocked for its athletic failures.

For a while, it seemed feasible that James may one day surpass Michael Jordan as the greatest basketball player of all time. After leading a barren Cavs roster that featured Mo Williams, Delonte West and an aging Zydrunas Ilgauskas to the 2007 NBA Finals, it seemed the NBA was James's oyster. Then, over the next few seasons, James found himself unable to replicate the success he enjoyed in 2007. Then he quit on the Cavs.

We all remember "The Decision", the infamous sitdown interview that saw James appear on national television to blindside and embarrass his hometown franchise. "I've decided to take my talents to South Beach," said James, inviting immediate ridicule and bemusement. It was the day that James, regardless of future outcomes, conceded defeat.

In the following weeks, the city of Miami would host an unearned parade celebrating the arrival of LeBron James and Chris Bosh. They prematurely boasted that they would win "...not five, not six, not seven" titles, a goal that, with the benefit of retrospect, they fell embarrassingly short after only capturing two. You see, six championships is a Michael Jordan accomplishment and LeBron simply isn't Jordan.

The 2010 free agency period altered the landscape of the NBA. In pursuit of his first NBA Championship, LeBron James manufactured a superteam featuring three surefire Hall of Famers (Dwayne Wade being the third) smack dab in the middle of their respective primes, subsequently rigging the league in the process. "The Decision" would end up having a domino effect, ending league parity in favor of the shameless pursuit of championships.

However, James's fans still vehemently

defend his legacy, claiming that should he capture six championships, his legacy would earn him the title of the greatest of all time.

James's tenure in Miami was undeniably successful. While donning a Heat jersey, James captured two championships (2011-12, 2012-13). However, despite such lofty accomplishments, James's failures are equally as noticeable. Alongside two perennial all-stars, James lost the 2010-11 NBA Finals to a team spearheaded by Dirk Nowitzki, a 37-year-old Jason Kidd and a 15 points per game (ppg) Jason Terry. In 2013-14, the James-led Heat lost to an aging Spurs team featuring a 37-year-old Tim Duncan (15.1 ppg, 9.7 rebounds per game), a 33-year-old Tony Parker (16.7 ppg, 5.7 assists per game) and a 36-year-old Manu Ginobili (12.3 ppg, 4.3 apg). Once the Heat were no longer considered title favorites, James departed back to Cleveland to form a second superteam with Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love.

Overall, LeBron James is 3-6 in the NBA Finals. While it's impressive that he has led his teams to nine straight NBA Finals, the NBA is not a league that offers consolation prizes. You're either the best or you're not. Furthermore, LeBron was objectively a beneficiary of a historically weak Eastern Conference. While James was dominating the conference, his fiercest competition was the Derrick Rose-led Chicago Bulls. Other than that, his he was tasked with defeating the Al Horford/Jeff Teague Atlanta Hawks and the Paul George-led Indiana Pacers.

Embracing the inevitable comparisons, LeBron has vocally expressed his desire to usurp Michael Jordan as the greatest of all time (G.O.A.T). While LeBron has never been able to approach Jordan's scoring abilities, he evolved his game to incorporate his passing ability, though critics contend that LeBron's desire to reinvent himself as a facilitator alienated teammates and hurt his teams by taking the ball away from capable point guards like Kyrie Irving.

When dissecting both Jordan's and James's stats, it's really a matter of taste. By his age-34 season, Jordan averaged 31.5 ppg, 6.2 rpg, 5.3 apg and 2.3 steals per game (spg). At the same

age, James has averaged 27.2 ppg, 7.4 rpg, 7.2 apg and 1.6 spg. So if someone values scoring and defense over assisting and rebounding, they'll likely prefer Jordan's statistical output. If they value rebounding and assists, they'll gravitate toward James.

However, where Jordan truly separates himself from James is in the intangible, immeasurable qualities that propelled him the top and kept him there until he voluntarily stepped down.

Jordan's drive to win was unparalleled. In fact, his insatiable desire to not only defeat his opponents but also destroy their morale has become the stuff of legend. As ESPN's Mike Greenberg stated during a debate over who would win a one-on-one game between Jordan and James, "Michael Jordan would either win or die on the court in that game, whereas LeBron might lose and then hug him...Michael Jordan is either going to win that game or he is going to be carried off." That will to win is why Michael Jordan, who stood 6 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 195 pounds, was named to nine NBA All-Defensive First Teams compared to James's (6 foot 8, 250 pounds) five.

It's why Jordan, despite playing in a league dominated by some of the greatest centers to ever play the game, led the league in scoring 10 times compared to James's one, despite attempting 2.5 less three pointers per game.

It's why, omitting his age 38 and 39 seasons with the Washington Wizards, Jordan scored 40 or more points 108 more times and 50 or more points 19 more times while winning three more championships than James, despite playing in three less seasons up to this point.

It's why, at age 34, Jordan won his sixth NBA Championship in his sixth finals appearance while LeBron, at age 34, missed the playoffs in his first season in the Western Conference. Sure, LeBron missed 27 games last season, but the Lakers were only 28-27 with him on the floor.

The bottom line is that when facing increased scrutiny, James's supporters must manufacture excuses to justify his shortcomings. Jordan, on the other hand, placed him-

self in a position where that isn't necessary. Where James's teams have lost six times in the NBA finals (two which can't be attributed to James under any logical argument), Jordan had a 1.000% winning percentage and never let a team take the Bulls to a Game 7 in the NBA Finals.

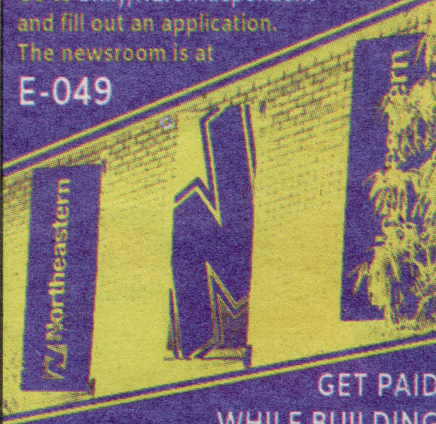
Barring a late-career resurgence, James will be remembered as a generational talent who came just short in the G.O.A.T conversation. He will be remembered as a great player whose sensitivity to criticism caused him to flee adversity and avoid any situation that didn't favor him, as evidenced by his unwillingness to participate in the NBA Slam Dunk Competition. He'll be remembered as a player who needed to handpick a superteam in order to win championships yet still failed to monopolize the NBA. Finally, perhaps unfairly considering the Celtics constructed the first modern superteam, James will be remembered as the player who ended parity once and for all in the NBA.

LeBron James is a great basketball player. He is a player capable of taking over any game he plays in. He is in the conversation for the greatest of all time. But James's moments of inspiration were Michael Jordan's standard.

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