



Magazine
Issue 727
Autumn/Winter 2020
DEFIANCE



DEFIANCE

DEFIANCE

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Thank you for opening our winter edition of Pi Magazine!

We chose our theme, *Defiance*, as a celebration of boldness and resistance in these unprecedentedly challenging times. We are fortunate that the UCL student body is so rich in tales of resilience, activism, leadership and courage. We hope that the spirit of defiance embodied in the articles of this edition will reinforce your passions and inspire new ones.

We are so grateful to everybody who has worked on this edition of the magazine: our editors, artists, photographers, designers, and interviewees. Thank you all for sharing your talent, experiences, and perspectives with us.

Stay safe, and enjoy the magazine!

Your co-EICs,
Emily & Vanessa



Photo by Johara Meyer
Front cover by Moïse Mbarga-Abega

NEWS

4-5 *Under the Yellow Umbrella* by Ashira Kwan

6-7 *The Revolutionary Road to Sistah Zine* by Zsofia Lazar

8-9 *In the News* by Toong Ping Rui, Zsofia Lazar, Manuela Sadik, Isabel Jackson

FEATURES

10-11 *The Movement that Defined a Generation: UCL Occupation 10 Years On* by Colin Lee

12-13 *Behind the Scenes: UCL Staff Reflect on Campus Reopening* by Sophie Capello

14-15 *Fighting Contemporary Antisemitism through Education* by Evie Robinson

16-17 "UCL Students Forging Change" by Asyia Iftikhar

OPINION

18-19 *Becoming the main character...a lesson from my father* by Irene Mavrantoni

20-21 *Defying the Education System* by Mumena Choudhury

22-23 *5 People, 1 Question* by opinion editors

CULTURE

24-25 *A Taste of Resilience in London Chinatown* by Vivianne Zhang Wei

26-27 *Words will set us free: poetry in a time of crisis* by Miyin Delgado

28-29 *Our Recommendations* by Deepali Foster, Evie Robinson, Daria Mosolova, Gabriel Roberts, Olivia Hall

LIFESTYLE

30-31 *UCL Trendsetters* by Ellie-Jean Royden, Stephanie Frank

32-33 *Online activism: unlimited audience or too easy to dismiss?* by Zsofia Bekker

34-35 *Lifestyle backpages* by Anna Sarasiti, Shayeza Walid

SCIENCE

36-37 *The Fight for Justice in the Datafied World* by Trisevgeni Papakonstantinou

38-39 *The Amygdala Hijack* by Palin Supradit

40-41 *Science Roundup* by Michal Gricuk, Lilly Tozer, Hannah Vaughan, Bethany Evans



Under the Yellow Umbrella:

UCL Students & the Hong Kong Protests

Written by Ashira Kwan
Photography by Marcus Chow

When a Hong Kong policeman shot the first rubber bullet on June 12 of last year, it exposed Hong Kongers' long-existing discontentment. The conflict started as the government introduced a bill that would allow the extradition of criminals to mainland China. The bill sparked months on end of mass public protests, sometimes featuring highly-organised guerrilla-style tactics, across Hong Kong. Rounds of tear gas, rubber bullets and foam bullets were fired at the largely peaceful protestors, which quickly escalated the demonstrations as protesters devised new ways of penetrating police lines by throwing petrol bombs or obstructing traffic with sundries and mills barriers. In just a few months, people learned to grow accustomed to a faint but constant stinging smell on the street.

Many students at UCL were deeply impacted by the situation in Hong Kong, and many of them expressed support for the protesters or found ways to help them from abroad. Last year, UCL student groups such as HKPASS and UCL Solidarity with Hong Kong organised gatherings and activities to support those in Hong Kong. "There is always a reason for defiance", says Hilary Lai, a UCL student from Hong Kong. "When the government is accountable to one person and not the 7.4 million people living in the city, there really isn't much room for diversity."

Yet, the freedom to speak up against the government—as some students at UCL are able to do—is quickly fading in education institutions in Hong Kong. Last month, a primary school teacher's license was revoked for discussing freedom of speech and independence in class. Similarly, pro-democracy message boards—'Lennon Walls', as they have come to be known—were torn down late at night at several universities in Hong Kong. This increased censorship was made evident when publishers were told to remove the concept of the separation of powers from Hong Kong's Liberal Studies textbook. The Chief Executive Carrie Lam later declared that Hong Kong never had a 'Separation of Powers' and fully supported



the Education Bureau for making such a move.

The National Security Law bypassed the local legislature and was inserted into the city's mini constitution—the Basic Law—on July 1 this year. Despite being incredibly vague on the criminalised terms "secession, subversion, terrorist activities and collusion with foreign countries", the draconian law carries a maximum life sentence that has deterred many from taking to the streets once more. Under the law, a newly established Committee for Safeguarding National Security, headed by Lam, grants the police extra power to conduct searches without warrant and requires internet providers to hand over information of people suspected of breaking the law. There is a looming fear that these laws will be used as an excuse to arrest political dissidents in the near future.

The future of Hong Kong's democracy seems grim. The protestors have long laid out the five demands, including universal suffrage and an independent inquiry committee to investigate the truth. Yet, Lam continues to evade such demands. One year ago, over a million people crowded the streets of Hong Kong to make their voices heard; one year later, the idea of recreating such a scene appears impossible. Citizens of Hong Kong are increasingly flocking to other countries in hopes of a less oppressed life. The UK has already laid out a special visa for BNO (British National Overseas) passport holders in Hong Kong and their families to ease migration into the UK.

For many, the act of defiance is not an attempt to gain Hong Kong's independence, but rather to preserve the rights and freedoms stipulated by the Sino-British Joint Declaration and work out a sustainable way to

move forward. UCL student Matthew Lam hopes for the possibility of both sides becoming involved in a rational conversation about working together instead of against each other. He believes the key is to cultivate a relationship of equal footing with China rather than promoting China's 'ownership' of Hong Kong. However, he understands how frustration at the inability or unwillingness to hold this conversation time and time again leads to defiance and violence on the protesters' side.

"hope still exists and it continues to fuel defiance in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world."

In light of the new National Security Law, protesters have looked to innovate new ways to resist. Many have taken to social media to voice their opinions, as well as being meticulous about choosing 'yellow' (pro-democracy) restaurants to eat out at. Some are occasionally surrounded by a number of police as they sit silently in parks reading the pro-democracy newspaper. It is unclear how this will end as the party tightens its grip on Hong Kong. One thing is clear, however: hope still exists and it continues to fuel defiance in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world.

The Revolutionary Road to Sistah Zine

Written by Zsofia Lazar
Artwork by Katie Sperring



It's true, the force and ideas behind Sistah Zine, a platform to 'amplify the voices and stories of women and non-binary people striving for liberation,' pose a revolution in the media. Born of the UCL Justice Collective, the Zine is an innovative digital presence challenging conventional views and issues around women and non-binary individuals. It is composed currently of ten UCL students and was originally conceived as a fundraising instrument for Sistah Space, a community-based non-profit initiative established in 2015 to bridge the gap in domestic abuse services for African heritage women and girls'. The central theme of the first issue is 'liberation,' encapsulating the ethos of the Sistah Space campaign and organisation, which inspired the Zine.

As of 23 July 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sistah Space were forced to suspend their services, and prepared to be evicted from their premises by Hackney Council. The UCL Justice Collective took up their cause, campaigning to extend their lease and prevent eviction, to preserve this essential safe space. Petitions were organised, T-shirts were sold to raise money for the cause, and the idea of a magazine as an additional fundraising instrument emerged. 100 percent of the profits from the Sistah zine are to be channelled to the Hackney-based organisation.

Currently, Sistah Space is out of immediate danger; after their petition gained 20,000 signatures and protests were held in front of the Town Hall, Hackney council agreed to temporarily extend the lease on their headquarters until January 17 2021. Both parties have agreed to 'move on,' and the council has agreed to cover a predefined portion of removal costs when the time comes. This victory will allow the organisation to continue its vital work until they find a new location.

Sistah Zine was inspired by, and will carry on, the organisation's ideals. According to Katie Sperring, an organiser of the zine and UCL student, the magazine will cover essentially everything, from big topics like politics, climate justice, and arts and culture, to prominent and engaging areas like identity and movement, abolition and reimagination, knowledge and education, and cultural commentary. The topic of politics is by far the widest, featuring interviews from figures like Maya Goodfellow, Minna Salami and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan. It tackles issues of racism and Islamophobia, self-education, and identity, drawing inspiration from the abolitionist, anti-capitalist views that the magazine was founded on.

The zine's section dedicated to Sex and Reproductive Health speaks to the great breadth



of discussion and thought that is addressed in Sistah Zine. The recent challenges to women's rights, specifically their right to an abortion, in both the USA and in Poland showcases the pertinence of this issue, yet this topic is often neglected by the media. Those at Sistah Zine feel that 'reproductive justice' is central to women's liberation, so the zine provides a platform to discuss issues about women's health 'with dignity and in safety,' including features on organisations like PeriodLink.

When faced with the question of achieving Sistah Zine's aims, Katie rose to the challenge, emphasising the importance of education and understanding our obligation to read and reflect on the ideas in the zine. The central tenet of the magazine is to educate; building on our capacity for change as a society, it encourages discussion

“Where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each recognise our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives.” - Audre Lorde

on topics of women's liberation for previously stifled voices.

What of the future of the zine? The first issue goes live on the 12th of November in a digital format. Katie explained that this was to cut printing costs, so that all profits can be channelled to support Sistah Space in its work. Depending on the success of the first issue, there are much-anticipated plans to create a website for rolling submissions. She also stressed that the zine is continually looking for more organisations to fundraise for as they expand; they hope to establish many more connections with worthy causes.

The words of Audre Lorde, Katie says, encapsulate the driving force of Sistah Zine: “Where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each recognise our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. That we not hide behind the mockery of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own.”

These words, more relevant than ever, cut to the heart of the matter—that Sistah Zine, like the Sistah Space campaign that inspired it, is a place for women to be lifted up, liberated and, above all, heard.

Belarusian protests

Written by Zsofia Lazar

Ongoing demonstrations in Belarus to protest the reelection of President Lukashenko are only escalating despite the media lull, after the result which is widely believed to have been rigged in the incumbent President's favour. Workers and students in the country heeded calls for nationwide strikes from opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, intending to force a resignation from the President.

The government insists key enterprises are continuing to function as normal, though protests have taken place in several state-owned factories. The EU sanctions put in place against Belarus and President Lukashenko have also not made much difference thus far in the treatment of protestors, whom security guards have used water cannons, stun grenades and rubber bullets to subdue. At least 20,000 were detained in August and September, thousands in October and over 1,000 have already been detained in November - at least half remain in custody.

Media restrictions have meant that the full scale of the protests is unclear, though security forces blocked roads in central Minsk, and according to Russian news agencies, stun grenades and rubber bullets have been used by security forces to subdue protesters.



Artwork by Flynn Klein

Activist fined for removing “stolen” African artefact from French museum

Written by Ping Rui Toong

Emery Mwazulu Diyabanza, a Congolese activist, has been fined €1000 for seizing an African artefact from a museum in Paris. In June, Diyabanza and four other activists were apprehended by museum guards as they attempted to remove a Chadian funeral staff from the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, in a protest against the exhibition of “stolen” African artworks in French museums. Diyabanza explained their actions in a livestream during the protest.

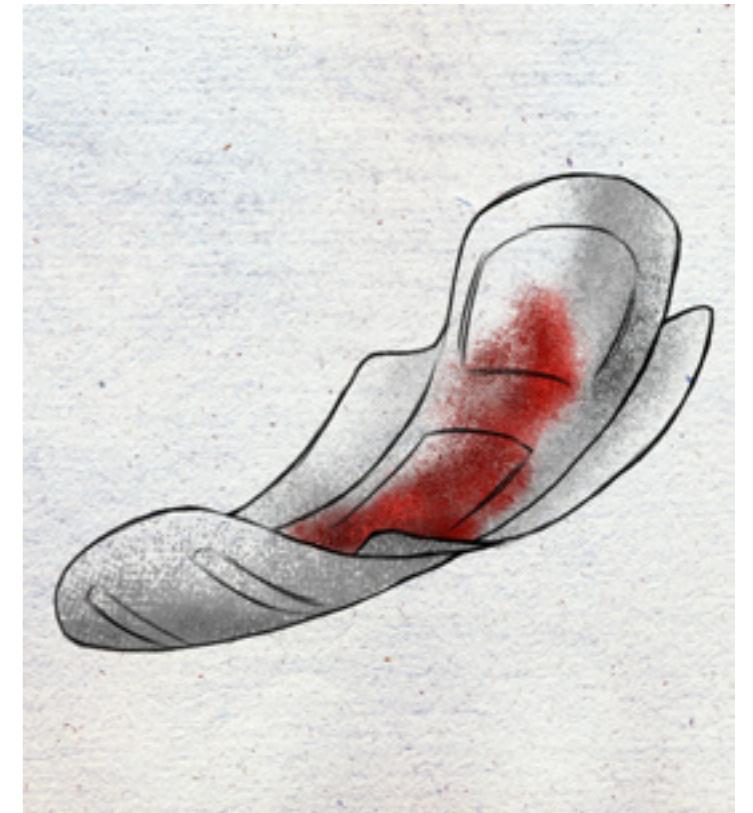
Diyabanza and three other activists have been convicted of aggravated theft and received fines of €1000, €750 and €250, although they could have faced a potential fine of €150,000 and 10 years in prison for their actions.

Although Diyabanza maintains that they never intended to steal the object, he has stated that they would “continue as long as the injustice of pillaging Africa has not been remedied.” A report commissioned by Macron in 2018 found that French museums owned around 90,000 African artefacts, revealing the scale of the colonial past of some of France's prized cultural artefacts.

Period Pains: The Fight Against Indian Menstruation Taboos

Written by Manuela Sadik

Menstruation taboos in India have impeded the lives of women for many years; nearly 23 million girls drop out of school each year due to a lack of changing facilities. A further 88% of women use old fabric, ash and sand instead of sanitary pads. As a result of the taboo, girls are left with little-to-no education on menstrual hygiene, with 71% of girls reportedly experiencing fear upon getting their first period. Yet, from Niraj Gera's Sacred Stains photo series, to the documentary *Period. End of Sentence*, activists are fighting to end this stigma. In *Sacred Stains*, Gera depicts the harrowing menstrual-related experiences of the women he interviewed. *Period. End of Sentence* tells the story of women resisting the stigma as they work to create their own affordable sanitary pad line. With awareness steadily growing, and more activists popping up across the globe, the end of this taboo may be in sight.



Voter suppression in the US election

Written by Isabel Jackson

Despite claiming to be the world's leading democracy, voting is not a constitutional right in the US, leading to centuries of discriminatory practices. While the 1965 Voting Rights Act ensured citizens' right to vote regardless of race or sex, in 2013 the act was deemed unnecessary by the *Shelby County v Holder* ruling. There have been 1,688 polling place closures between 2012 and 2018 in urban, Democrat-leaning areas. Voter ID laws are common in Republican led states, despite being proven to discriminate against marginalised groups who are less likely to own government issued photo-ID.

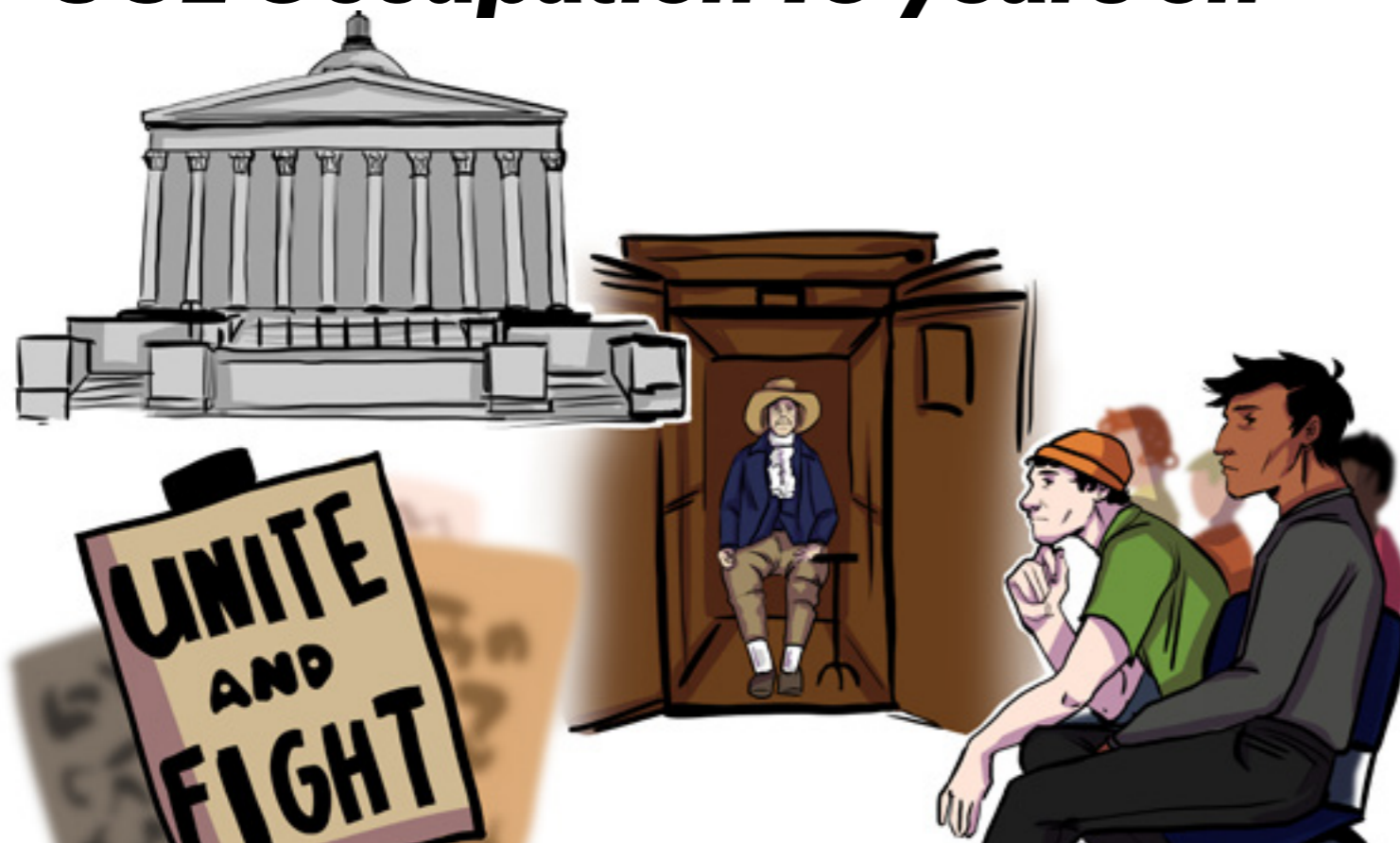
These disenfranchised minority groups tend to be Democrat voters, leading Donald Trump to claim that widening voter participation would mean ‘you'd never have a Republican elected in this country again.’ Trump falsely claimed that mail-in voting would lead to fraud and called to ‘stop the count’ in battleground states, undermining democratic process. The 2020 election has seen a record voter turnout of over 67% of the population and a win for the Democrats, but there remains a section of the US population without a voice.



In The News...

Our writers select stories from around the world that have caught their attention this term

The movement that defined a generation: UCL Occupation 10 years on



Written by Colin Lee

Artwork by Flynn Klein

2020 can be described by a number of usually negative adjectives, yet it has also pulled out passions that students didn't even know about. Remember the adrenaline rush while trying to occupy a university study space, motivated by actual desires to learn and shape the future? Surprisingly, the situation wasn't too different 10 years ago. Students occupied university buildings in order to shape their future themselves. Across the country, students were leading a new social movement.

Around a decade ago, UCL students, alongside a coalition of other student bodies around the UK, rallied against the government scheme to cut the state grant for universities and increase tuition fees.

On 12 October 2010, the Browne Review, a newly-published report on higher education in England, suggested removing the cap of £3,290 on tuition fees (yes, domestic and EU students only paid only around £3,000. International students paid less too.

Unbelievable.). The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government didn't remove the cap, but increased it to £9,000.

Student response was quick. The first major protest erupted on 10 November in London under the name "Fund Our Future: Stop Education Cuts" or "Demo 2010". Organised by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the University and College Union (UCU), about 50,000 students gathered from all corners of the UK to participate.

On 24 November, around 150 UCL students occupied the Jeremy Bentham Room in protest. Six days later, a second group occupied the Slade School of Fine Art. The UCL sit-in, dubbed "UCL Occupation", was one of the first of the many university occupations that sprouted as this student-led grassroots movement spread across the country.

On 12 December, UCL Union (UCLU, now UCL Student's Union) passed a motion supporting UCL Occupation.

UCL Occupation wasn't solely supported by students. Singer Emmy the Great performed for the students lodging in. Nick Doody and Matt Kirshen did free standup comedy gigs. Noam Chomsky sent his regards from the US.

UCL students, ideologically diverse and well-dressed, didn't inflict damage to the campus property. Instead, the occupants displayed posters with slogans like "Unite and Fight", sang carols, and accepted Oxford's challenge to a dance-off, as Jeremy Bentham gazed at the students from his glass case. From student records, it sounded like a miniature version of Woodstock, or as writer Michael Chessum put it, a 1968 movement for UK students.

Eight days after the sit-in, UCL administration stated that the occupation was "unlawful" and threatened legal action, despite thanking the students for the peaceful protest and acknowledging their anger. The students refused to back down.

Aaron Porter, the president of NUS at the time, recalls his engagement with UCL demonstrators as memorable, especially the "discussions with the team at UCLU in the run up to, and after the demonstration." His brother studied at UCL, as well as many of his friends, hence he felt "a particularly personal connection to the university." He even visited UCL, where he famously apologised for the lack of NUS support for student activism.

UCL Occupation used new and innovative methods to promote its initiatives. Jessica Riches, a Pi alumna (though she notes the Pi team "were not supportive of the occupations") and the primary operator of @ucloccupation, a 5,000-follower-strong Twitter account, was one of the students behind its success. Riches, nicknamed "Twitter guru" by The Guardian, was part of the media working group of UCL Occupation. This was still the early days of Twitter, and utilising it helped students to get their voices heard. In fact, Riches was one of the students who called for a vote of no confidence in Porter's presidency on Twitter, which factored into his visit to UCL.

She was surprised by the attention, saying, "we didn't really expect that the Twitter account would take off in the way it did." Well, it did, and many media outlets including the BBC lined up to report on a piece of the action.

The movement that defined a generation

In the end, the student movement wasn't able to prevent the tuition fee raise. The parliament passed

the government proposal on 9 December. A day after the vote, student occupants vacated university buildings.

Despite the disappointment, many continued to persist. Second and third occupations followed. The third occupation in March successfully shut down the university. This final stand eventually ended with an injunction from UCL.

In 2011, UCL student Sam Gaus, who was part of the occupation tech team, co-founded Sukey, an app designed to improve communication between participants during protests. Like Gaus, students continued to pursue activism and became prominent influencers, including Ash Sarker, now a political activist with almost 300,000 followers on Twitter, and Riches, who was elected community officer for UCLU in her third year. She is now a social media strategist and screenwriter. Riches said the movement "was about much more than tuition fees", and ultimately helped to define a generation of youths.

"I am still incredibly grateful to everyone I met [at the UCL occupation], as I believe that I got a more well-rounded and vital education in three weeks in that room than I did in three years of academic teaching in the English department," said Riches.

Despite the consequences faced by some participants, many nonetheless stand by their actions. Riches called UCL's counteraction "punitive", and emphasised that she has no regrets. "Even if the consequences were different, I can't see that I would have made a different choice with a time machine. Everything we did was driven by a desire to make change and fight injustice, and I am glad that the protests in 2010 made me the kind of person who sees the importance of doing that."

A decade after Demo 2010, tuition fees are once again on the minds of many students. The coronavirus pandemic has forced universities to rely on online teaching methods, and some students are dissatisfied. Discussions about fee reduction or refund are gaining momentum.

Not many students today recall the boldness of their alumni from a decade ago. Nevertheless, the call for changes in tuitions is gaining traction. Riches urged students to "use this moment to organise, and try to turn it into a collective power 'on campus' and across the UK." She acknowledged the reduced circumstances caused by the pandemic, adding, "it's difficult without being able to meet in person – but there are still ways to work together."

Behind the Scenes: UCL staff reflect on campus reopening

Written by Sophie Capello

Universities have been the topic of much discussion regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, with opinion divided on how best to balance combating the pandemic and caring for students. With the end of summer came the question of reopening university campuses. Should students be invited back to campus? How should teaching be delivered? How can social distancing be enforced? What will be the impact on academics? On mental health? But another area of crucial concern in reopening universities received less attention: the health and safety of the people who



Photo by Sophie Capello

make these campuses run. Security officers, student residence advisors, janitorial staff and many others make daily sacrifices, not only to enable students to return to campus, but to ensure their safety and wellbeing while here.

Kenrick Mason, a security guard in the front lodge of the main quad, has been working for UCL for over five years. Because of the nature of the job, social distancing is difficult to implement when responding to incidents. “We have to come out in every situation regardless [of the pandemic],” Mason says. He also highlights that UCL staff now have additional responsibilities: “Security has a responsibility to police the changes happening around campus,” including the use of face masks, a one-way zoned system, and maintaining distancing requirements. “It’s challenging because we have to do a lot more than we did in the past... Enforcing the rules, following the rules ourselves in some respects also.” That said, Mason has been pleased with the UCL community’s response, emphasising that the vast majority of UCL students and staff take the changes seriously.

Despite compliance and adequate PPE, there is still a sizable risk in Mason’s duties. “I do not feel entirely safe, not only because I have to be out and about at my job, but also getting to my job,” Mason says. “Regardless of the security they put in place, there is always that risk factor.” While students were given the option to study from home or in London, UCL’s decision to reopen campus leaves its custodial staff with the choice of accepting this risk or losing out on the income. “If you take the pandemic into consideration, opening [campus] wasn’t a good idea,” suggests Mason. “With people out and about, the risk factors are always there...Schools, colleges, unis—because people have to come to those places, there’s always a risk.” This echoes the sentiments of the University and College Union, who have also expressed disappointment at the lack of mandatory

testing for UCL students in halls.

Jack Sheppard, a fourth year medical student, is a Student Resident Advisor (SRA) at St. Pancras Way halls. The role of SRAs used to be disciplinary, but within the past year it has become more pastoral. The pandemic has changed the nature of the work in meaningful ways. For example, the SRAs now help students with the isolation outreach program. “UCL is keeping a record for who has tested positive and who is in isolation,” explains Sheppard. “We call and reach out to those in isolation to check on them.” Lots of students have had to self-isolate in accommodation owing to the flat arrangements. In terms of physical safety, Sheppard feels safe. “I think my perspective is a bit warped from being in hospital [for his degree] and seeing lots of patients with COVID there,” he suggests. He also notes that shifting the SRA duties to a virtual platform—something custodial and security staff are largely unable to do—helps. From a mental health standpoint, the role is taxing. But this was always the case, and is how the competitive SRA job is advertised by UCL. “You have to invest a lot emotionally, and have to go into it with that in mind,” says Sheppard.

Keeping everyone in the halls safe depends largely on student behavior, but keeping students mentally healthy often involves interacting with friends and potentially spreading the virus. “Safety is very dependent on students themselves. But you can’t really blame students [for unsafe choices],” says Sheppard. “They’re young, eighteen, just moved away from home.” Plus, the second

lockdown coming at an already difficult time—winter—doesn’t help. “You have to factor in the time of year; I think it’s going to be really difficult. Because the normal things you’d advise, like going out to see your friends, aren’t sensible.” However, Jack notes that his role as an SRA is to refer students to the appropriate places to access mental health support provided by UCL, in addition to offering some guidance himself. As difficult as things may be for students, the role they play in keeping their communities safe—including their halls staff, who spend all day disinfecting shared surfaces, wiping down door knobs and handrails every two hours, and looking out for students—should be a priority. “The staff are working incredibly hard in difficult circumstances and the students must be aware of these circumstances,” says Sheppard, though he is unsure of how much attention students pay to this in their daily lives. The burden of safety has largely fallen on staff, both in halls and on UCL’s main campus. Sheppard praises the security staff, who “have been great at making sure students follow the one way system,” emphasising “It’s that kind of vigilance that’s really needed.”

While national attention has been turned towards the pandemic’s impact on students, the implications of an open campus for university staff must also be considered. Many of these employees do not have the luxury of choice when it comes to safety at work. And the sacrifices made by UCL staff are what enable so many students to safely stay in London through these strange and dark times.

“You have to invest a lot emotionally, and have to go into it with that in mind”



Jack Sheppard

FIGHTING CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM THROUGH EDUCATION:

MY WORK WITH THE HOLOCAUST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Written by Evie Robinson

Antisemitism is a strand of racism that continually prevails in our society, despite the world soon marking the 76th year since the liberation of Nazi concentration camps at the end of the Holocaust. It is racism that is ever-present but often overlooked. As a student in London and someone who is involved in Holocaust Education, I have sadly come across anti-Semitism as an all-too-regular occurrence; graffiti, verbal discrimination and sometimes even physical violence. It is for this reason that the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust is so important to me; ensuring the memory of the Holocaust is honoured and committing to educating people about the events of the past to put an end to them in the present. In the run-up to Holocaust Memorial Day 2021 (27 January), of which the theme is 'being the light in the darkness', I've found myself considering the importance of my role as a HET ambassador even more; remembrance and commemoration are key facets of Holocaust Education.

I first got involved with the trust as part of their Lessons from Auschwitz Project in 2019, through which I got to embark on a visit to Poland. I'd always been interested in the Holocaust; it is one of the darkest chapters of European history and something that has both shocked and fascinated me ever since I have been old enough to be aware of it. I knew that in order to begin to understand the magnitude of the Holocaust, I needed to stand in the place where it happened. I don't think anything could have prepared me for it. Working with the trust for this visit was undoubtedly what made it so unforgettable; the support they provided for us made me truly process the gravitas of what I was experiencing. Visiting Auschwitz was incredibly overwhelming, and I had to frequently pause and

take in what I was seeing. On arrival back into the UK and my return to college the following day, I was adamant that this would not be the last time I worked with HET.

Volunteering as a HET ambassador involves a multitude of responsibilities, including taking part in educational events, listening to guest speakers and survivor testimony, and most importantly representing the trust and ensuring that we recognise and promote the importance of Holocaust education in our daily lives. Meeting fellow ambassadors who are like-minded and have the same passion for and commitment to Holocaust education is incredibly rewarding. I spoke to ambassadors Amelia Chesworth, Chloe Milton and Joseph Shekelton also took part in the Lessons from Auschwitz project across different UK locations, which inspired them to work with HET. Amelia explains the importance of our role as ambassadors; "we aim to amplify issues facing the Jewish community. We are in a unique position to do so, as all Ambassadors have been privileged with the experience of bearing witness to the horrific events of the Holocaust." Amelia and Joseph have recently been working with their local Labour Councillors and the Mayor of Trafford to raise awareness of localised antisemitism within their consistency, emphasising the importance of Holocaust education. Chloe has since become a Regional Ambassador for the trust, after attending recent events such as the Lord Meryln-Rees memorial event at the Houses of Parliament, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps earlier this year. I also attended this event, and found it incredibly inspiring to hear from key figures within HET, such as CEO Karen Pollock and

Zigi Shipper,
Portrait by Emilia Stimpson



historian Sir Anthony Beevor.

Hearing the testimony of Holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper as part of my Lessons from Auschwitz project was one of the most influential experiences of my life. What I admired so much about Zigi was his attitude; after experiencing the trauma of being imprisoned in Auschwitz, his one simple message to a room full of young people was to spread love and work to eliminate hate amongst us. Zigi's words remind us of the chilling fact that what evolved into mass brutality and genocide started out as hatred by a powerful few. We live in a world where there is still so much hatred and cruelty, and many acts of antisemitism still occur.

As I reflect, I am reminded of the sad fact that I am part of the last generation to hear the testimony of Holocaust survivors; it is up to us to ensure their memory and message lives on. Both Joseph Shekelton and Chloe Milton emphasise the vital role that survivors play in contemporary Holocaust education; Joseph's words, "now more than ever, we must listen", really stuck with me and are something I wholeheartedly echo. Chloe describes witnessing survivors' stories as "an honour", and spoke of her desire to do all that she can to "keep the memory of those lost alive".

In an age where social media is an integral part of most people's lives, antisemitism is sadly rife on many online platforms, which often fail to remove such content. Chloe speaks of taking action against antisemitism online, reporting comments and posts, and emailing her local MP to help raise the issue on a larger level. Facebook has recently updated its hate speech policies to explicitly ban content involved in Holocaust denial; this is a step in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go with fighting antisemitism online.

Holocaust education is incredibly important, especially in today's society when the horrific events of the Holocaust are being increasingly forgotten. Though the Holocaust is taught on the UK school curriculum, I found myself unsatisfied with the little time I spent studying it and had a desire to research further. Amelia speaks of the vital nature of our work as ambassadors in going beyond the standard education system, and raising awareness of the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust, "engaging those who would have possibly remained indifferent". We must honour the stories of both living survivors and those we have lost, to ensure this dark chapter of our history is forever remembered and prevented.

UCL STUDENTS FORGING CHANGE



Toyin Agbetu is a PhD Student in Social and Cultural Anthropology, an activist and community educator on racism. He was recently a panelist at the UCL Black Lives Matter Town Hall.

What reform has UCL been making in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and why?

There's an issue I have with institutions like UCL getting caught up in this moment as opposed to recognising the movement. To its credit, there are staff that support decolonising efforts and movements led by students. However, beyond headline acts and diversity figures, removing structural barriers has been torturously slow. The real test for UCL is not what it has done in the last few months but, when we look a year later, have those changes made a difference?

What changes does UCL need to make most urgently?

When it comes to elitism in the way that staff are retained and organisational culture plays out, that's very problematic. There needs to be a purge of the gatekeepers that maintain this sense of elitism; and more transparency from UCL on their decision-making processes, beyond salary pay and diversity audits. At its core, UCL is good at recruiting fresh talent, but not when it comes to developing it. UCL can recruit, it just doesn't seem very good at promoting.

Can we look forward to a better future at UCL?

Even when UCL as an institution is letting students and staff down, there will be people inside UCL fighting against them. Are they making successful and long-lasting changes? We need symbolic justice, such as renaming buildings, but we also need structural justice. It's not just changing a name, but changing the decision-making process that enabled the name to be there in the first place.

While UCL enjoys the glamour of league tables, students from various disciplines and years are holding the university to account. Whether tackling institutional racism, elitism or climate change, here are three students pushing UCL to change for the better.

Interviews conducted by Asyia Iftikhar



Kezia Stewart is the founder of the UCL Behavioural Innovations Team and co-convenor of the UCL Environment and Behaviour network

What sustainability project have you most recently worked on with UCL?

Sustainability is an area with a lot of interest in both behavioural science and among students at UCL. The Department of Sustainability was keen to work with us and open to ideas from students. The project itself was to feed data onto screens across campus about energy levels in the building. As the figures change day by day, we would hope it encourages students to live more sustainably. This would come alongside other efforts, such as switching to an eco energy source.

What more can the Sustainability department be doing?

The Sustainability Department does a really good job and has really interested people, but they've got a lot of barriers. There are different stakeholders and parties involved, from cafe owners to students. UCL is very devolved as a university, which can hinder them.

I think there is also an intention-behaviour gap: people intend to live sustainably, but the question of whether they actually behave sustainably is the area that we need to focus on.

Is there a bright future for sustainability at UCL?

Overall they've done a lot of good already. They're really open, and not too proud to ask for help. Going forward, if different disciplines at UCL like Architecture or IT, to name a few, could work with the sustainability department, a lot more work could be done.



Tania Tang is co-founder of the 93% Club at UCL

What is the 93% Club and why did you establish it?

The UCL 93% Club was founded in June 2020. It represents the 93% of students across the UK who attend state schools. 68% of UCL students attended state school, and this gap is still one of the smaller ones in the country. This also carries into careers. The privately educated 7% make up 51% of the media industry, 74% of judges and the list goes on. Private school students tend to get more resources and opportunities. It seemed like a great society to bring to UCL since there didn't seem to be anything like it to support state school students. The UCL branch is part of a wider movement: there are over 20 clubs across UK universities and counting, so there is a nationwide network of events and opportunities.

What is the 93% club working on right now?

We're currently building a mentorship programme to support state school sixth formers who want to study at UCL. We're in partnership with a non-profit organisation and hoping to launch that soon. Beyond this, we have a sign-up sheet on our social media for members to put in the careers they're interested in with the hope that we can find partners and sponsors who can support them.

What challenges do students from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds typically face at UCL?

At UCL the situation is especially nuanced. London is an expensive city. Some students may be able to spare the time to get a part-time job more than others. There will be people who can afford to not work, using that time to study and socialise. Both types of students are equally talented, but discrepancies in grades and performance start to arise. This is just one example of the many challenges that students can face.

What does the future look like for UCL and the 93% club?

We're hoping to reach out to UCL, to work with them and receive support for our projects. It's also important to engage students from all backgrounds to get behind this cause and put on a united front.

Written by Irene Mavrantonaki
 Artwork by Rachel Szpara

Becoming

How an unfortunate event

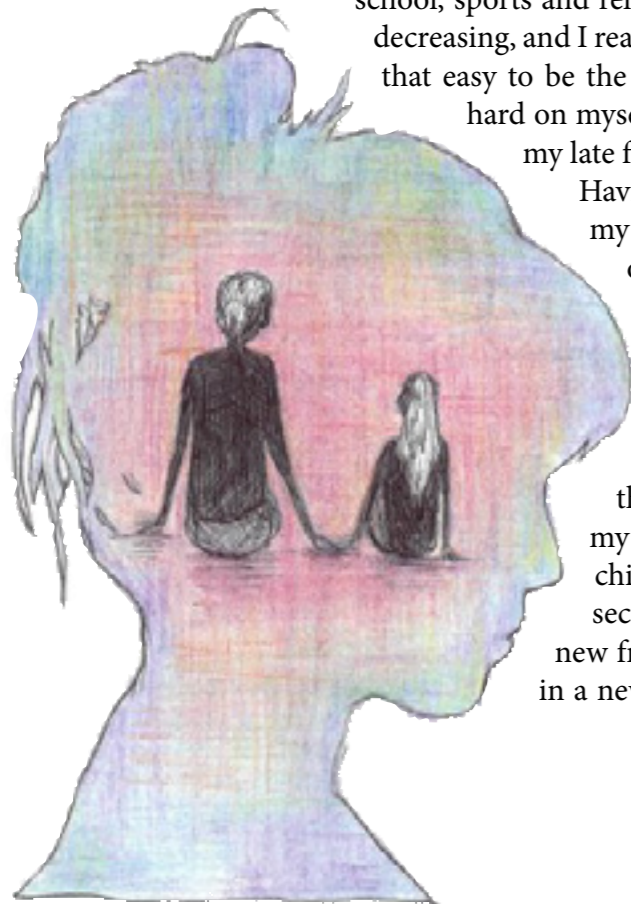
Since day one I remember my father telling me “you need to be the best in what you do”. Needless to say, such a saying can be really tough for a 7 year old child. But it turned out to be one of those phrases that has stuck with me and shaped my life so far.

I lost my dad at the age of 10. He was diagnosed with a sarcoma on the leg. The last two years that I had him in my life, he would travel all around the world for treatments for this then-rare type of cancer. When we thought that he was cured, having completed chemotherapies and had part of his leg removed, the cancer spread to his lung. We finally lost him to metastatic lung cancer. I really do not know how, but there was not even one time that I remember seeing him down. We never saw the pain that he went through. He was always happy for ‘his girls’: my mum, my sister and I. When he passed away, my life turned upside down.

Up to then I felt that I had to be the best at everything I did, from getting good grades to winning in sports competitions. I always felt like the ‘main character’ in my life, placed on a pedestal by my father. I thought that to do well for him I would have to keep being the best at everything I did.

When he passed away, I stopped putting effort into school, sports and relationships. My progress started decreasing, and I realised that without drive it wasn’t that easy to be the “best” after all. I started being hard on myself, worried I was disappointing my late father.

Having gotten used to idealizing my life until then, my 10-year-old’s brain would ask why this happened to me. Why did I have to be the unfortunate one? Why couldn’t I just have a normal life like all of my classmates? Why couldn’t I be the one growing up with both of my parents there for me? As a young child on the brink of moving to secondary school, having to make new friends and become comfortable in a new environment, I started losing



the main character...

can shape you into

a lesson from

the best version

myself. I would compare my life to others, thinking that life was unfair to me. I felt that the loss of my father meant losing a part of myself.

After a while, I started to realise that I was surrounded by people who felt that life was unfair to them too. Everyone has problems they’re trying to escape, everyone compares themselves to others. Unfortunate events happen to everyone, but that should not be an obstacle that keeps us from being happy and thinking of life as something great.

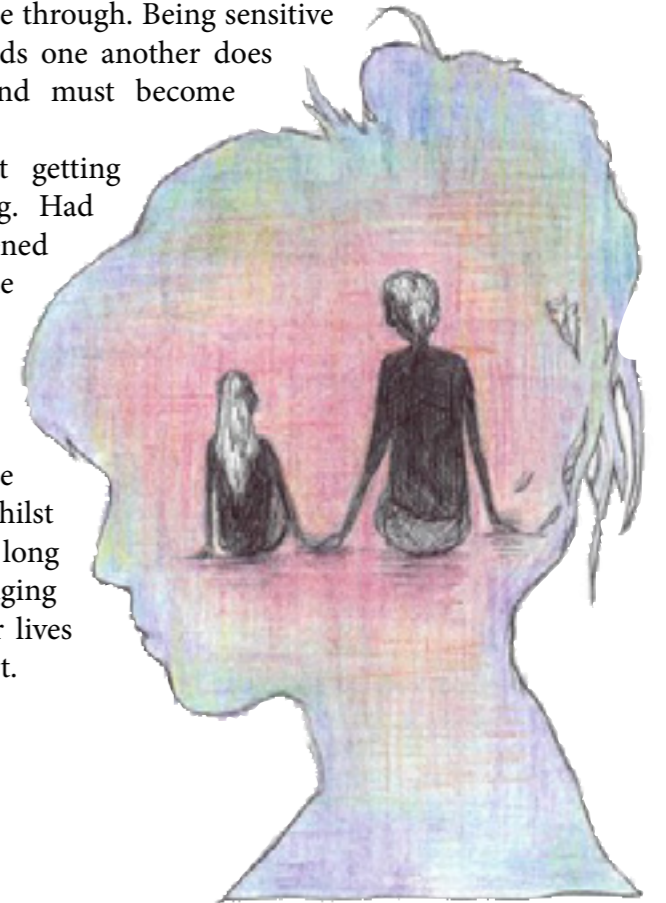
I found that I could transform this pain to strength. I saw the limitless opportunities that life gave me, and knew that it was in my own hands to take advantage of them. I finally realised that my dad’s lesson of “being the best” did not actually mean being the perfect student, the perfect athlete, the perfect person. It just meant being your best self, your kindest self, your happiest self, putting in the effort to achieve the goals that you set for yourself.

Our best self has the drive to reach our goals, whilst also being conscious of others. We live in a world that is constantly changing. Each individual is finding themselves in different ways. We must be conscious of others and what they may be going through. It may be easy to form conclusions about someone, but we should aim to treat each other with kindness as we never know what the other person may have gone through. Being sensitive towards oneself and towards one another does not mean being weak and must become normalised in our society.

Pain is inevitable, but getting through it is empowering. Had this tragic event not happened to me, I would not be the woman I am right now. I have found what gives me courage in life and what I’m passionate about, and I have learned how to be strong and independent whilst being sensitive. I still have a long way to go, but acknowledging that with every loss in our lives there is a gain is a good start.

my father

of yourself



defying the education system

My very first acknowledgment of success was through school. The thing is success was never truly in the moment. It was always something that would happen to us in the future. I remember being a year 9 student and the very first assembly was about how we should all do the English baccalauteate as it will look good for universities. We were all so driven to get that slight taste of success so we all opted to pick subjects that we were not so sure about but knew it would look good on a piece of paper. Maybe we ended up loving it and achieved the best grades but was that really the only version of success out there?

I walked away with my GCSE results questioning why the feeling of success wears away so quickly. Then came A levels where I was told that you must do facilitating subjects (those preferred by universities, for example maths) or the Russell group universities will not accept you and that is your prospect of employment gone. So, I did just that, eager for a more lasting effect of success. Then something strange happened, the exams were cancelled and I was handed my grades on a piece of paper. Sure, I was happy with the results, but walking home I started to question if my success came from a mere piece of paper. Where did this notion even come from? The fact of the matter is I did not know what I wanted in year 9—all I was told is that this is the best way to succeed. I thought I would be silly to ignore the teacher so I followed the herd to the destination of success. In terms of the education system, I

Written by Mumena Choudhury
Artwok by Shyla Robinson

“university is a time to create your own definition of success”

am on the road to success. I have felt success and I am successful. I have ticked all the boxes. Now all I need to do is get a decent job that pays well and climb that career ladder. Then I would have officially made it.

But this made me think - why was I never encouraged to think about success in other ways, beyond education or “financial success”.

University is a time to create your own definition of success, not what society deems as successful, your peers or anyone else for that matter. Will it be in the form of a first class grade, or something more intangible like happiness or pushing yourself to learn something new? Success can happen every day and we walk past it without any form of acknowledgement, rendering it insignificant. However, when you stop for a minute and really detach yourself from the stereotypical definition of success, you can notice the little things that you have succeeded at. And to the person next to you this may not look like a success in the slightest, but that is ok because you know in yourself that you’ve succeeded

- and that is what really matters.

We live in a world where we are considering everyone else’s perceptions and viewing everyone else’s journey that we almost forget to look at ourselves without comparison to others. Maybe when we were younger the vision of success was fed to us but now, we can reclaim it. We can shape it. Define it. Change it. Success is what you make it and whether you are embarking on your university journey or it is nearing its end, I urge you to question success and find joy in celebrating your own version, no matter how small you may think it is.

Defying the education is not limited to questioning the meaning of success but it can be about understanding what is left behind in the curriculum. With the number of people in higher education increasing, we need to question what we are learning more than ever. The foundations of our learning are biased, whether it be towards Western history or in the languages schools offer learning about western histories

“become the author of your own ambition”

“get down to the root of reasoning that we tend to ignore”

or languages that are perceived to be ‘better’ to learn due to the countries that they are spoken in. Now that we have all completed the foundations of our education, we have the platform to challenge it, uncover and discover the parts of the learning process and histories that are less familiar to us.

What I urge you to do is become the author of your own ambition. Though it may seem like we do this already, when we break down the reasons for our actions, we will see the influence of others laced within our own stories. While it is unfortunate when we do not get what we want, it is even worse when we get something that we discover we did not want all along. What could help us to start with this is writing down what we want out of university, and why we genuinely want those things. Get down to the root of reasoning that we tend to ignore. It is important to try and think about what we want out of our experience of UCL, but it is even more important to understand why we desire those things in the first place.

5 PEOPLE 1 QUESTION

Andrew Harper, France

“I was inspired to see the people of Paris, from many walks of life rally in support of pursuing justice for Adama Traorè. Standing before the Tribunal de Paris, this social movement felt acutely powerful before such a formidable institution and building. Despite how inspiring this may be, it should not be left as a one of moment confined to 2020. These movements against oppression should continue into 2021 and beyond.”

Nuraiya Malik, US

“I’ve been inspired to speak up more. In a time where black Americans fight for basic human rights and young women are faced with the issue of gender inequality in everyday lives, I feel the need to raise my voice and make myself feel more aware of my surroundings so that I can also point out the wrongdoings of other in my society.”

Isabella Ross, Australia

“I’ve been inspired to become more actively involved in anti-racist movements in Australia, primarily relating to Indigenous Australians. This has mostly taken the form of mutual aid donations and spreading awareness of current issues, and calling/emailing MPs particularly in protest of the destruction of the directions tree on Djab Wurrung country.”

Remina Aleksieva, Bulgaria

“The mass anti-government protests in Bulgaria in the summer of 2020 were sparked in response to yet another showcase of inability of the prime ministers and members of parliament to handle the coronavirus crisis, abuse of power and corruption. This social movement inspired me to continue to express my defiance as a moral obligation and constitutional right, despite the government’s negligence of the protests. It urged me to seek novel ways to connect with others in this moral battle ground, as well as acknowledge the importance of standing against injustice and violence. As an act of defiance, i now understand the invaluable role and influence of the international community in protecting human rights and the law in countries such as Bulgaria.”

Helena Wacko, Poland

“I’ve been inspired by the Strajk Kobet (Women’s Strike) protests in Poland in response to the recent regressive changes to abortion law. I think it has given Polish feminism a more coherent voice and it has shown across generations, as well as across religious beliefs, a new form of unity and support.”

“I feel the need to raise my voice”

“I’ve been inspired to become more actively involved in anti-racist movements”

“shown across generations, as well as across religious beliefs, a new form of unity and support”



2020 HAS BEEN A YEAR OF HUGE SOCIAL UPHEAVALS AND A TIME OF DEFIANCE AGAINST SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN INSPIRED BY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

A Taste of Resilience in London Chinatown

Text & Photography by Vivianne Zhang Wei

Situated on London Chinatown's Gerrard Street where other restaurants tacitly compete for the brightest reds and glitziest golds, there's a bold humility to Plum Valley's minimal design. Its name appropriately alludes to the Peach Blossom Land from an ancient Chinese fable: an isolated utopian village, who's harmonious existence is unbothered by the outside world. However, when speaking with Iris, who runs the restaurant, I learn that not even Plum Valley was spared from the Covid-19 pandemic's toll on small businesses. Chinatown was hit especially hard, and especially early, as on top of the general challenges of a public health crisis, anything East-Asian also faced shunning as a potential source of the "Chinese-virus".

Iris moved to London from Hong Kong 26 years ago, the same year that my own parents emigrated from China to Sweden. My family never lived in a city big enough to have a Chinatown, but at least one restaurant was guaranteed; always with the same red paper lanterns, mechanically waving cats, and fishponds with discomfitingly large fish. We probably cooked better food at home, but to occasionally be around others who looked more like me than my blond-haired classmates—even if just for a meal—was a refuge I cherished.

However, when news first broke about a coronavirus outbreak in China, I, too, found myself steering away

from Chinese restaurants; not because I feared the virus, but because I feared those who did. Iris recalls: "They thought, 'oh, Chinatown, that must be where the virus is coming from!', which is ridiculous, because Chinese people were taking more precautions than anyone else." Groundless as those concerns were, their consequences were very real: already before the lockdown, half of Chinatown had closed, and over 200 hate crimes on East-Asians been reported nationwide.

Iris nevertheless feels grateful—grateful for people who have realised that, actually, we are all in the same crisis, and are trying their best to help. A 50 percent rent discount from Shaftesbury, Chinatown's landlord, took a lot of pressure off the Plum Valley team. They now remember the temporary closure as a surprisingly positive experience, with time for rest, family, and new hobbies. "You blink your eyes, and three months have already passed," Iris says.

This unfaltering optimism reminds me of the Mandarin word for "crisis", *wei ji*, and how my mum explained that it consists of two characters: *wei* for danger, and *ji* for opportunity. Whilst a quick Google search exposed it as a popular culture cliché, I can't deny how accurately it encapsulates the spirit of resilience that underpins Chinatown's history—because this won't be the first attack endured by its community.

The Chinese immigrants who first arrived in the

East End's Limehouse area were never really welcome; despised by unions for their cheap labour, most started running small businesses for a livelihood. Those earliest Chinese restaurants and laundrettes became regular targets for hostile attacks, but nevertheless developed into London's first Chinatown. The real existential threat came in the world wars of the 20th century: the first left Britain vulnerable and desperate for a scapegoat, and existing anti-Chinese sentiments exploded into full-blown moral panic about the "Yellow Peril" of Chinese men. When the Second World War then added the physical insult of devastating aerial bombings in the East End, Chinatown seemed beyond recovery.

Indeed, pre-war Limehouse Chinatown was demolished, but Chinese entrepreneurs soon spotted opportunities in Soho's cheap properties, and eagerly moved to cater for a new customer base of Hong Kong immigrants and British soldiers who had returned from the Far East with a transformed palate.

This new Chinatown inherited a history of defiance: not just in enduring persecution and crises, but seeing in them opportunities for growth. September's post-lockdown reopening proved its continuation into the pandemic; accompanied by a #LoveChinatown campaign, which replaced the traditional red lanterns with bold, multi-coloured ones, expanded outdoor seating areas, and added a very 21st-century appropriate virtual lantern screen, it became yet another testimony to Chinatown's extraordinary adaptability. "I think you get stronger when you have a crisis. You went through the storm, and you definitely become tougher. When the pandemic started, my brain started thinking 'What can we do better?', 'How can we survive?'" Iris reflects, with that premature nostalgia you feel about a crisis that is not quite yet over.

For Plum Valley, the pandemic prompted a desire to

connect with others in more meaningful ways, such as their participation in initiatives to provide free school meals. "Even though we are not doing greatly ourselves right now, I think it's important to get into society. We feel the pain of other people, so we can connect," she explains, and mentions that she spends most Saturdays chatting with customers in the reception. "Chinese people get to know each other through eating. We don't come out to just talk, we always have some food." Right on cue, she orders in some of Plum Valley's specialities, and we continue our conversation over some delicious cheung fun, pork buns, and rainbow coloured dim sum.

“life has to go on. whatever happens, we will look at it positively.”

Turning now to Chinatown's future, Iris is quietly confident. "Life has to go on. Whatever happens, we will look at it positively."

Only two days after my visit, a second national lockdown was announced. Whilst that means another closure for Chinatown, the past year has reminded us that Chinatown is, and always has been, more than just "restaurants, bars, and non-essential shops". Ever since the first entrepreneurs arrived in the 18th century, the site has been a symbol of hope and opportunity. Perhaps in this particular crisis, the opportunity is to reconnect with this heritage and realise that even if London Chinatown returns in some ways altered, that might not be something to grieve, but to celebrate.

Words will set us free: Poetry in times of crisis

Written by Miyin Delgado Karl
Artwork by Esther Chang



It might seem strange to resort to poetry in times like the one we are living now, filled with so much hardship, unrest, and uncertainty. However, this is exactly why we need it: poetry is a unifying force, as well as a source of power through which writers find their dignity and express their strength.

Words have always been the spark of revolution and the fuel of change, so we should be listening very closely to what contemporary voices have to say. With the rise of Instagram poetry, there is a new generation of writers who are redefining our understanding of the genre and reaching increasingly wider audiences. Poetry, like activism and social change, has never been more accessible.

Here are 4 vibrant voices whose work is a testament of survival, love, and defiance.

Fadwa Shagroun

Fadwa is a Libyan poet and first year Engineering student at UCL. She draws from her own struggles to feed her poetic voice, writing about mental health, community, and hope. Through her work, she experiments with form, exploring how poetry can even be found in text messages and short scribbles.

For her, poetry is the defiance against the “belief that we should keep our thoughts to ourselves and not be overly “emotional”. By writing and expressing herself, Fadwa has found solace, clarity and power: “My poetry is my own sword against the ugliest sides of this world.”

‘One day, you won’t hate the sight of your skin,
you won’t hate the sound of your voice and
your body won’t hate you for being its soul,
your mind will be at ease, your words will sound
like unfinished poetry in your ears’

-from “One day”

Follow her poetry [Instagram](#) for more.

Caleb Femi

This British-Nigerian poet and artist became the first Young People’s Laureate for London in 2016. Through his poems, Femi explores his place in the world as an immigrant, a black man, and an artist, questioning our understanding of Britain as a whole. Often using London slang and drawing from his experiences growing up on the North Peckham estate, he is constantly defying the notion that poetry is an elitist activity only accessible to certain types of people. Having had personal experiences with racial discrimination by London police, the words from his poem “horizon of body” (2016) seem far too familiar:

“i know you know how it ends /i
know you see bodies like this on your
phones... you see a body like this die
before its died.”

In his first poetry collection, “Poor”, Caleb Femi depicts his community with truthfulness and love. You can explore his poetry and visual art on his [Youtube Channel](#) and [Instagram](#).

Theresa Lola

[Theresa Lola](#) is a 26-year-old British-Nigerian poet and 2019/2020 Young People’s Laureate for London. She writes about challenging subjects with an inspiring level of courage and eloquence, portraying deeply personal and vulnerable moments with ease. London features in her poetry as a site of both limitless opportunities and devastating events:

‘When a riot breaks out, or a tower
turns black from smoke, / we hold
each other to check the other is still
breathing.’

- from “Despite the Noise”

Lola hopes [to inspire young people](#) to “use the power and the emotion of language to celebrate themselves”, a message which feels even more urgent in a world that often shames us into inaction and self-hatred.

Bailey Bellingy

Bailey is a third-year Social Sciences student at UCL from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Her poetry covers many different themes, in particular ethnicity and racism, beauty standards, womanhood, mental health and relationships. Bailey’s poems read like speeches of pride and disobedience, words in rapid succession constantly asking the reader, demanding not only answers but also empathy and action.

Do you think I deserve to live?
Do you see my light brown skin, my
white mother, my university degree and
give me the pass?
Did you think he deserved to die?
Did you see his dark brown skin, his
poverty and his criminal record and let
him fit your stereotype?

- from “Time Drags”

When interviewed, Bailey remarked that reading poetry by other women of colour “validated my own struggles and gave me the courage to voice them” and notes that “many great people of colour in history have used their work as a way of shouting ‘I will not be silenced’; I would love to do the same with my work.” For her, “poetry is an act of defiance, and I know that a lot of the poetry I write feels like a small rebellion to me.”

‘You could never unravel the curls or
lighten the skin of your heart.
My curls are my own private rebellion.
My curls are my ode to my ancestors.
I uprooted the plantation fields with my
curls,
I unshackled my brothers and sisters with
my curls,
I set the night ablaze and wove you a
crown with my curls.’

- from “Falling in Love”

Our Recommendations

A selection of cultural highlights from our section editors & committee members

1

To Read: *Flèche* (2019) by Mary Jean Chan

Review by Deepali Foster

Both personal and political, Mary Jean Chan's debut poetry collection, *Flèche*, is compelling. It explores the complexity of queerness, maternal relations, multilingualism, political turmoil and longing. 'Flèche' is an attack technique in fencing, where one lunges forward, hoping to use speed and surprise to hit their opponent. Chan's poetry works similarly; her precise and poignant language is piercing. The cleverness of Chan's poetry is evident by the title's pun on 'flesh', which shows the collection's duality; it is conflictual, but also vulnerable and intimate. Poems such as 'Practice' are tender, ambiguous and evoke an abundance of thoughts and feelings. *Flèche* is a beautiful read. It is accessible, honest and fragile, yet defiant.

3

To Listen To: *Forever* by Shura

Review by Olivia Hall

While Saturday nights are for staying in, I'm recommending Shura's lo-fi disco *Forever* for spacey pop grooves. It's the ultimate party album for the year of no parties. Listen out for my favourite tracks, 'side effects', 'the stage', 'religion (u can lay your hands on me)', and 'BKLYNLDN', distinct for their easy, lazy funkiness. Shura's vocals here remind me of the sugary high tones of Kylie Minogue's, but in the more distant and reserved style typical of alt-pop today. Another standout is the heart-aching 'princess leia', a dreamy, detached song that ponders morality with an entrancing vulnerability. *Forever* is not really revolutionary for the music scene and it's a great album precisely because it's not trying too hard to be that. It's a refreshingly easy and fun listen, intimately representing queer women without making a big song and dance about it (at least not in that way).

4

To Read: *The Flame* by Leonard Cohen

Review by Daria Mosolova

As much as I would love to recommend something a bit more life affirming to get you through these lockdowns, it would be dishonest of me to not talk about Leonard Cohen this time of year. Cohen died in November 2016 (hence my annual November pilgrimage through his discography) and *The Flame*—a posthumous collection of his lyrics and poetry—came out two years later. While we all know the sound of "Suzanne" and "Hallelujah", I don't think that we pay nearly enough attention to the lyrics – to me, Cohen is first and foremost a poet. It gets grim at times, but reading Cohen is ultimately a cathartic experience and the book is filled with his hand-drawn illustrations to cheer you up along the way.

2

To Watch: Eric Kripke's *The Boys*

Review by Gabriel Roberts



Eric Kripke's TV adaptation of *The Boys* is an unsettling reimagining of the classic superhero tale, where superhuman powers are used to serve profits, not people. Under the secretive Vought corporation, the elite superhero squad "The Seven" projects a shiny facade of vigilantism over superficial marketing deals and shady pharmaceutical connections. Lowly store clerk Huey Campbell finds himself caught up with "The Boys", a ragtag crew seeking revenge against Vought's megalomaniac superheroes, after A-Train (*The Flash*) kills his girlfriend, only offering money in return for his silence. For those unsatisfied with the recent MCU, *The Boys* offers a more gritty and convincing alternative, touching on a variety of contemporary topics: from Instagram memes to far-right radicalisation.

5

To Read: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass

Review by Evie Robinson



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass tells the story of one man's journey from enslavement to freedom, and how he defied those who oppressed him through the act of writing. The famous abolitionist leader narrates his own life journey, detailing the horrors he witnessed when enslaved by various plantation owners, and his battle to regain his sense of self and masculine identity. Receiving education so late in life in comparison to his white counterparts, Douglass' rhetorical and poetic mastery is beautifully poignant and evocative. In the aftermath of the most recent wave of the Black Lives Matter movement, Douglass' narrative serves as a reminder of the power of language and storytelling in relation to rebellion and recapturing one's identity.

UCL TRENDSETTERS

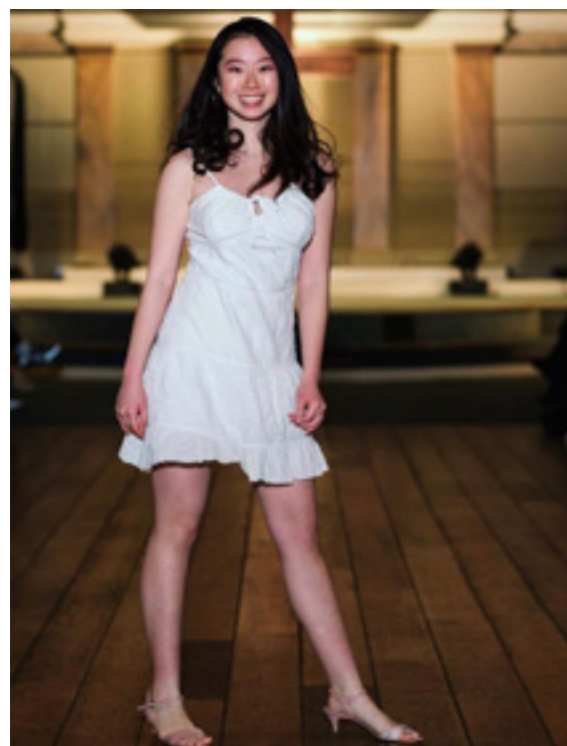
From High Street to

High Fashion

Clothes shopping was not always like this. What was once an occasional event has now become an addictive, careless, toxic habit too many of us can't quit. The fast fashion industry, grown off the backs of overproduction and mass consumerism over the past few decades, is largely to blame. Frequently foregoing quality to deliver goods within the shortest possible time frame, the fast fashion industry has consequently become one of the most socially and environmentally concerning industries in the world. For behind every £5 T-shirt, lies a deep moral cost.

To keep production prices low, manufacturers often compromise the wellbeing of their workers. Child labour, severe underpayment, and hazardous working conditions are common yet justified sources of criticism of the contemporary fashion industry. Ecologically, the industry is responsible for toxifying waterways, reducing biodiversity and depleting non-renewable resources; becoming one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, second only to the oil industry.

However, increased awareness regarding the atrocities of the fast fashion industry has awakened a new wave of eco-conscious consumers, with people beginning to question the ethical footprint of their purchases. Combined with the rise in vegan lifestyles and climate activism, it's no surprise that market forces have begun prioritising and promoting sustainability in every facet of their business.



Written by
Stephanie Frank

Photography by
Charmaine Koh

The fashion industry is no exception. From high street to high fashion, activists are beginning to defy the 'business as usual approach', in favour of championing a greener future of fashion. Speaking with Charmaine Koh, one of UCL's very own sustainable fashion designers, it seems sustainable fashion is being redefined beyond the stereotypes of vintage threads and drastically overpriced garments into something accessible to the everyday woman. Brands are now designing attractive, affordable, ethical collections that are mindful towards the planetary boundaries of our Earth.

Having been initially attracted to the "classiness" of the fashion industry, Charmaine discovered there was "nothing classy about the exploitation of people and the environment" and began to adopt sustainable practices throughout her work. She decided to embody a zero-waste approach throughout the production process. Thrifting material in second-hand stores as opposed to buying it new, she saves only the most unwanted garments, leaving the desirable items for local customers, and upcycles them into elegant designs: from silken cocktail dresses, to a timeless white lace top with intricate detailing.

While the fashion industry may be taking steps in the right direction, there is still much more to be done. It is up to us, as consumers, to pressure change: by supporting eco-friendly businesses, raising awareness of social movements and rethinking our consumption patterns. There is no difference too small, and no excuse to wait.

From Fast to Circular Fashion

With over 2300 followers, Emily Pjils is a Comparative Literature student at UCL who doubles as a Depop reseller, and is changing the way we consume fashion.

The charity shops where she thrifts are located in Surrey. She jokes that it's not one particular place "like Narnia where I just walk in the door" and everything is magical, but instead she would spend 4-5 hours a day trying to find classic, wearable and special pieces. The brand is important, but if she wouldn't wear it, she won't sell it.

Emily buys 80-90% of her own clothes from Depop, and the rest from brands, but acknowledges that sustainable fashion is not viable for everyone, and accessibility is a huge issue. Instead, focus should be shifted towards companies' production methods.

Shyla Robinson, head of sustainability at MODO, agrees that "the most basic barrier we need to tackle is the lack of education about where our clothes are coming from and who is making them." In choosing to go to Depop over the manufacturer, Emily emphasises how you would be contributing to a circular model of fashion, rather than contributing to a line of production.

Some sustainability activists have been critical of Depop reselling, claiming that it undermines the purpose of charity shops, often involves over-inflated prices, and adds to transportation emissions. In response to this criticism, Emily points out that "it's not as simple as buying something for £10, selling it for £20 and I get double the money!"

She criticises 'Brandy Melville girls' who sell "rare" pieces at horrendous prices, which gives resellers a bad reputation, and undoubtedly agrees that Depop has been over-saturated with slender, middle-class, white girls up until the emergence of the BLM movement. Shyla believes Depop's sudden promotion of black sellers may "come across as a bit performative" but adds: "being brown myself, I'm not one to complain about representation."

Emily also highlights the fact that many Depop sellers come from lower financial backgrounds, trying



Written by Ellie-Jean Royden &
Photography by Emily Piljs and
Shyla Robinson

to produce a sustainable source of income they can rely on. Furthermore, she believes that Depop provides an alternative, online platform for "recycling, upcycling, and circulating fashion." She says, "charity shops in the UK give about two thirds of the clothes they receive away to landfills". Therefore, by taking these clothes to a different market, these products are more likely to be consumed again, rather than thrown away.

When asked if Emily saw herself as an entrepreneur to begin with she smiles: "oh absolutely not". Perhaps the criticism directed towards Depop resellers is just another way to devalue women's entrepreneurialism? "When women start to be successful in their own right, the patriarchy starts to have issue with it". She recounts how often older men are skeptical of her work, and how she gets fed up of being condescended to for her entrepreneurship.

While Emily doesn't see Depop as the perfect sustainability solution, nonetheless, reselling acts as a form of defiance against the exploitation and harmful practises of the fashion industry. Shyla argues that sustainability is already accessible to people of all backgrounds beyond sites like Depop, as it's "about mending your buttons and re-wearing dresses, it is a movement about affordability and longevity. I think this often gets lost in the conversation about sustainable fashion." Emily leaves me gushing over my favourite Karen Millen dress, and I feel more positive about the impact of Depop in battling fast fashion.

The rise of online activism:

expanding horizons or digital overwhelm?

Written by Zsófia Bekker
Artwork by Keli Sheng

Before the pandemic, we were experiencing unprecedented levels of mass cultural mobilisation. The 21st century has been dominated by voices: various social movements, associations, groups and individuals calling for change, from Extinction Rebellion to Black Lives Matter and the Yellow Vests movement.

Ever since Covid-19 tightened its grip across the world, public gatherings—and with them, demonstrations—have been deemed threats to public health. Nevertheless, the current generation's hunger for justice cannot be curbed by a global pandemic. Online activism is thriving, quickly adapting to our new way of life. Of course, saving travel time won't make up for the loss of the roaring crowd or simulate the power of live protests, but continuing to engage in online movements might just help to take the edge off the tragedy that has been 2020 thus far.



1/7

I have learned a great deal about political lobbying and experienced the very essence of team spirit during my time working with the organisation. Picking up extra tasks or dropping some of my own—it still works because everyone wants it to. Teamwork and empathy are traits of voluntary organisations that are ever more evident when doing the work online. After all, taking on less instead of taking on nothing is still something.

In a university environment, macro-level problems filter down into student populations and are discussed in local conversations. Societies, activists' groups and magazines tackle contemporary issues through debates, town hall meetings or performances. With the rest of the world, the UCL community has moved online, but continues to be a fertile environment.



3/7

Nabila explains that HCUC London is engaging in online collaborations with other societies to break into the UCL community. "It's activism on a very personal level" she says, and I take note, as this is something I feel is a crucial starting point when contemplating joining an online cause. She also suggests that many avoid joining activism groups because they feel their knowledge is incomplete, adding that the educational process does not have to be a rigorous academic undertaking with daunting 45-page briefing documents and journal articles. Simply transforming your feed to feature sites that share informative videos or posts will get you there. Join the society or movement and learn it while you do it.



5/7

So much important work has already been done online, and it seems set to continue this way into the future. With the uncertainty surrounding rules and the ever-looming possibility of lockdowns limiting platforms for protest, there is no better time to join than now. In what has been an absolute car-crash of a year, Nabila leaves me with a glimmer of hope: "there's definitely a chance for you online to get your work across, in your way."



7/7

So how to maintain motivation to keep staring at a screen after hours of online lectures? If your eyes have been aching from screen-fatigue since week two, rest assured that you're not alone. Has taking activism online increased audience reach, or with everything shifting onto virtual platforms, do we risk minimising its impact? Is no one interested in yet another Webinar?

I joined a political organisation at the beginning of summer that works to restore the rule of law and establish a solidary society within Hungary, from abroad. Communication and events are strictly online, and I have not met the majority of my colleagues in person. The cause is truly important to me, but the cruel reality of voluntary work is that sometimes it must take the backseat while my studies and paid jobs take the wheel. And that's okay! You can't expect anyone to keep their morale up and their calendars free all of the time.



2/7

Talking to Nabila Haque, a second-year Comparative Literature student, over Zoom, my passion for activism is matched by her own fierce enthusiasm. She is the Social Media Agent for Her Campus UC London (HCUC London), a fairly fresh portal on the UCL scene. A magazine with a spectacular diversity of editors and articles with content ranging from feminist politics and internship advices to music recommendations and skin care product reviews, HCUC London was formed entirely online. They are fortunate not to have to grieve for their pre-Covid-19 existence, but Nabila stresses the challenge of not being able to meet fellow activists face to face. It's not organising that's hard online, but the human aspect.



4/7

An interesting paradox emerges as we move onto impact. She agrees that the target audience expands with the new online emphasis, but adds that sometimes "You want to feel like you have made a localised impact." Still, she measures success not only in statistics and numbers but also on a more human level — if just one person feels represented by an issue she raises online, it's a successful day. She seconds my statement that a team is always there, giving feedback or taking over responsibilities when it's personally too much. Nabila likes to plan ahead. She has a clear vision on how to maintain her channels of communication, but, critically, she works as part of a team. Brainstorming, strategy, and implementation extends to the whole society.



6/7



to the dreams deferred:

a pause in the city dreamer's life

**London. Paris. New York. Tokyo.
Hong-Kong. COVID.**

Written by Shayeza Walid & Photography by Johara Meyer



on them, when hope of their ability to reform and adapt is lost, it feels much more than a closure of some shops, schools and buildings.

Yet, Big Dreams, Dreams of what is possible in the city, what is possible in London, are still valid and blossoming.

The lives we hoped to live in London—hoping to become a part of the cultural scene, hoping to be inspired, to go to plays, museums, libraries and vintage stores, hustle for jobs, stroll the parks, and encounter fascinating strangers—are still possible. And the dream of coming to the City, chasing one's ambitions tirelessly, smiling ear to ear as the lights of Central London blind the eyes on a night out—put simply, indulging in the luxury of not just the London university life, but life in London in and of itself—is still out there to grasp.

What the pandemic has done is deferred the “Dream Big” mindset, but we mustn't be naive enough to think that it has erased it. The fact is: we have merely had to press pause on our grand pursuits. We have come to university in London and settled for a subtly exciting experience as career-driven individuals instead of a flamboyant or exhilarating one. It is up to us to be resilient and defy the notion that London is no longer a place where real, live, inspiring human energy exists. The lights haven't been turned off. They have just been dimmed down. London is alive and still full of passionate possibilities waiting to be explored. Continue to Dream Big. Continue to Dream Bright. Anything is still possible. This is the City. This is London.

Amidst the chaos of the pandemic, when so many are struggling to make ends meet, I wondered why I should be anything but grateful. My “suffering”—being robbed of the university experience in my new city—was a mere inconvenience in light of others, and I knew it. But seeing a multitude of others in similar situations, it was clear to me that our position needed to be addressed.

Despite the media's coverage of the adverse effects of the pandemic on higher education and the departure of people from urban centres, to me, the portrayal of the pitfalls seemed incomplete. It wasn't the move to online classes that hurt the most, nor the barriers to making new friends, but that I was prevented from chasing my dreams the way I hoped to in one of the most dynamic cities in the world. It was that London was “dying down” and we could not experience it for its true worth.

It is then that the piercing quality of the starting sentence to this piece hit me. For me and many others, coming to The City means much more than pursuing a busy yet convenient lifestyle. So now I ask, wonder why those words felt so harrowing? It's because these ‘cities’ aren't just geographically defined. They mean much more. They are much more.

As Jerry Seinfeld eloquently put it in *So You Think New York Is Dead*: ‘Energy, attitude and personality cannot be “remoted” through even the best fiber optic lines.’ And London is a profound manifestation of this idea. Cities are emblems of culture, creative energy and ambition. Symbols of tireless resilience and places where dreams come to fruition. And when the light is seemingly “switched off”



DEFYING STEREOTYPES

Celebrating UCL Students Who Have Overcome Adversity
Content Warning: cissexism, depression

HARRY

On Growing Up Queer In Tokyo

It's different. In other parts of the world, people attack you overtly; in Tokyo, it's taboo to be queer. That was my experience growing up; being queer was something that just wasn't in the realm of possibility. Tokyo is my home, but at a certain level I know that people are not going to be accepting of my identity. Growing up, I was the only non-binary person I knew, so I was not sure how I would make my identity public. It was only when I came to London that I was able to see that this was possible. I never would have imagined that there would be so many other gender non-conforming people around me.

On Polari

It was surprising to me as well that there were no LGBTQ-focused publishing houses in the UK. A lot of the ones that do exist are either closed now or publish erotic fiction, which is not necessarily what we're into. We wanted to provide a platform for marginalized queer voices: that's why we created Polari. We're taking a more radical approach: we're working entirely non-profit and want to represent specifically people who have been oppressed for their intersex identity.

On Their Everyday Life in Sofia

I moved to Sofia, Bulgaria in the beginning of October. I go to this radical autonomous collective: I've been volunteering and going to drawing events and film screenings. I've started weekly pole dancing at this studio in Sofia. I'm really enjoying it; I feel like I'm embodying my kindergarten dreams and it's kind of like dangling from monkey bars. It's about becoming more comfortable with your body. And I guess that's a reason why I want to do as well: to combat body dysphoria and gender issues with my body.

MARGARET

On Puberty and Family

It is quite hard to define when it started. At the age of 10 or 13, I felt that something was off. When I went to high school and started modelling, it magnified my anxiety and depression. My parents always thought that it is a part of growing up. I decided to ask for help. I ended up getting diagnosed with depression, which was the root cause of every other problem I had.

On the Paradox of Depression

For a long time, I knew that something was wrong, but I kept saying to myself that it was not that bad. Fortunately, and with my mum's encouragement, I quit modelling - too early to have made it as a model, but too late in terms of protecting my mental and physical health. I realised that I was doing something unhealthy, but I was trapped in this toxic mindset.

On Daily Routine

I went into therapy during quarantine, and now I make a point of checking myself. I write my journal, reflecting on my day, trying to be mindful. Small things, like going out for a walk, soaking in the sunlight (whenever the weather allows), taking that fresh air, doing yoga half an hour every day. All these things that you think don't work, they actually do. I recently read a quote that I've adopted: “share your scars, not your wounds”. First work on yourself, heal, and then you can help others.



*Interviews by Anna Sarasiti &
Artwork by Amy Zhang*

Amygdala Hijack

Written by *Palin Supradit*

Artwork by *Manca Rakun*

We have all been there: yelling at our parents, blaming others for almost no reason, or just having a bad day. Everything seems worse than usual. The worst part, unfortunately, is when you regret everything three hours later. You're not the argumentative child you may have seemed like, rather you had been "hijacked" by an uncontrollable creature: the amygdala.

The amygdala, the emotional centre, is one of the main structures of the brain's limbic system. Also found in animals like cats and dogs, it coordinates autonomic and endocrine functions in response to emotional stimuli. The amygdala is involved in the decision-making process, along with the prefrontal cortex, which is unique to humans.

The term "amygdala hijack" was first coined by Daniel Goleman in 1995. Just a millisecond delay stops the prefrontal cortex from reacting to a stimulus, and the amygdala takes charge. Once the amygdala takes over, there is no rationality, but only aggression and fear. Remember the infamous flight or fight response? That is the amygdala in action, reenacting the animal-like responses of our ancestors.

"Remember the infamous flight or fight response? That is the amygdala in action, reenacting the animal-like responses of our ancestors."

2020 has been a year full of major events: forest fires in Australia, injustice towards African Americans in the US, and global Covid-19 outbreaks. Each of these is emotionally triggering, involving the loss of many lives. While social media and online news can keep us up to date with current affairs, these platforms can catalyse our impulse to immediately react to it, creating consequences like the instinct to blame, social polarization, or the spread of fake news. One hour of doom scrolling can provoke the amygdala, our animal-self, to act on negative stimuli: your blood flows through your muscles, your adrenaline rushes, and your heart pumps, getting ready to fight or to run.

To cope with amygdala hijack, it is important to acknowledge and express emotions healthily, rather than trying to repress them. The world is in turmoil right now, so whatever negative feelings you are having, remind yourselves that those feelings are valid and they don't define who you are. After all, you are not an angry person, you just feel anger. You are not a part of the amygdala, it is a part of you.

"To cope with amygdala hijack, it is important to acknowledge and express emotions healthily, rather than trying to repress them."

Krisztina Amatya, the president of UCL Mental Health Society and a fourth-year Neuroscience student, gives some insights into the amygdala hijack, and how we can cope with it.

In the long term, is there a way that we can train our amygdala not to put emotions at the forefront of our decision making?

This is a tricky question! Emotions and decision-making are highly interlinked since they both arise from the amygdala. Whilst it may seem beneficial to remove emotions from decision-making, it can actually worsen your ability to make decisions. Studies have been conducted where exposure to emotional stimuli was seen to improve verbal working memory, as the stimuli directed attention to the task at hand. However, reaction time also decreased; this might be less beneficial for important decisions.

How about in the short term? When your brain is about to activate that fight or flight response without rationality, what could we do in that moment to prevent the hijack?

We evolved to have the "flight-or-fight" response in the face of life-threatening danger, yet sometimes we get this feeling in ordinary situations, such as when we are stressed. The amygdala processes all of the external cues before we even know what's happening. Whilst we currently don't know how to prevent this stress response,

there are ways to counter it:

- The relaxation response – this can be elicited by doing deep abdominal breathing, focusing on a soothing word, visualisation of tranquil scenes, repetitive prayer, yoga, and tai chi. Whilst this isn't a cure-all, it can definitely help in the moment.
- Physical activity – exercise not only deepens breathing but it also helps relieve muscle tension and takes your mind off the stressful situation.
- Social support – having people to talk to not only relieves the stress response, but it also increases longevity! It's not clear why, but it is thought that having a support network indirectly helps when it comes to chronic stress and crisis.

Does the Mental Health Society have any resources or events that can aid UCL students with their well-being?

The main focus of the UCL Mental Health Society is to provide resources for those that need them, as well as to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. We're constantly posting resources on our Instagram (@uclmentalhealthsociety) about different kinds of mental health issues and ways to deal with them. We also run well-being events and workshops, as well as frequent socials where people can make friends and bond!

Any last thoughts regarding the amygdala hijack?

The main takeaway is that the amygdala is not evil! It's our brains' way of keeping us safe, even if it's a little overprotective now and again. We should aim to work with our anxieties and stresses rather than demonising them.





The Fight for Justice in The Datafied World

Written by Trisevgeni Papakonstantinou
Artwork by Flynn Klein

In 2020, data makes the world go round. This year, we unexpectedly found ourselves having the majority of our social and professional interactions entirely online, our behaviour leaving a bigger footprint than ever before. We are slowly starting to understand the impact mass data collection and analysis is having on our world. Regulation has not caught up; the new GDPR serves merely as a facade. Corporations are playing with fire—a fire that

has proven extremely profitable—with no meaningful regulation to control them as they continue monetizing our online behaviour in Orwellian manners.

Mainstream attempts to address the social consequences of data-driven technologies tend to center around issues of security, efficacy, and privacy. The concept of data justice provides a context where questions about data with regards to current social justice concerns can

be voiced and, most importantly, translated into broader political action.

Exclusion by Design

An important term in this discussion is digital divide, a phenomenon rooted in the unequal distribution of digital resources and skills, that pre-existed the age of big data. Obstacles to participation in society, such as low capacity for internet connection and digital literacy, point to new challenges for inclusion. Close to half of the world's population remains unconnected to the internet. Among the connected, the information they produce during their interactions with platforms, other users, and devices, are being used by organisations to classify their behaviours and identities, shaping, among other things, private and public policy.

Big data applications represent an additional layer of exclusion, which demands a shift of focus; we must question the extent to which the systems themselves operate based on skewed perceptions of reality that are then re-encoded into digitised reasoning. We must remember that technologies are integrated into larger social systems and procedures, already engraved by the rules, values, and interests of dominant groups. We can no longer afford to treat data as an abstract artifact. Data has to be seen as something situated, which can only be understood in relation to other social and political practices.

“We can no longer afford to treat data as an abstract artifact. Data has to be seen as something situated, which can only be understood in relation to other social and political practices.”

Data and Consequence

The term datafication describes the phenomenon of the increasing presence and influence of data in the social structure. Datafication is a global-scale phenomenon and its influence is especially apparent in the sector of international development. The increase in data production and collection has led to both hopes and concerns for its developmental impact. New developmental ideals have emerged tied to the datafication procedure, such as the development of the “smart city” agenda in the global South.

Optimists view the consequences of datafication as opportunities - a sort of “data revolution” that can promote goals such as sustainable development. Pessimists emphasise the obvious limitations. There are also potential negative consequences of datafication. These include loss of privacy and increasing possibilities for surveillance, the privatisation and monetisation of datafication benefits

and the potential loss of the political power of civil society - ready for the right regime to exploit.

The existing literature and political discourse around discrimination and data injustice suffer from several limiting tendencies. There is a pervasive focus on individual “bad players”: a widespread trend in social justice discourse that is also reflected in legislation. In the digital world we often blame “bad algorithms”. A prominent example is the 2018 Amazon hiring scandal, an incident involving an application-scanning algorithm that taught itself to favor male candidates. We often see cases like this being treated as isolated incidents. However, in most cases, they are but mirror images of the systemic inequality all around us. Furthermore, the tendency of interpreting such issues across a single axis makes accounting for intersectionality impossible; there are countless cases, for example, of people who are both financially underprivileged and elderly. Lastly, we are often inclined to focus on a limited set of achievements, overlooking their shortcomings; legally recognised rights do not actually protect anyone against the embedded structural elements that allow discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion to invade the digital world.

It is clear that we are facing what can be seen as either a challenge or an opportunity; an opportunity to fight for social justice now, while humanity transitions to a data-driven world. Data, and its collection and analysis techniques, are powerful—and this power can also be exploited to bring about positive change. Organizations like Kaggle, Omdena and many more regularly host ‘hackathons’, bringing together data scientists to build solutions to problems of social injustice. These solutions can then be translated into policy.

“Data, and its collection and analysis techniques, are powerful—and this power can also be exploited to bring about positive change.”

It is important for data and computer scientists to be educated in these issues and consequences of their work, as they can become valuable allies in the fight against data injustice. It is also crucial that political actors become aware of the ways data-driven technologies in government and industry can amplify social injustice. This means that appropriate infrastructure has to be set up so that experts on data injustice can have a voice in the policy-forming process. It is a duty of those who are aware to fight against ignorance. Student publications and societies, protest and educational interventions are tools of collective action that have served as incubators of political reform in the past. As students, we are part of a community that has the collective power to inform and influence public opinion. And we have a duty to use it.

SCIENCE ROUNDUP

UCL students discuss recent research that's captured their attention

Artwork by Valeria Fernandez-Soriano



SPACE

Possible Signs of Life on Venus

In September this year, a paper was published in the *Nature Astronomy* journal that hinted at the possibility of life on Venus. The study claimed to have found traces of phosphine, a toxic compound of hydrogen and phosphorus, in the Venusian atmosphere. This gas, produced by some organisms on Earth, can be an indicator of life. However, another team using a different telescope did not observe strong indications of phosphine, which prompted others to have a look at the original data set. None of the new independent analyses could find reliable traces of the gas, they attributed the initial conclusions to missteps in the original data analysis.

Text by Michal Gricuk

NEUROSCIENCE

Scientists Enable Mice to 'Teleport'

A recent study at UCL has made a strange new discovery: activating certain cells in the brains of mice can teleport them into another time and space. The cells responsible—called 'place cells'—are activated in specific parts of the brain when mice are doing a certain action in a particular location. These place cells were genetically modified to allow scientists to activate those in the hippocampus with light pulses, resulting in the mice exhibiting behaviour associated with that particular location. Albeit a little *Inception*-esque, this is definitely an exciting finding in the world of neuroscience.

Text by Lilly Tozer

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution Affects Bird Behaviour

Birds' perception of their environment can alter greatly due to light pollution, according to a study by California Polytechnic State University. This is because of a change in natural lighting, which birds rely on to time the hatching of their young ones to occur around the same time each year. As a consequence, many species have been found to hatch sooner than usual. Scientists had previously believed this was because of the birds' adjustment to global warming, which causes the foods they rely on to feed their young to ripen sooner than in the past. However, it has now been shown that even their seeming adjustment is caused by human light pollution.

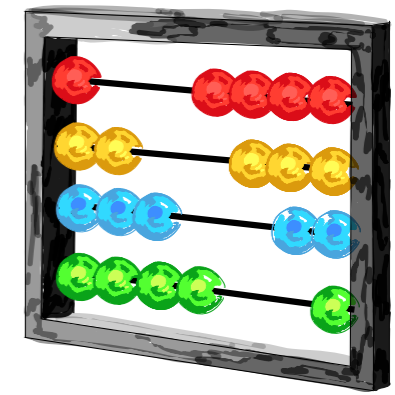
Text by Hannah Vaughan

MATHS

Success of Game of Thrones Explained

Ever wondered why *Game of Thrones* was so successful? Well, a team of mathematicians, physicists and psychologists from Cambridge, Oxford, Warwick, Coventry, and Limerick universities sought to find out exactly that. Using data science and network theory to analyse the very successful book series, the team found that interactions between characters in the books were incredibly similar to how we humans interact in real life. The main characters have roughly 150 things to keep track of—about the same number we typically deal with in day-to-day life! Maths could even predict what fans couldn't—the character deaths. Pretty crazy, right? Could this team predict the next instalment?

Text by Bethany Maia Evans



HEALTH

Promising New HIV Therapeutic

Trials for a new HIV therapeutic showing a dramatically increased potency and dosing period are underway. Lenacapavir, developed by Ginead Sciences, is a viral capsid inhibitor that interferes with virus replication and will only need to be administered every 6 months. Current HIV treatments have a high risk of viral drug resistance, as inconsistent dosage, which can occur from missing a dose or due to the stigma faced by patients, is a particular issue since the drug must be taken daily. Lenacapavir has the potential to change that, making HIV treatment easier, safer and more accessible.

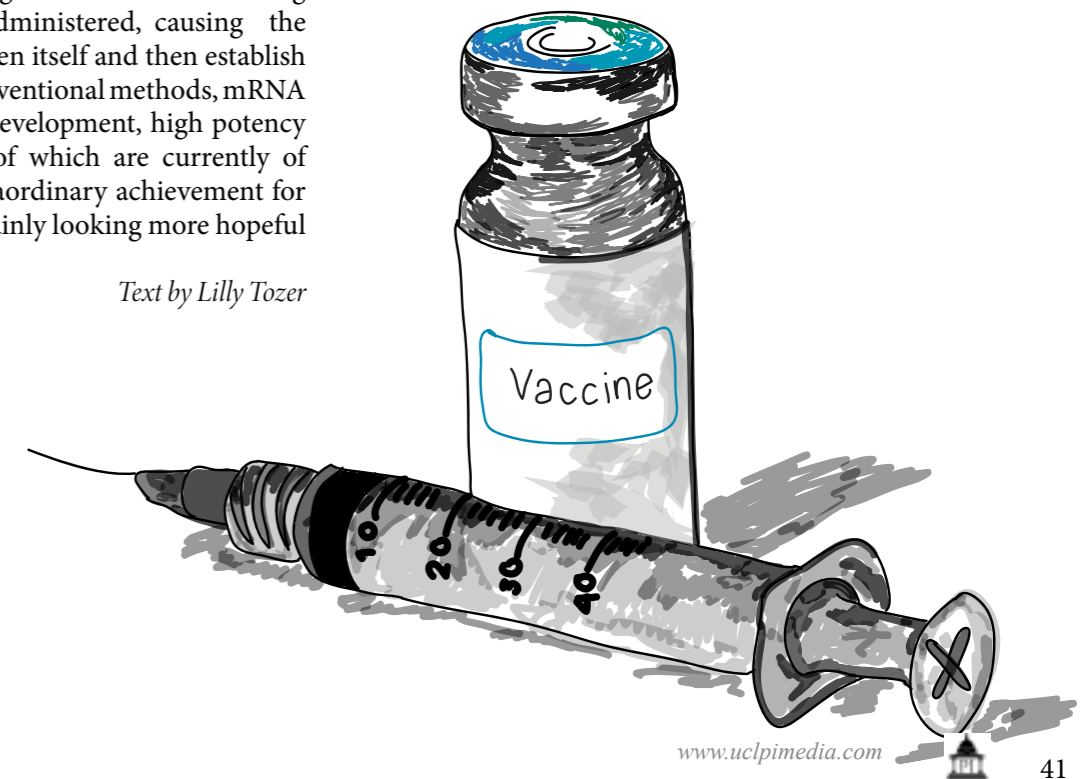
Text by Lilly Tozer

DRUG DISCOVERY

A Potential Vaccine Revolution

The world let out a sigh of relief as reports of Covid-19 vaccines hit the news this winter. One of the most promising of these, developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, is an mRNA vaccine, whereby viral genetic material encoding the viral antigen protein is administered, causing the body to produce the viral antigen itself and then establish immunity against it. Unlike conventional methods, mRNA vaccines are capable of rapid development, high potency and safe administration—all of which are currently of prime concern. This is an extraordinary achievement for scientists and the future is certainly looking more hopeful in light of the news.

Text by Lilly Tozer





(left)

'the policeman on the high horse'

Hasha Dar, UCL Photo Soc President

"Taken in July this year on a Fujifilm Superia 400. I think this image radiates defiance."



(left)

Florentyna Syperek ,
UCL PhotoSoc.

"One year on since the legalisation of abortion and same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland, I look back at the photos I took during the final pro-choice march, which rallied activists from various organisations across the country. To me, they highlight the sense of community and the importance of a continued fight for human rights, especially in the light of the continued lack of provision in Northern Ireland and new attacks on women's reproductive health across the world."



(above & back cover)

Luca Steinfeld, UCL PhotoSoc

"She's out the window
as BJ locks all her doors
with her unmatched socks"

DEFIANCE
DEFIANCE
DEFIANCE

2020/21 Committee

President: Isobel Helme

Treasurer: Chloe Rossington

Magazine EICs: Vanessa Tsao & Emily Hufton

Online EICs: Matt Cross & Daria Mosolova

PITV EICs: Ping Rui Toong & Ellie-Jean Royden

Marketing Officer: Livvie Hall

Social Media Officer: Evie Robinson

Events Officers: Zsofia Lazar & Olivia Scott

Design Officer: Valeria Fernandez-Soriano

Welfare Officer: Joe Kenelm

Diversity and Inclusion Officer: Afsaneh Hachemian

Section Editors

News

Anna Vall Navés

Deepali Foster

Gabriel Roberts

Lifestyle

Emily Schone

Zsófia Bekker

Nadia Freeman

Features

Mia Lui

Kate Iida

Joseph Adam Rattue

Culture

Joe Kenelm

Maeve Hastings

Alexandra Anoja

Opinion

Tom Snell

Portia Kentish

Science & Technology

Bethany Maia Evans

Ana-Cristina Ghica

Ebani Dhawan

Design Team

This edition was designed by Alexandra Baitanu,
Manca Rakun, Valeria Fernandez-Soriano,
Emily Hufton & Vanessa Tsao

Thank you to UCL PhotoSoc for your excellent work!



Photography by Luca Steinfeld, UCL PhotoSoc