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”

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How Do College Students Celebrate Halloween?

Anna Wildman
Staff Writer

With busy schedules, assignments due, and exams to study for, it is no surprise that Halloween can be a holiday that college students overlook.

Some students celebrate by going to parties, but for those who don't like partying, options for celebrating Halloween can seem limited. Wearing a costume, the defining feature of Halloween, can be overlooked by young adults who see it as "childish" or simply don't have the time/money to come up with an elaborate costume. But for some students, Halloween is an opportunity to express their creativity through costumes, and an excuse to actually wear those costumes in public.

RJ McCuien, a freshman at NMC, loves to celebrate Halloween by "Trick-or-treating with some friends and family, then... gather[ing] all the homies for an anime binge watch party." Between participating in cosplay and musical theater, McCuien is no stranger to costumes. This year he is going as Tengen Uzui, a character from the anime Demon Slayer. McCuien's advice to those who are costume-shy: "Don't limit yourself on Halloween! Be your favorite character even if their muscles are way bigger than yours."

Halloween can still be fun and festive even if you aren't into cosplay or aren't willing to spend money on a costume

you'll wear once. Felix Volas, another freshman found a way to participate in dressing up without breaking the bank.

"This year I'm going as a cowboy for Halloween, but my costume is made up of clothes I thrifted. I like doing it that way because I can have a costume that's unique and cool, instead of something generic and cheaply made from the Halloween store." Volas will spend Halloween "Trick-or-Treating with my friends and then doing spooky stuff in the woods, so it would be boring not to have a costume." A lot of college students think they're too old for Trick-or-Treating, but it is not uncommon among the age group of 18-25.

"It's just an opportunity to show off your costume and look at other people's costumes/decorations. Some people think it's childish but it's a lot of fun," says Volas.

NMC hosts its own Halloween event, called "Trunk-or-Treat" (Trick-or-Treating from the trunks of volunteer's cars) on Oct. 24. This took place in Cherry Lot and is open to students, staff, and the general public. This event is a great way for students to socialize and celebrate without having to leave campus (or spend money).

So even for students who don't have a party to go to or a large costume budget, there are many ways to have fun on Halloween



Photo by RJ McCuien

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Anti-Police Graffiti Found in NMC's Scholars Hall

Megan Thoreson
Staff Writer

Early in September, the acronym "ACAB" was found written on a bathroom stall in the basement of Scholars Hall on NMC's main campus.

Prior to this most recent graffiti incident, vandals had tagged a police academy (P.A.) vehicle and whiteboard in a classroom used by P.A. students with the same acronym in February 2024.

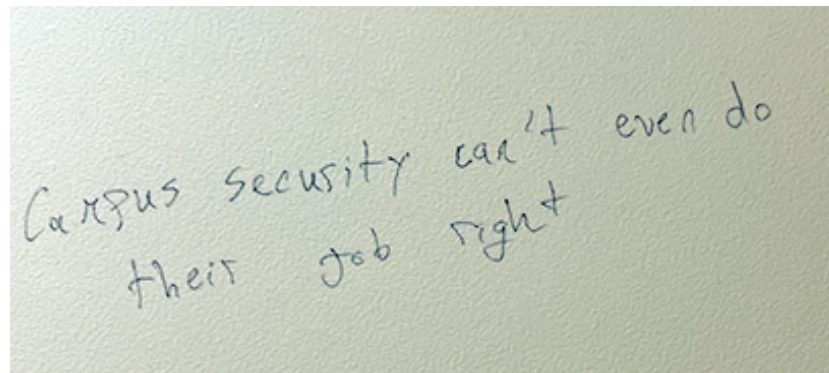
The acronym stands for "all cops are bastards," a message of anti-police sentiment from the 20th century. According to Colin Groundwater, author of *A Brief History of ACAB*, The acronym was originally used in the 1940s by workers on strike and later in the 1980's by the punk and skinhead subcultures, as well as anarchist and anti-authoritarian movements across the world.

The phrase is occasionally coded as 1312, to disguise the acronym with numbers correlated to the numerical place of the letters used in the alphabet. According to the Anti-Defamation League, ACAB is a hate symbol and has been a "slogan of long standing in skinhead culture." According to James Poulter, author of *How 'ACAB' Became the Universal Anti-Police Slogan*, it wasn't until the murder of George Floyd in 2020 that the acronym became more frequently used by those who oppose the police.

The "ACAB" graffiti follows another instance of vandalism in Scholars Hall from earlier in the summer. In the southern stairwell, "FREE PALESTINE" was engraved into a tear in the paint of the wall.

"Northwestern Michigan College takes all reports seriously that may contradict our values of respect, integrity and inclusion. We are committed to maintaining a safe and welcoming environment where all students can achieve their full potential." said Diana Fairbanks, AVP of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communication.

The *White Pine Press* reached out to the NMC Police Academy, but received no comment.



Found in the bathroom in the basement of Scholars Hall



Found in the stairwell of Scholars Hall



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Candidates for NMC Trustee

Q: What are the critical issues facing the NMC Board of Trustees and would I address them?

Seeking full 6-year term

Mark Keely

The critical issues facing the NMC Board of Trustees are diverse and interconnected, primarily revolving around infrastructure, financial sustainability, student support, and modernization.

Aging Infrastructure and Facility Upgrades: Many of NMC's buildings, such as the Osterlin Building, are outdated and require renovation to meet modern standards. I would prioritize allocating resources to these upgrades, ensuring they are energy-efficient and align with long-term sustainability goals.

Student Housing and Affordability: Expanding on-campus housing is crucial to providing affordable options for students. I would advocate for developing new housing facilities and exploring public-private partnerships to accelerate this expansion without putting undue financial strain on the college.

Financial Sustainability: NMC faces financial risks, particularly with its reliance on certain revenue streams. Diversifying income sources, such as expanding specialized programs like the Great Lakes Culinary Institute, and optimizing campus operations, are essential. I would support strategic investments that generate sustainable revenue while ensuring a balance between fiscal responsibility and growth.

Kennard Weaver, incumbent

The greatest risk to NMC in the next 10 years is the current downward trend in demographics and in the growing negative attitude towards traditional liberal arts education. If we do not rapidly advance our technical education, other institutions will fill that gap. NMC is doing very well in marine technology, but our advances in other areas are behind other Michigan community colleges and other educational institutions. A faculty member recently pointed out to the NMC Board that there is a glass ceiling over people who are trained in coding. We need to break through that glass ceiling and move our students more quickly into cybersecurity and other advanced technical areas with well-compensated careers. Offering more challenging courses will attract more students capable of advanced learning, who will make the effort. If we do not, we are at risk of becoming irrelevant or becoming absorbed by another institution and losing local control. NMC needs to continue to distinguish itself and be the college of choice for local residents.

Jordan Ascione-Broad

Broad didn't respond before press time.

Seeking partial term ending on Dec. 31, 2026

Pamela Horne

Particularly as a new Trustee, I will study issues and decisions with an approach that is data-informed and takes into consideration the needs of both the NMC and the greater Grand Traverse communities. I will need to absorb a great deal of information and look forward to learning from the other Trustees and the NMC administration, faculty, and students. Listening to a wide variety of constituencies is also an important aspect of a publicly elected official. My decades long career in higher education also provides me with expertise and context. Important issues that I have preliminarily identified are described Below.

The College's physical plant and land assets are among those about which critical decisions will be made in the next several years. Short- and long-term risks and benefits must be carefully weighed against academic, service, community, and environmental priorities, as well as financial and enrollment forecasts.

Merek Roman

The critical issues facing the NMC Board of Trustees include: **Enhancing Student Success and Workforce Alignment:** According to the Northwest Michigan Works! 2024 report, about 60% of our region's residents aged 25+ have an associate degree or less. We need to develop strategies to attract and support these potential students, especially given the declining high school population. We must align our programs with workforce needs and create pathways for adult learners to return and complete their education, leveraging initiatives like the Michigan Community College Guarantee. Our focus should be on improving our 3-year completion rates, which have risen above pre-pandemic levels, but require continued attention to maintain this positive trend.

Resource Optimization and Program Affordability: With rising tuition costs, as shown by recent BLS data, we need to find innovative ways to keep our programs accessible and affordable. This involves strengthening our community partnerships, as outlined in our strategic goals, to share resources and avoid duplication of efforts. We should explore collaborations with organizations like Networks Northwest to leverage existing resources and create more efficient pathways for student success.

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GVSU helps open doors for surgical first assistant

Michele Coffill

Grand Valley State University

at age 19. Now seven years later, at age 26, Thiebaut is ready to climb the career ladder and Grand Valley State University will help her advance.

Thiebaut earned an associate degree in surgical technology from Baker College in Cadillac. She quickly found a job at a surgical center in Traverse City and enjoyed the work: preparing sterile fields and passing equipment to surgeons.

She later earned an advanced certificate to work as a surgical first assistant and suture and give injections to patients. "A surgeon will have either a first assistant or physician assistant to help in the operating room," Thiebaut said. "That's when I initially noticed the role of a PA in the operating room and became really interested in doing that."

Thiebaut transferred to Munson Medical Center, where she assisted in more complicated surgeries than the typical elective surgeries at the surgical center. And, she met more people who prompted and reinforced her decision to return to college and earn a bachelor's degree.

Yet, going back to college as an adult was nerve-wracking; "terrifying," according to Thiebaut.

Torilyn Thiebaut began working as a surgical technician



Torilyn Thiebaut

Ready to help ease her nerves and mind were plenty of helpful people at the Northwestern Michigan College University Center. There, Thiebaut discovered that GVSU's Allied Health Sciences program would set her on a path to becoming a physician assistant.

She found an accommodating schedule with classes that began at 6 p.m. "I could easily go to work, then go to class in the evenings," she said.

Thiebaut said she enjoyed both in-person and online classes. Jacquelyn Abeyta, assistant director of student engagement, was instrumental in helping Thiebaut choose classes and plan her degree progress.

She will earn a bachelor's degree in allied health sciences in the spring and plans to apply to Grand Valley's Physician Assistant Studies.

"It's exciting. I can see the finish line now," Thiebaut said.

Thiebaut said she drew on her community of supporters to help her manage work and classes.

"People at work have given me great support. I really have an army of people behind me. You get really close to the surgeons you work with and they have given me the confidence that I can do this," she said.

When Thiebaut thinks ahead to working as a physician assistant, she said she is not entirely sure she wants to keep working in an operating room.

"I love the OR but what I like about it is talking with the patients as they go to sleep. It's the patient connections that I've grown to love," she said.

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Pioneering Inclusivity: Traverse City becomes first Certified Autism Destination in Midwest

Eli Stallman
Staff Writer

In August, Traverse City was declared the first Certified Autism Destination in the Midwest and third in the entire world by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). IBCCES is an international organization that educates communities on neurodivergent needs, and provides organizations with training to assist autistic individuals in navigating community spaces. This achievement is a result of IBCCES's collaboration with Traverse City Tourism, a non-profit independent organization with a goal to serve as Traverse City's destination guide.

Being granted the title "Certified Autism Destination" means that a large portion of Traverse City organizations have earned the "Certified Autism Center" (CAC) title — which is earned by completing a series of requirements to ensure the needs of autistic and sensory-sensitive customers are met. This includes specialized training for staff, evaluations of readiness and knowledge conducted by IBCCES, and occasionally onsite reviews.

Meredith Tekin, president of IBCCES said that "We require our certified partners to complete renewal training periodically to ensure they get up-to-date information and reminders on best practices, it's not a one-time program. We all have to continue to learn and pay attention, and IBCCES always includes the lived experiences of autistic individuals in the programming to show a variety of perspectives, along with other data."

These efforts can benefit autistic tourists and members of Traverse City's community by providing accurate support at recreational destinations like the Dennis Museum or various Traverse City hotels. Currently, 22 organizations in Traverse City have completed the CAC process to date.

"It's a huge accomplishment — Traverse City Tourism really led the way to support this initiative and it shows that communities of all sizes can achieve this," said Tekin.

Many NMC faculty and students found the achievement to be a milestone of progress in the world of neurodivergent support. Nancy Gray, head of NMC's Neurodiversity Support Center recognizes this title as "a significant step towards inclusivity, highlighting the importance of accommodating autistic people in community spaces."

Autistic NMC student Freya Simone shares a similar sentiment, saying "I was diagnosed in 2012 or 2013. I have lived in the area my whole life. I think it shows how far we have come on this issue of the stigma around autism. It is a very good thing that

people are understanding the issues that people with autism face."

Collaborative efforts like the ones made by IBCCES and Traverse City organizations have outstanding potential to help lift some amount of burden off of autistic individuals by educating the community. These organizations which work to spread awareness and inclusivity assist in making neurodivergent accommodations not only tolerated, but understood and accepted by communities on a larger scale. Educating the community on autism and the needs of people on the spectrum means autistic people have to overcome less judgment and misunderstanding when going about their lives. "If anything, I know it [increased awareness] has benefited a lot of my fellow autists who don't feel as isolated and alone—people are more apt to express their experiences and less likely to mask 100% of the time. Visibility allows for a stronger community and I only hope that continues to grow!" said Autistic NMC student Ayri Norteña.

Gray also mentions that "Greater awareness has led to improved accommodations, such as sensory-friendly spaces and support systems. This fosters acceptance and understanding, allowing everyone to participate more fully in society and enhancing quality of life for all."

Even the community at NMC has made significant strides toward this acceptance by introducing support systems such as the Neurodiversity Support Center, which assist in making room for neurodivergent students to participate in the academic environment while also accommodating to their needs.

Gray said "We have implemented strategies such as targeting support services, creating sensory space for self-regulation and relaxation, teaching faculty and staff about neurodiversity, and promoting an inclusive campus culture. These initiatives aim to ensure that neurodivergent students feel valued and supported," said Gray.

Simone added, "NMC really has a lot of great resources to help you succeed and make sure you succeed. Another thing is the Osterlin building at NMC is a nice place to relax. I think it's another safe space like the Neurodivergent Center."

While hope remains the biggest takeaway, there is also an air of confusion among students. "I had no idea Traverse City was becoming the first Autism Certified Destination in the midwest. I find that this is both exciting news, while also managing to be extremely confusing" said Norteña, "As an autistic person, I've never felt supported by my city or the businesses here that employ people like myself and other autistic individuals.

Sure there are programs like Michigan Works and Grand Traverse Industries but apart from those things, I've heard of no such support in regards to employment, housing or mental health care ... So I guess overall, confused."

So even considering the significant amount of progress made here in Traverse City, there is no doubt that receiving support and accommodations for needs which are still seen to be unconventional is a difficult feat—especially in educational and work environments.

Simone reminisces on her educational experience, "My entire life from grade school to highschool I never received any good accommodations. My school did not understand neurodivergent students, most failed or dropped out or possibly switched schools. It was very challenging."

"I had a principal tell my parents I would never make it to college due to my autism. I hope that has changed in schools today."

Norteña alluded to their continuous struggle receiving accommodations, saying that "As a whole, I have struggled in a multitude of ways to receive accommodations and general support. I find that unless you fit a specific criteria, support doesn't exist. Even our own disability support on campus is extremely minimal and you have to come up with your own accessibility plan for accommodations which can be extremely difficult if not impossible for some who in the bigger social perspective are fully capable or high functioning adults. It wasn't until the Neurodiversity Center opened on campus that I even felt understood, supported as well as connected to real resources that exist within the community."

NMC's autistic community observed that the minimal level of understanding that many have regarding autism is still an issue, and many community members' view of neurodivergency is narrow despite increasing awareness. "There is still so much misunderstood and misleading information about it [neurodivergency] floating around out there. Once autism was seen as an issue only the severely mentally handicapped alone dealt with, or ADHD was the overactive kid who needed more outside time or stricter rules. Thankfully we are moving away from those stereotypes" said Norteña.

Tekin explained that to continue to educate community members, "We need to support awareness with actual knowledge, acceptance, and action. IBCCES frequently speaks at industry conferences to educate organizations about the need and impact for more inclusion, in addition to the programs we provide that include training, certification and ongoing support."

While proper support and understanding is still lacking, the efforts of NMC students, faculty, and many Traverse City organizations are slowly but surely continuing to spread awareness and improve the lives of autistic people locally—tourists and residents alike. Furthermore, being recognized as the first Certified Autism Destination in the Midwest has been a profound achievement for Traverse City in this process of fostering proper and thorough neurodiverse accommodations, and is a title to be celebrated among NMC students and Traverse City residents.

Lastly, Tekin shared her advice for autistic college students trying to navigate a world that isn't built for them. "Advocating for yourself can be difficult sometimes, but it is still something that is needed, unfortunately. Make sure you're up to date on your rights to access, support organizations, and businesses who are working toward inclusion to show those efforts have tangible effects." She continues, "Also, it's up to everyone to be advocates for inclusion, not just those who are personally impacted."



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You Take The Initiative: Alan Bersin Gives Students Insight into the US Immigration System

Minnie Bardenhagen Staff Writer On Oct. 9, former assistant secretary in the Office of Policy at the Department of Homeland Security and Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, Alan Bersin, sat down with the *White Pine Press* and a group of students for an exclusive interview.

Immigration has been a hot topic going into the Nov. 5 election, with a high number of voters citing it as one of their top concerns. Bersin, a voice of expertise on the issue of the southern border, offered insight into the current state of the system.

“The division we have in the country and the ineffectiveness of Congress... really leaves us with an immigration system that is anachronistic,” he explained, “It can’t deal with the current circumstances that we face.”

The United States Southern border is not just a current issue. Bersin described how immigration has always stirred the country, “It’s the fear of the unknown, the idea of us against the ‘others’, that has always, in history, generated this kind of heat and division about borders and insecurity about borders.”

While much of the national conversation around immigration has revolved around urban areas, especially sanctuary cities, the agricultural Traverse City area tends to reap the benefits of migrant workers. In a time where it is difficult for the area’s orchards and farms to find labor, migrants, both documented and undocumented, fill in some of those much needed spots.

Bersin acknowledged the H-2A visa program, which helps employers find foreign workers when they are in need, “There are an unlimited number of visas for agricultural workers to come into the country on a seasonal basis and pick crops.”

“The interesting question is: why haven’t they arrived in Traverse City? Why is it so difficult to get people to come up to Northern Michigan?”

He then offered a proposition to the student body, “I’d suggest that maybe NMC needs to organize a project to figure out: how do we actually build the network that could take advantage of lawful visa programs, the H-2A, to bring workers here in a way that’s consistent with the law, with places to live, and guaranteed legal wages.”

“If you get that started here at NMC, I commit that I will help you make the connections that you need to connect with the Department of Homeland Security,” he kindly gestured, “but you take the initiative.”

That was not the only suggestion Bersin gave to students. He spoke to how academic institutions are studying the border in terms of migration, trade, and cross-cultural influences.

“Another thing students could do is actually ... promote the idea of border study,” he said, adding that there are ways to tie it to life in Northern Michigan, “Think about the ways in which your situation near Canada ... How has that affected life near Traverse City?”

Bersin explained that in order to figure out why migrants chose to make the journey to the United States, one must examine both the “push” and “pull” factors.

“What are the push factors out of countries that are seeing large migration?” he described, “It goes from political conflict and violence, the kind of thing that’s been happening in Cuba and Venezuela, or it’s just the impoverishment, the poverty, of economic circumstances in places like El Salvador,

Guatemala, or Honduras, that push people to take the chance of a perilous journey.”

Bersin continued to describe the role of the receiving country, “It’s also the policy of the receiving country that will determine this. Whether or not the United States will deport you if you get there. Whether or not the United States will permit you to come into the country on an asylum claim ... ‘Can I get into the United States? Can I get a job there? Can I reunify with my family?’ Those are the pull factors, the magnetic forces that pull migrants toward the United States.”

On the campaign trail, former president Donald Trump has molded the topic of immigration into one of his strongest issues by repeatedly referring to Southern border migrants as “violent criminals,” and claiming that migrants are a direct cause of many voter concerns such as the housing market. Bersin gave insight into the effect of this rhetoric.

“We’ve seen the demonization of migrants in ways that, frankly, is unsupported by the facts,” he explains, “but it plays to that fear, that tribal instinct of fear.”

“Yes, you have a fraction of migrants who are criminals and have successfully avoided the vetting process to enter the country. The notion that migrants create the criminal problems that exist in this country is a falsehood.”

That being said, it’s not only the right-wing politicians that fuel this fire. According to Bersin, each side of the spectrum currently has a flawed perception on the issue.

“Yes, Donald Trump and the MAGA group demonize. They demonize Mexicans. They demonize migrants. They talk about Haitians eating cats. All of this foolishness,” he described, “On the other hand, if you go to the left of the spectrum on this issue, you find a lot of attitudes about open borders and the idea that anyone in need of refuge should have the right to enter this country.”

Bersin, who described himself as a “radical moderate,” argues that the current US asylum system is deeply flawed.

“It’s not sustainable to believe that the American asylum system can address every human misfortune that exists on the earth,” he said of the left’s policies, “We’ve lost the center in American politics where we can find those moderate solutions that have tended to be the success story of American history.”

With all the rhetoric surrounding the subject of immigration, Bersin gave his understanding of what students must face when tackling intensely partisan issues.

“This is one of the great challenges for higher education in today’s world ... The disinformation, the deep fakes, and the inability to make sense of facts is an obstacle that you have to figure out a way to overcome.”

“You have to find reliable sources of facts in your lives,” he advises, “Hold your judgment, make sure you get the facts, and take Mark Twain at his word which was ‘let’s get the facts, then you can distort them as much as you’d like.’”



Photo by Jacob Dodson

Transgender Students Endure Anti-Trans Onslaught Ahead of Election

Emma Marion Editor-In-Chief As the Nov. 5 election nears, former President Donald Trump and his campaign have increased their attacks on the transgender and genderqueer community, reportedly spending millions of dollars in an effort to win over voters. The advertisements have been most commonly aired at NFL and college football games. According to the Trans Legislation Tracker, 581 anti-trans bills have been introduced to state legislators, and 80 in Congress. This adds up to a combined 661 bills.

While state legislators introduce and pass these bills, Abby Cherry, The Northwest Campaign Manager for Equality Michigan adds that “Our Supreme Court here is huge for the state of Michigan, and that can determine so many things for all of our rights here in the state, but specifically the transgender community.”

“Just like the conversion therapy ban was passed. Now it’s being challenged by a church in Holland, so more than likely that would be going to the Michigan Supreme Court,” said Cherry.

To date, nine anti-trans bills have been introduced in Michigan according to the Trans Legislation Tracker. Introduced by state representative Steve Carra in 2023, Bill MI HJRE aims to amend the state constitution to define transgender individuals out of Michigan law. The bill would accomplish this by defining the terms “female” and “male” as an individual who has specific reproductive organs, tying these terms to biological sex rather than one’s gender.

However, the anti-trans bill with the most sponsors from Michigan state senators (42 to be precise) is MI HB4345, introduced in April 2023 by representative Bill G. Schuette (District 95). The bill calls for adding “religious exception to certain provisions of the Elliott-Larsen civil rights act.” Elliott-Larsen is Michigan’s civil rights act that took effect in 1977. It protects against a wide variety of sexual and racial discrimination in different institutions, such as housing and employment. In March 2023 Governor Gretchen Whitmer

signed a bill expanding the Elliott-Larsen civil rights act to include protection of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

For Cherry, the local bills are disturbing, “I kind of expect it from a national spotlight, but when you see it in your backyard and in your hometown and where you’re from and where you feel safe, that’s ... scary.”

On top of unprecedented amounts of state-level anti-trans legislation, Trump’s campaign has significantly increased spending on transgender attack advertisements, most frequently airing during NFL and college football games. One of those advertisements, titled “Nonsense,” attacks Vice President Kamala Harris’s 2019 statements supporting transgender inmates receiving hormone replacement therapy and sex reassignment surgery. However, Trump kept those policies in place during his presidential term.

The advertisement ends with “Kamala is for they/them, president Trump is for you.”

“I think they’re kind of just grasping at straws at this point ... It’s definitely scary,” NMC student Ayla Schnepf said about the Republican party’s attack on transgender rights.

Freya Simone, student leader of NMC’s pride club, agreed. “It reminds me of what happened during the [presidential] debate, just like ‘oh they’re eating dogs.’”

A second Trump presidency could severely limit the types of gender affirming care the transgender community can receive.

“After years and years of waiting and not going for it, I’m finally on track to get top surgery,” said NMC student Thursday Maurel. “And I have been sitting here afraid of if Trump wins, am I not going to be able to do this?”

“I have friends who have gotten surgeries recently, and they were just like, ‘oh my god, I’m so glad I did this now,’ there’s a lot of fear there,” Maurel added.

One queer-identifying NMC student who preferred to remain anonymous shared that “I can’t trust him [Trump]. I really don’t even want to test the waters of him.”

“A lot of this stuff worries me. It really does. And it feels like Trump is like the actual embodiment of fear for me. And it’s really scary seeing all these Trump signs out there and just watching my friends be super depressed because they feel like they can’t be themselves in here [public].”

Maurel opined that “Kamala really is our best option, because there is no other option.”

As anti-trans bills continue to pass in the more conservative leaning southern United States, some students have transgender friends and family that have been affected.

“My Uncle is a trans-man, he’s a teacher. So there are places he can no longer teach,” said NMC student Maddy Randolph. “He cannot teach anywhere in the South ... even if he wanted to come closer to home he couldn’t.”

Moving to conservative, anti-trans states poses extra hurdles for transgender individuals.

“I have a trans-masculine friend who is still trying to figure out their identity, and he just moved to Florida for school,” said Schnepf. “And that scared the crap out of me. Cause I’m like, I don’t know what is going to happen to him.”

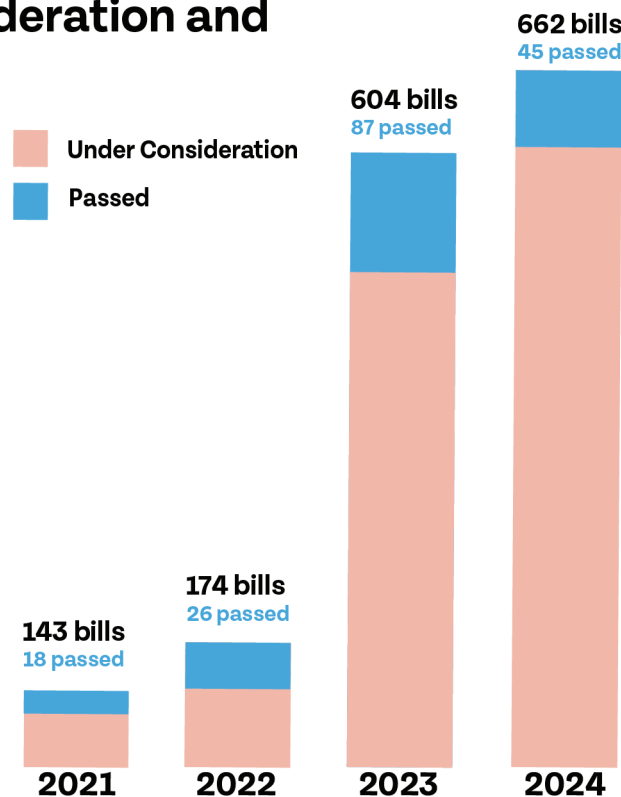
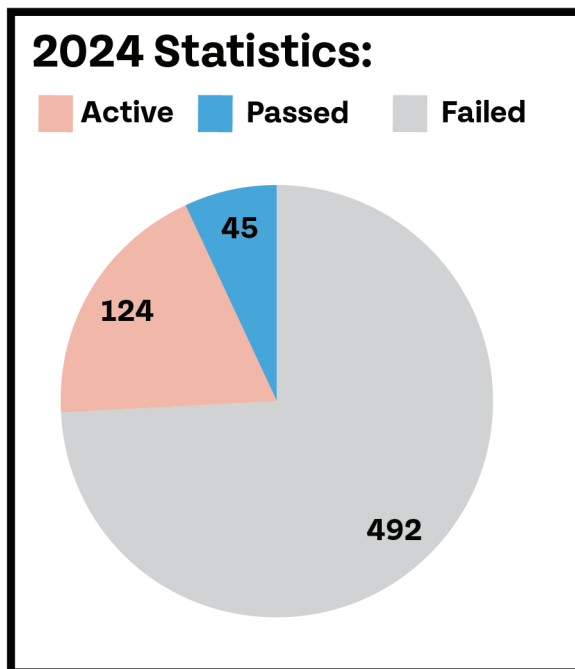
While the political climate around transgender rights remains charged, the queer community remains resilient.

“Every election I’ve been stressed out,” said Cherry. “I get very depressed, and all the things. And this year, I don’t have that ... I know I don’t have it because I’m doing this work, and so I’m out here, and I’m talking to people every day ... instead of just hoping for the best.”

Sometimes, what helps is simply “a professor or maybe like a distant family member that you might not expect,” Simone said.

Or as Maurel added, focusing on “things you can change, things you can do in this present moment.”

Anti-Trans Bills Under Consideration and passed, 2021-2024



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Sen. Bernie Sanders Amplifies Stakes of Election at Traverse City's Milliken Auditorium



Photo by Jacob Dodson

Minnie Bardenhagen
Staff Writer

On Oct. 13, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders visited the Dennon Museum on NMC's campus to promote vice president Kamala Harris's bid for president.

Throughout US history, younger voters have been less likely to show up to the polls than older voters. In a vital swing state like Michigan, a candidate would want to reach as many potential voters as possible, so going to a college campus would be strategic to try and garner support from a younger demographic.

However, inside of the auditorium, the vast majority of the crowd consisted of an older demographic, with only a couple students scattered throughout.

One of those students, Apple-Lee Anderson, was asked his opinion on the lack of young people at the rally.

"It solidifies what the older generation thinks of the younger generation," he explained, "They're also not doing a lot to get younger people out."

Possible explanations for the low student turnout could range from the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza, to lack of promotion on campus of the event. Young people have been critical of the approach that the current Democratic administration has taken, and some are hesitant to support Harris, as she has taken a similar stance on the war to the current President, Joe Biden.

Even with the lack of students in attendance, Sanders made several appeals to the college-aged demographic. The climate crisis, which had become less of a main talking point for either of the presidential candidates, but was brought back into people's minds after hurricanes Helene and Milton swept through North Carolina and Florida, is a large issue for many young voters.

"Anyone who has turned on the TV recently has seen the destruction, loss of life, in Florida. Seen the terrible hurricane Helene in North Carolina," Sanders described, "The entire scientific community, no dispute, they all understand that climate change is real, and it is caused by human activity. And they all agree that this is an existential threat to the planet."

Sanders emphasized the finality of the climate change crisis if Trump were to be president again, even claiming that

"If, God forbid, Trump is elected, the struggle against climate change is over. It's over, we lose."

"If the largest economy on earth, which is America, turns its back on the struggle against climate change, China will follow, Europe will follow, and so on." Sanders explains. "For the sake of our children and the future of this planet, we have got to defeat Trump and transform our energy."

Sanders also focused a large part of his speech on income inequality, which is another relevant issue for plenty of young people. The senator highlighted how the working-class demographic spans both parties. "It is no secret that many of Donald Trump's supporters are angry, and Kamala Harris's supporters are angry. Working class people in this country have a right to be angry."

The solution to this unrest, Sanders insisted, is a Harris presidency. "Kamala Harris has laid out an agenda for working families that is strong. Does it go quite as far as I would go? No."

Sanders deemed Harris' plan as somewhat frugal, and insisted that "The quote-on-quote 'far left agenda' is, by the way, supported by the overwhelming majority of the American people."

Throughout the event, the crowd showed their enthusiasm for Sanders and the Harris agenda, chanting "Kamala Harris for the people!", "Not going back!" and "When we fight, we win!"

Healthcare, an issue relevant to almost all demographics, was another large topic of discussion for Sanders. "Today, in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, we are the only major country to not guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right."

Increasing access to healthcare is a major focus of the Democratic party and many believe it is necessary to improve the quality of life for American citizens. "If you are rich in America, by large you will live as long as the people in other wealthy nations. If you are working-class in America, you will live 5 to 10 years shorter."

Sanders also discussed women's rights, a strong issue for the Democratic party. Since the 2022 overturn of Roe V Wade, which brought the question of abortion access back

to the states, the Democratic party has staunchly opposed the overturn.

"Since the inception of our country, the very beginning, women and their male allies have been struggling to make certain women become first-class citizens," Sanders explained, "It's not ancient history."

He echoed the Harris Campaign's stance on abortion access, "Maybe the most basic, fundamental right that women and their male allies have struggled for, is literally the right for women to control their own bodies."

Sanders also spent time criticizing Donald Trump's presidency. He focused on criticizing Trump's character, even using colloquial insults.

"When you lose an election, you 'man up' so to speak. You don't lie about the election results, you don't whine, you don't try to undermine the very foundations of American society."

Sanders urged the audience to consider Trump as a role model, "I'm gonna ask parents out there, and I don't care about your politics, but as an example, a model for your children ... Do you really wanna have someone in the White House who doesn't know the difference between truth and lies?"

Sanders claimed that Trump's behavior poses a threat to democracy itself, placing emphasis on how big money corrupts politics. He qualifies this statement by admitting that political corruption goes both ways. "There are democratic billionaires putting in a lot of money into the Democratic candidates."

The solution to this problem, according to Sanders, is to "get rid of this terrible Supreme Court Citizens United decision," referencing Citizens United V. FEC (2010) which establishes that "corporate funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited."

Taking the time to campaign in Michigan is strategic due to the nature of Michigan as a swing state. In 2020, Biden won Michigan by only a slim margin, and in 2016, Trump won the state by an even narrower margin.

Sander made sure to stress the importance of his visit. "I'm in Michigan because the likelihood is: your state, which is so very important in terms of the electoral college, will probably be decided by a few thousand votes."

On-Campus Student Engagement Is Faltering. What's Next?

Eli Stallman
Staff Writer

William Pappas
Staff Writer

Currently, student engagement on NMC's campus is at a low point. With minimal attendance at club meetings and community activities, student leaders in NMC's community are working to make connection more accessible to students. Still, increasing engagement has remained a difficult feat.

The Hawk Owl Leadership Coalition is a regular set of meetings hosted by the Student Government Association (SGA) to bring together student leaders. This allows leaders to better understand the important role that SGA plays for student groups. This year, SGA rebranded these meetings, now called Leadership Luncheons, to allow for better and more consistent collaboration between student groups. The most recent luncheon was themed around increasing student involvement within groups and participation in campus life as a whole.

Over the course of the luncheon, many promising conversations were had on ideas that student group leaders would like to implement. Many also expressed the complications their clubs were having when recruiting and retaining new members, with a general consensus that scheduling meetings to fit so many different schedules was nearly impossible. Many of the students at NMC are working part-time along with taking a full load of classes, and the intensity of such a schedule makes it increasingly difficult to be involved in extracurriculars—especially clubs that meet at the same time every week.

Nineteen year old Adyn McHugh, science and marine tech student and president of the Marine Tech Society, explains “it's incredibly hard to get engagement from your students at all. I get the same maybe 5 to 6 people at each club meeting.”

“I think ... what it really is, is busyness ... because a lot of the classes are scattered times. It's never easy to find one time that works for a lot of people.”

Even navigating a work schedule that fits with school is a feat in itself. Chase Snell, 19 year old Mathematics Major mentions “I work as well as school, so getting those both in is a bit of an issue ... Typically I can't attend activities, they just conflict.”

Alexander Brooks, engineering major and president of NMC's astronomy club, skyward scholars, states that “Unfortunately, many of us are going to be taking 14, 16, sometimes even 18 [credits] and with full schedules, it's going to be even fuller study schedule, and oftentimes students just—especially if you are a day student—generally will not have the time to engage in any other extracurricular because you're so focused on your studies.”

Twenty-two year old Heather Trudeau, an aspiring criminal justice student, shares the sentiment. “The reason I'm not involved more is just because I'm working so much. It would be cool to get more involved and make more friends, but I'm working four or five days a week sometimes.”

Furthermore, many NMC students struggle with a long commute on top of their busy schedules. Many students that would otherwise be strong assets to clubs could not justify the extra time, gas, and energy required to regularly participate on campus. Twenty year old Lydia Middaugh, a visual communications student, wants to be a more active

member of the His House group on campus. “[The meetings] coincide with my church's events, like Thursday night game nights for example, I have prayer meetings on that night and then also on Sundays I could make it to House church, but it's a long drive in.”

The level of commitment required to participate regularly on campus is difficult and can be too much of a hassle for students with a long commute. “I think a lot of it is just that it's more convenient to stay home than do something,” McHugh said.

For others, the lack of structure compared to high school can make joining extracurriculars intimidating. 18 year old Piper Stowe, a first year liberal arts student said “I guess it came easier in high school ... But this is like a complete change of pace so it's kind of nerve racking,” she continued, “It feels difficult to put myself in a situation where I'm in a club.”

Getting out there can certainly be an intimidating ask for many, and for some students it may be less scary to socialize online, especially with a busy schedule like most college students have. Going out of the way to do something like a club may not even feel worth it in a society where we connect online every day. McHugh says, “I hate to be the person that is like ‘ahg, everybody is on their phone,’ but I think we're all so plugged in to our world that we forget to like, I don't know.” Trudeau seconds that feeling, saying “I feel like other than class I don't have much connection ... Everybody's got headphones on or is looking at a screen.”

It is also apparent that word about community activities may not be reaching students as much as it could be. Stow said that most of her information about groups comes from word of mouth. “I have two teachers that do a really good job of promoting stuff like that, like making sure we check the student activity calendar and promoting stuff that's part of their classroom like study abroad meetings.”

Brooks added, “I think if you are wanting to look at a higher attendance, if there was lower attendance, there needs to be more accessibility to information about when those events are being done.”

While lack of connection is a multifaceted subject that is different for everyone, and there is still a struggle to connect, many students are making efforts to be more involved with the community. Student leaders are also working to make that involvement more accessible to everyone.

McHugh said “What we're trying to do is more consistent meeting times and we are also doing pre-month schedules, so like within the next few weeks I'll finalize the November schedule and send it out to everybody so that they have time to account for it.”

“We're just trying to figure out our best- what works best for people and try and make it more consistent for them, and make sure they can plan for it.”

As work continues to be done to unite NMC students, simply being aware that lack of connection is an issue allows for impactful efforts to be made. Middaugh shared that things are starting to change for her, saying “I've been meeting lots of new people this semester, I feel like I have been more outgoing this semester” she added “for the most part [campus] feels really homey.”



Photo credit William Pappas



Photo by Sawyer Harper

Inside NMC's Refugee Simulation: A Student's Perspective

Joe Lyons
Guest Writer

On Sept. 27, 22 NMC students including myself crammed into the back of a white electrical van. Jim Bensley, the director of International Services at NMC, dressed in a green uniform, a beret, black sunglasses, and armed with a club drove the van haphazardly around campus, before off loading the students in the woods.

Passages is an interactive simulation meant to spread awareness of the hardships refugees and immigrants face when attempting to cross borders seeking asylum. It breaks the participants into family groups of four people each. These family groups challenge students to consider the age of their characters as well as language barriers that isolate them from aid.

My family was two children, a single mother, and an aunt; I was an 8-year-old girl named River. After being dropped off into the woods the students were told to put on blindfolds and run in opposite directions. Speakers in the woods echoed around us the sounds of bombs dropping and helicopters searching for us.

I remember trying to think how a child would react to being lost in the dark, with all the chaos of their community trying to find one another; I chose to sit down and cry for my mother. As luck would have it I was found by my family, but the next random event assigned to my group broke one of my character's legs.

Hazel Finfrock, a fellow student, and one time aunt for the simulation, elected to carry me on her back for the rest of the day while my mother kept track of my 10-year-old brother.

Finfrock remembers a challenging section of the simulation

where the border patrol stopped the group, forcing the refugees to get on their knees. They were looking for bribes, "I had nothing to buy my way into safety, I felt very helpless, and looked around hoping someone else had something to bribe," Finfrock said.

Each group had been given immigration paperwork, and when the guards couldn't find anything of value from the group, they took the papers instead.

As a child I couldn't help in these situations. The Guards swore at us in languages we could not speak, and treated us like criminals. Eventually the refugees and my family were taken to a holding facility.

"I genuinely didn't know what to do I should do, and I couldn't communicate with any of the officials there." Finfrock was elected to speak for our family and plead a case for supplies and aid. However, our family only knew the regional dialect of our home country, so the border clerks could not understand us.

"That was a nightmare. There was a huge communication barrier. We were miserable and needed help." Finfrock remembers being met with a very cold response, making her feel like a burden.

After what seemed like an age of waiting at the facility and being the last group to be allowed entry across the simulation border, our families were told we could return to our country once it had stabilized.

"It was just dropped back off. There's no more war, there's also nothing left," Finfrock remembers that after being returned to our home country no aid or support was available.

The displaced families had to salvage to try to find supplies to support their families.

While searching for supplies my own character found a landmine. I remember sitting on the ground being taken out from the simulation and seeing a few students who weren't in any of the families watching. I waved and one asked how I was handling the game.

Later I recognized that student as they recounted their story of fleeing Syria at the age of 5 in 2011 to the Passages students. they had lost family and still couldn't visit many of their graves.

Imagining this student, younger than myself and younger than my character when they actually had to flee her home country, made both myself and Finfrock realize just how real these tragedies are.

"Had I not gone through the Passages roleplay and listened to them speak afterwards I would not have known that they had gone through that all. Yes, that's another student at NMC." Finfrock continued "I wouldn't have known what they'd gone through."

These simulations aren't fun, but they are important to help break through the isolated perspectives many people find themselves in. Both Finfrock and myself felt like Passages helped us recognize these are not far off issues and that people who live in our own communities have had to go through the worst ordeals imaginable and still don't have closure for many of their families.

We got to go home after five hours, some people are still waiting.



Cutouts Marks The Return of The Smile

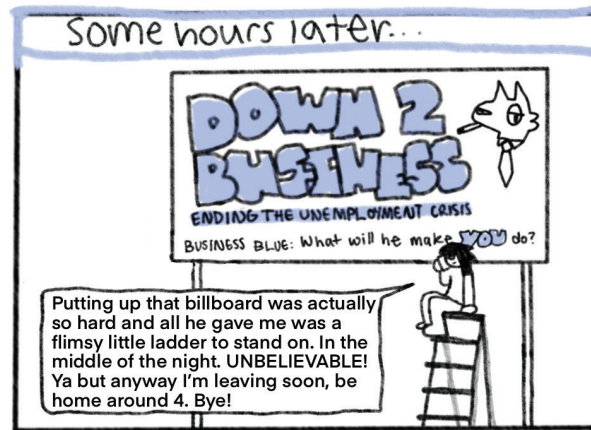
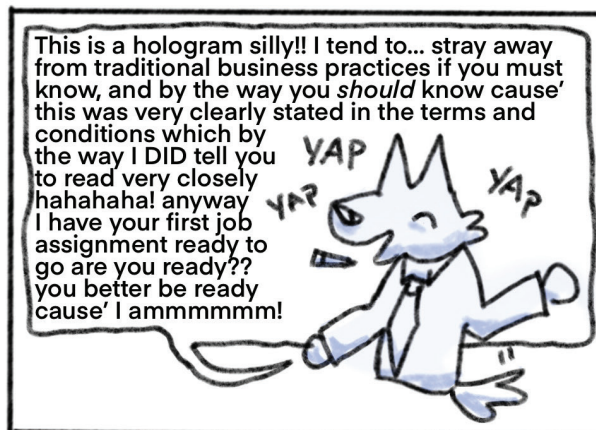
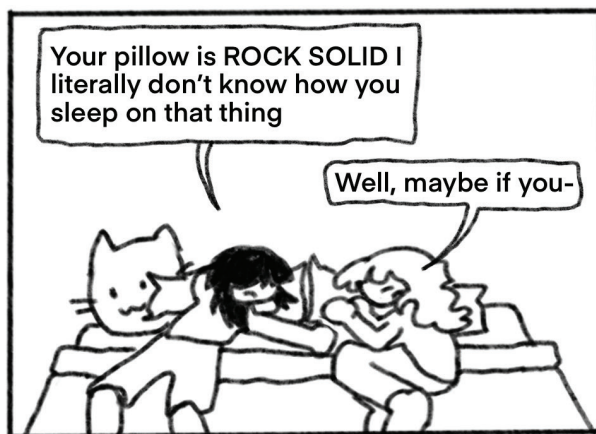
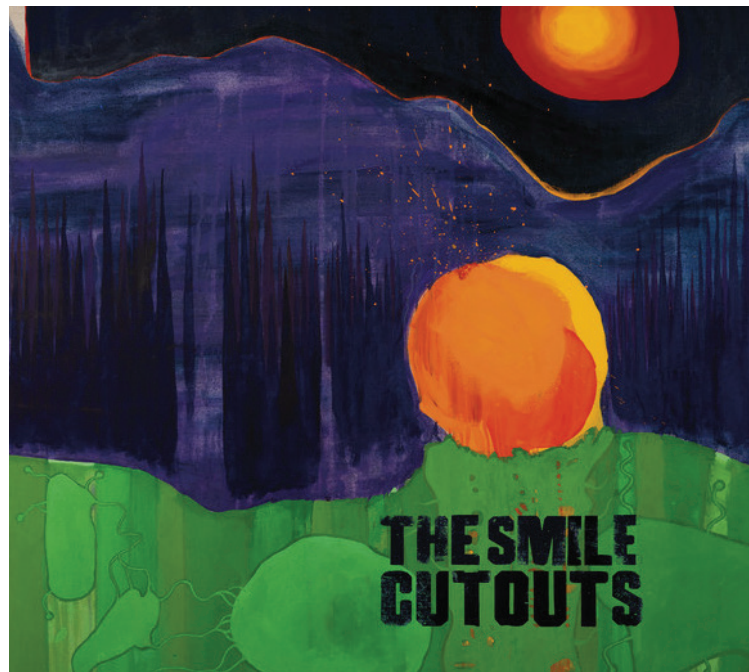
Emma Marion
Editor-In-Chief

Out of seemingly nowhere, The Smile has released their second album of the year: Cutouts. For context, The Smile is a small group composed of the vocalist from Radiohead, Thom Yorke, the drummer for Sons of Kemet, Tom Skinner, and Radiohead's guitarist, Jonny Greenwood. Their first record was released in 2022, with their sophomore self-titled album releasing two years later in January 2024. Both records made a substantial splash in the music critic world upon their respective releases. I remember seeing promotional posters and window-clings still on record store doors for their self-titled album when I visited London in late March. When the minds behind Radiohead release a project, music-heads generally take notice.

That being said, I don't hold The Smile to a Radiohead standard, I don't see The Smile as a pseudo-Radiohead group, and to be frank, I don't place Radiohead on a pedestal. This made Cutouts for me, all the more disappointing.

The project starts strong with its first track, "Foreign Spies." Its sparkling synths and dreamy vocals are immediately captivating and moving. Track two, "Instant Psalm," uses chilled-out strings to elicit the feeling of walking through a calm forest in the middle of a cool summer day. Then, track three, "Zero Sum," gets funky with a cowbell, quick plucky guitars, and brass wind instruments.

From there, the songs become less captivating. While it's a fine ambient art-rock record, it fails to remain interesting for its full 44-minute runtime. It doesn't iterate on itself or introduce new ideas, leaving the project feeling homogenous. The Smile has definitely found their sound, but they can't seem to break out of it.



created by: Eli Stallman

Campus Quotes

“How are you feeling about your opinions at the polls?”

Alex Roush: Biology & Music Programs

“I’m a little biased because I tend to lean Green Party, and the problem with that is that we have yet to see a third party president... so it’s kind of like picking the best of two worlds that I’m not exactly the biggest fan of ... I voted Kamala Harris for president because I just know that Democrats have a decent history of taking environmental issues seriously.”

Mason Moran: Audio Tech Program

“She hasn’t even talked that much about Gaza, and what she’s going to do there... I have no idea what Kamala is going to do when she gets in office. Yeah, we have problems in our own country, but also, you know, as the big superpower that we are, we have this responsibility to at least have opinions on the other side of the globe... and, you know, reasonable, good opinions, that aren’t ‘lets support mass genocide.’”

Valorie Lantz: Education Program

“I’m feeling very pessimistic about the candidates. I feel that neither of them align very well with my political views, and that the closer candidate to [those views] is leaning further and further away from me as the election reaches nearer ... My biggest hope is that at the very least they could attempt to get rid of the yearly military funding given to Israel, I mean billions of dollars every year are sent their way for the military, almost half of Israel’s military force is made up by US money, so I’d hope to see that change.”

Ava Barts: Visual Communications

“I’m scared. I am scared to see what happens ... Women’s reproductive rights is very important to me, and it has affected me in the past, and affected the people around me ... It’s something I’m really scared about. Things with Project 2025 and birth control, or how [he would] control birth control and limit it ... That’s something I’m really scared about. Just my rights being taken away ... [Kamala’s] not perfect, but really nobody is, and she’s a lot better than the other one.”