

# Injustice and inequalities inside Augie



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by Olivia Smith p11

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# This is not a trend

The Observer asked for submissions on the topic of social justice from the Augustana community.



Both graphics on this spread were submitted by sophomore Daisy Lorenzano. The Observer thanks Daisy for sharing these graphics.

# ‘How Long?’ the speech before resignation

## Intro by Observer Staff

### Speech by Destined Darlington Sehgbear Jr.

Destined Darlington Sehgbear Jr., former student senator in the Student Government Association (SGA), represented 278 international students. On Jan. 21, Sehgbear announced his resignation to SGA over difficulties to gather the organization's time and resources to address the concerns of his constituents. On Jan. 26, the Observer received his resignation speech, entitled “How Long?” and asked Sehgbear to talk about his decision to leave SGA.

“I realized it was time to make a speech so that we can create awareness, not just in SGA, but administration can get to know the concerns that have not been attended to,” Sehgbear said.

Sehgbear met with President Bahls late last term to share information of bias towards a domestic student over international student applicants for a managing position in the Dining Services. The position sought out applicants with previous experience in the dining hall, but the position went to a first-year domestic student who hadn't worked in

the hall before.

“I've met with the president and he promised that there will be

revised policies coming up especially with the issue of campus job disparity,” Sehgbear said. “He said he was not aware of that, but now that we have brought it up to his attention, this issue, he was going to make sure to set up a committee to look into and see if they can revise the policies.”

Sehgbear went on to explain how federal funding, TRIO grants, were only designed to help domestic students, and the college should create a mechanism to help international students who were also struck with the same financial difficulties.

“That is a fact. That is a reality of an international student experience. It is just a feeling that comes with it...It is the feeling of abandonment. The feeling of neglect,” Sehgbear said.

For the remainder of spring term Sehgbear will be working towards uniting all international student groups into a coalition. The coalition could bring up

main concerns to admin with the full force and support of the greater international student community.

Sehgbear's speech, which has been edited for space, to SGA is included below.

“Tonight is a beautiful night. Unfortunately, it's going to be my last night with you as international senator of the SGA. Coming up with

this decision stole a lot from my mental health, and a lot more from my happiness because this has been a position in which I have found myself doing the things I care about. Representing the interests of the most diverse student group at the college has been a privilege, and I will cherish that for the rest of my life. In the end, sometimes the decisions we make depend not just on us alone. I have used study hours and stayed late nights to frame the bits and pieces of this speech in my head, in hopes that one day I will muster the courage to inform the student body about why I will be leaving the SGA, and tonight is ultimately the long awaited time.

As you can see, I have come with a white sheet of paper in my hands. While this paper holds the ink-spills that adorn it, it also contains the stranded concerns of my constituency. Thus, tardiness takes away nothing from the content of this speech, whose coherent lines are solidified by pragmatic realities and united by a common urge.

The title of this speech is called “How Long?”. When I say “how long” and with a question mark, I am asking “YOU” about the duration of time that we must keep sitting on the fence and watching the body of international students being tortured and dehumanized through various forms of racial discrimination. And when I say “YOU” with all three letters capitalized in quotation marks, I am referring to members of the Executive Board; heads of committees, senators in different capacities and faculty members who are absent from this meeting.

So how long must “YOU” continue to pretend that you care about the issues of international students when it's glaringly clear that “YOU” don't? How long must “YOU” continue to profile and target students who bear a different perspective from yours? How long must you continue to scrap my ideas and sweep the concerns of my constituents under the rug only because I

commit myself to the reason for which I was elected? How long must “YOU” continue to use rhetoric to dehumanize and treat international students like second-class students to their domestic counterparts? How long must “YOU” continue to sleep on us and only realize our relevance to the college when it's time for diversity awards? How long must “YOU” continue to make us feel like we don't belong at a college that promises diversity, equity and inclusion? Lastly, how long must “YOU” continue to decorate the flaws and inability of the college to provide equal access to resources for both domestic and international students by posting attractive pictures and stories on your social media pages? As a matter of fact, I could keep sliding down the wide slope of “how-longs”, but if you have not felt any remorse from the few I have presented so far, then the rest of the speech is for you!

For too long international students have been taken for granted at Augustana College. But if you don't know what I am talking about here, I ask you to spare a minute of your time and listen to the description of the college's backyard and what life is for students who unfortunately find themselves there.

Where the concerns of international students are taken for granted. The issue of employment disparity remains a major challenge at the college. Evidence shows that there are more employment opportunities on campus for domestic students than there are for international students. In fact, the primary employer of international students at Augustana is Dining Services. What's more, the attention of the SGA and the President of the college has been brought to this issue.

During the Fall Semester last year (2020), a student from Ethiopia shared her experience of discrimination involv-

ing Augustana Dining Services. According to the student, she applied for a supervisor position at the CSL along with other international students. While the position requires all candidates to be students who have worked at least one term in Augustana Dining Services, a first-year domestic student with no prior experience ended up as the preferred candidate above her and the other qualified international students who applied for the job. Again, the issue was

the college providing NO alternative resource to help international students in similar situations.

Mr. Speaker, if these counts are not enough to be classified as an act of injustice, I will go one step forward to share my own experience in the SGA as a student from the college's backyards.

It is no secret to anyone that when I joined the SGA as an international senator, I proposed a number of projects that could possibly enhance the

experience of both current and prospective international students at the college. These included the following:

i) That the college should make Handshakes accessible to students during the admission process and provide resources after enrollment so that international students may obtain their Social Security Numbers sooner to compete for campus jobs with their domestic counterparts.

ii) That the college should ensure host family opportunities (especially during school breaks) to help first-year international students who have no relatives here in the USA get acclimated to their new environment.

iii) That the SGA should increase the number of international senator seats from 2 to 5 in order to have more international students pushing the agenda of their constituency. This comes from the scenario where there are only 2 international senator positions in the SGA senate of over 30 senators.

iv) That the SGA should provide resources for the creation of an “international student coalition” in order to foster unity among the various cultural groups on campus and consolidate their advocacies.

Up to this point, Mr. Speaker, none of the above mentioned projects has been implemented by the SGA. How long?”

*Full speech* on the Observer website.

**“Evidence shows that there are more employment opportunities on campus for domestic students than there are for international students.”**

**-Sehgbear Jr**

reported to the SGA only to be swept under the rug.

While the Covid-19 pandemic has affected both domestic and international students on the same scale, the college recently launched a \$1.3 million TRIO Scholars Program to “provide services to low-income and/or first generation students, as well as students with disabilities.” Describing the significance of the program, President Bahls said and I quote: “At Augustana, we see the TRIO program as another way we can help improve the upward mobility of students. He continued. “We are committed to helping ALL Augie students and providing pathways toward high-demand careers”. However, only domestic students are eligible for the TRIO program with



*Darlington Sehgbear/Submission*

Destined Darlington Sehgbear Jr., then international student senator, speaks at the Vigil For Lives Lost, Sept. 24 2020.



# Allies need to be present

by Michelle Quinn  
Opinion Column

It is not hard to be an ally. But, there are important differences between performative allyship and real allyship.

If you are a member of a non-marginalized group and claiming to be an ally, but you're using your platform to advocate in counter productive and superficial ways, you are a performative ally.

"Performative allyship usually involves the 'ally' receiving some kind of reward — on social media, it's that virtual pat on the back for being a 'good person' or 'on the right side,'" said Policy Exchange, "Activism can't begin and end with a hashtag."

If you would like to become a real ally, then you need to start actively advocating and supporting your marginalized peers.

You can start small by attending events on campus. The Office of Student Inclusion and Diversity puts on events every month. There are multiple cultural groups on campus that put on events to continue the conversation about diversity and inclusion.

These events are for everybody, not

just people of color. So, we are inviting you. Please, take this as your personal invitation to come support people of color.

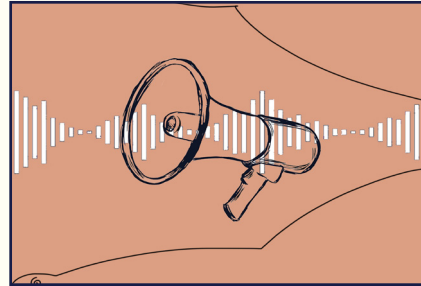
Allyship doesn't end there. You need to be signing petitions, donating if you can and supporting minority owned businesses. But, the number one thing you can do to be an ally is to be

**"You need to be calling out your friends, calling out your family members and engaging in the tough conversations."**

**-Michelle Quinn**

anti-racist.

Being 'not racist' does not exist. You need to be taking continuous actions to be anti-racist. Use your privilege to educate those around you and stop tol-



erating ignorance and racism.

You need to be calling out your friends, calling out your family members and engaging in the tough conversations. If a person of color explains how you have wronged them, then you need to apologize immediately and continue to study on how to be a better ally.

It is not people of color's job to educate you. You must take actions to educate yourselves. All lives can't matter until Black lives do. Black lives matter. People of color's lives matter. Minorities matter.

Take a minute to picture how your life would be different if you were a person of color. What difficulties might you face? What are some opportunities that might be taken away from you because of the color of your skin? How do non-marginalized people treat you?

Now use your privilege to help those minorities. Support them, educate yourselves and others.

Some educational resources you can look into reading are: "Between the World and Me," "So You Want to Talk about Race," "The New Jim Crow," "White Fragility," "Just Mercy," "Freedom is a Constant Struggle" and "How to be Anti-Racist."

Eye opening television programs you can watch: "When They See Us," "Teach Us All," "I Am Not Your Negro," "13th," "Immigration Nation," "Malcolm X," "Do Not Exist" or "American Son."

You do not need to give people of color a voice. We've always had a voice, you just need to start listening.



Michael Tarchala/Freelance

# Activists want real change

by Giselle Barajas

Augustana students embrace a culture of social justice activism on campus. From protests about rape culture to holding a vigil for the lives lost at the hands of injustice, activism can be found anywhere on campus. However, what constitutes the difference between true activism and performative activism?

Duy Nguyen, a senior and international student from Vietnam said, "there's a dialectic between those who are oppressed and to those who are the oppressor. So activism would be siding with those who are oppressed by a systemic hierarchy."

Education is a key component of true activism.

"First and foremost education really just takes the cake regarding just making sure you're a real activist," Jacob Washington, senior and president of BSU said, "You really need to know what you're fighting. You really need to sit down and bunker down and think 'what exactly is the issue here and what are the complexities of it?'"

There's a multitude of ways to further activist ideals on campus. Every student has their own unique activist roles.

"I try to do whatever I can," Nygun said, "I participate in events sponsored by OSID (office of student inclusion and diversity), the Black Student Union [and] the African Student Association."

Nguyen also publishes written work to further social justice. "I did a post on gentrification, one on the wage gap, explaining like really basic ideas, but in a way that the common reader would find it easier to understand," he said.

Groups on campus such as the ladies of vital essence (L.O.V.E) get involved in more grassroots community activism. L.O.V.E. strives to "strengthen our relationship with the Augustana and Rock Island community through doing service projects or social events," said senior Tajania Jenkins, president of L.O.V.E.

Hands on activism isn't the only

route to take.

"I would say there's definitely been a lot of activism [on campus] whether it's through events, or just making flyers, posters, stickers or whatever. It definitely just seems like Augie students are becoming more outspoken," Jenkins said.

Students can also become activists by "signing petitions, donating, education and contacting your elected officials," Washington said.

Unlike the term activism, performative activism doesn't have a clear cut definition.

Nguyen equates performative activism with passiveness. He said, "Being passive is aligning yourself with the system as it is."

Others believe that intent matters when it comes to activism. Sometimes though, it's hard to decipher between performative vs true activists.

"From the outside looking in it looks like [performative activists] are actually doing activism. They're bringing awareness to these topics of injustices against minorities and all these under-

appreciated groups. But from the inside, they're really just doing it for social capital and just for their own personal gain," said Washington.

While true activism blossoms on Augustana's campus, some students fall short.

"[There's a] lack of response from some democratic groups on campus. I would like to see more. I would like to see more action from those people," Nynguyen said.

"I feel like there is a good moderate majority of students who are just like 'yes I'm against this and 'yes that is completely wrong and I'm bringing awareness to this' but also in the same breath they aren't necessarily educating their peers who might be oblivious," Washington said.

Moving away from participating in performative activism creates a healthier space for marginalized students, keeping them away from harm's way.

"[Performative activism is] harmful to marginalized groups because it gives those groups a sense of false hope or like false allyship," Jenkins said.



Phoenix Agyepong/Observer Staff



# Cultural houses struggle to increase attendance

by Molly Sweeney

Augustana students celebrate their differences through events created by the various culture groups on campus, such as the Black Student Union Back-to-School BBQ, the African Student Association AfroFest and the LatinX Unidos Día de Muertos event. However, there is a lack of attendance by non-people of color (POC) and people that don't identify in the culture that hosts the event.

Emily Sibounheuang, president of the Asian Student Organization (ASO), said that their events have low non-POC attendance. The ASO is trying to improve attendance across the board by gaining a wider audience.

"In the past two years we have been trying to grow ASO's social media presence to help us gain more traction to our events and meetings," Sibounheuang said. "You don't need to be a certain ethnicity to come to our events. We love seeing everyone come and learn about different Asian cultures

and topics."

Nick Teng, president of LatinX Unidos, is also trying to increase attendance at their events and meetings.

One way students are encouraged to attend cultural events is through Greek

**"...[W]hile it's good that more people come, it's in the back our minds that people are there because it's a requirement."**

**- Nick Teng**

Life. Members of a Greek group are now required to go to at least one diversity event during the year.

"That increases attendance definitely," Teng said. "But while it's good that more people come, it's in the back of our minds that people are there because it's a requirement."

Another way to encourage attendance is to provide an incentive for students to attend the events.

"When we have cultural food that draws people in a lot. The cuisines from the different cultures are really popular," Teng said. "When there's food at least you can say it's a part of the cultural experience and more people are willing to come for that stuff."

One of LatinX Unidos' biggest events of the year is the Día de Muertos event. This year, the celebration was broken up into two sessions to keep the groups smaller due to COVID-19. The program

began with a short presentation that explained what Día de Muertos was and the traditions behind it. After the presentation, a movie was shown, people were given the opportunity to decorate sugar skulls and at the end of the event, attendees took home traditional cultural foods.

Although the Día de Muertos event generally draws a bigger crowd than just those within the LatinX cultural group, getting people to come to events is a general challenge.

"I think it's an issue of comfort, to be honest, and it's totally understandable," Teng said. "It's a human thing. If you don't feel part of a particular group, obviously you feel uncomfortable being there, [and] maybe you're not comfortable

going outside of your bubble."

First-year Carina Martinez is in agreement with Teng regarding issues of comfort in attending cultural events in which you are not involved in.

"I have been hesitant to go, in the sense that I didn't want to go alone. Not because of what it was but because I wanted someone to go with me," Martinez said. "I think it's definitely good to have a lot of different people from different cultures attend events because you get to see all the different perspectives."

Martinez also said that it is important to go to the events for the right reasons.

"I think really just beforehand, learning about what the event means and what they're planning to do is important. Not just show up for whatever reason, like you want some food, but actually know that some of the celebrations mean something," Martinez said. "Of course the food always helps, but you have to make it so that as you're eating the food you're learning about it."

Another possible reason for the low attendance at cultural events is that many people may be unaware that an event is going on. By improving

messages and communication to the student body, more people may attend the cultural events.

Etta Brooks, president of the African Student Association (ASA), said that they do not have a specific strategy to improve communication with students, but that they post the information regarding the events for everyone to see. "We'll post something about [an event] on the Augie school calendar and everyone is invited," Brooks said. "We also send out emails and those just go to campus emails and not everyone reads those. Another thing we do is the posters. We'll put that up and share it around campus."

LatinX Unidos is focused on improving communication through social media in order to increase attendance and to make other students feel welcome.

"We've definitely done more outreach, I think showing that you're a group open for everybody, that's very important," Teng said. "We're trying to get our name out there, so that it's a common name when you hear LU you know LatinX Unidos. Doesn't matter

if you're in the group or not. We're trying to market ourselves a little more and hope that will change some of the impact."

Brooks is involved in a research study about international and domestic student interaction and the impact that it has on international students.

"One of my recommendations in my research was to encourage domestic students to participate in cultural groups. People may recommend that the solution is for international students to try to make friends with the domestic students. I also think that domestic students can

**"People may recommend that the solution is for international students to try to make friends with the domestic students. I also think that domestic students can put in that effort and go to cultural groups."**

**-Etta Brooks**

put in that effort and go to cultural groups," Brooks said.

COVID-19 may have made attending culture groups meetings more accessible to students of various cultures.

"We haven't been meeting in person so that makes it a little bit easier for some of our members to just pop in online. So we've seen very good attendance online and actually a lot more non-POC too," Teng said. "There's a little more anonymity in it, you can have your camera off if you don't feel comfortable right away and you can just kind of listen in and observe."

The main challenge for cultural groups on campus seems to be getting the word out about the events and engaging people of different cultures. Overall, however, Teng said it is important to be open to trying new things and experiencing something out of your comfort zone.

"The world, whether people like it or not is going to become more diverse, so coming to fun events like this where we can share food and do it in a nice and fun way shows someone something new, is a good gateway to spark some interest in a culture," Teng said.



Bri Berndt/Observer Staff

Sophomores Lilia Rangel and Diego Andon were just a couple of many participants that decorated sugar skulls with food coloring.

**"I have been hesitant to go, in the sense that I didn't want to go alone."**

**-Carina Martinez**

messages and communication to the student body, more people may attend the cultural events.

Etta Brooks, president of the African Student Association (ASA), said that they do not have a specific strategy to improve communication with stu-



# Black Student Union wants to be seen and heard



BSU submitted photo

Augustana and St. Ambrose respective Black Student Union meets with Dr. Yusef Salaam in Centennial Hall on March 7, 2020.



Top to bottom: Senior Malikah Muhammad and William Nishal Weems, sophomore.



## BSU PHOTO COLLAGE



The Observer included several photos from a 2019 BSU photoshoot.



Top left, from left to right: Cole Long, junior, Caleb Perry, sophomore, and Luther Taylor, junior; middle left: Talayah Lemon, senior; middle right, from left to right: Jacob Washington, senior, Cole Long, junior, Xavier Dent, senior, and Daylen Lawson, senior, during BSU Spirit Week 2020; bottom left: Caleb Perry, sophomore; bottom right, from left to right: seniors Talayah Lemon, Malikah Muammad, Ashanti Mobley and Jordan Cray during BSU Spirit Week 2020.



# A history of social-justice activism at Augustana

by Olivia Smith

This is by no means a comprehensive summation of Augustana's entire history, but serves to highlight important milestones of student and administrative participation in the fight for social justice.

Change at Augustana College has been 160 years in the making, and the students have been a catalyst behind it all. Power comes from the students' voices, the students' actions and the students' needs.

Augustana has created a diverse, inclusive and accepting environment, both in the classroom and surrounding student life. It would be poor judgment to credit this solely to the administration. This progress is largely the work of students fighting for a more inclusive school and demanding their voices be heard.

## 1964

The first significant act of social justice on Augustana's campus was part of a national movement to raise money and awareness for Black families struggling with severe food insecurity. Despite the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery, structural racism created inequalities that persisted beyond 1865.

The Fast for Freedom Food encouraged students to fast in solidarity and donate the cost of the skipped meals to the movement. 416 Augustana students signed up and participated in the fast, raising between \$300 and \$400.

In regards to the Freedom Fast at Augustana, college President C.W. Sorensen said he was "very pleased with the proposal, for one of its special merits is that it gives the students a chance to DO something—rather than act as bystanders."

## 1969

In February 1969, the Representative Assembly, currently Student Government Association (SGA), and the Afro-American Society, currently Black

Student Union (BSU), held a symposium titled, Confrontation '69: Black Power. The guest speakers included Dick Gregory, Andrew Hatcher, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (NY) and Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Preceding the symposium, there were discussions around the college's official stance. Of this, president C.W. Sorensen stated that the administration's sponsorship of guest speakers does not imply approval or endorsement of their views.

**30 students sat in President C.W. Sorensen's office after the administration refused to sign a racial policy statement. (1972)**

A year earlier, an invitation to campus was extended to Strom Thurmond, who is most known for his record-holding filibuster against the Civil Rights Act, which lasted 24 hours and 18 minutes. This same year, students in the Quad Cities staged protests to prevent George Wallace from speaking. Wallace was the governor of Alabama at this time, and is remembered for his support of segregation and Jim Crow laws.

## 1971

In March of 1971, BSU and the Representative Assembly presented another symposium titled Minority Cultural Symposium. This event focused on literature, art and music. Speakers involved included Rev. Jesse Jackson, who spoke at the Black Power symposium, and Ricardo Ferre de Amarre, a professor at University of Illinois's Chicago campus.

## 1972

On Wednesday, February 4, 1972 30 students, all members of the Black Student Union, sat in President C.W. Sorensen's office after administration refused to sign a racial policy statement. Later in the spring, the administration agreed to sign a statement drafted by BSU and the Chicago Urban Pastors, but they fell through on this promise. The statement was excluded from the list of college policies.

When returning in the fall, the same 30 students promised to come back for a sit-in every week until a racial policy was instituted. According to clippings in Augustana's Special Collections of the Rock Island Argus dated February 4, 1972, President Sorensen refused to sign a statement, but promised "to produce a viable, realistic alternative statement of official school policy."

Because of student pushback, the college adopted an anti-racism policy, which resembled the statement BSU requested them to sign. A new policy was released on Feb 18, 1972 in a Memorandum from the Office of the President. The statement said, "Racist acts on the part of Augustana administration, faculty, students and staff will not be tolerated. Persons shown guilty of such acts, after due process, shall be removed from the Augustana community."

## 1979

In late October of 1979, the college immediately placed Gamma Alpha Beta Fraternity (GAB) on a one-year probation after performing a racist skit. The chapter paraded through the streets of Rock Island showcasing an active member dressed in blackface who was escorted by others dressed as KKK members. In response, the NAACP of Rock Island and Augustana's BSU demanded sanctions be taken against the group. Every member of GAB was required to attend a racial reconciliation program, followed by an optional retreat with the members of the BSU.

Adrienne Powell, a member of BSU who attended the retreat, expressed how the event was beneficial to both Black and white students, but there was still work to be done. The Rock Island Argus published an interview on May 18, 1980, where Powell said the retreat was "definitely a good start, but we do have racial problems which come from individuals." The individuals Powell seemed to be referencing were Augustana students who could not bear the consequences and dropped their enrollment at the college.

This event marked the first full-scale investigation by the human relations committee in five years.

## 1990

As powerful as student voices may be, they have not always been a beacon of justice. In the 1990 Rockety-I (Augustana College's discontinued yearbook), an article was published detailing controversy over a gay rights movement.

In response to "Denim Day," where Augustana students were invited to wear denim in support of gay rights, the Rockety-I notes that "letters of protest were written, many people refused to wear jeans or shorts, and controversy ran rampant around campus." The campus community decided they were neither in support or opposition and the letters written by students expressed this position. The prominent argument was by only having two options—wearing denim or not—excluded the students who did not want to take a position.

Augustana Lighthouse Organization,

**"It's definitely a good start, but we do have racial problems which come from individuals."**

**- Adrienne Powell (1980)**

which was a student group designed to support gay and lesbian students, were the organizers of this "Denim Day." Students were furious over the dichotomy of the invitation, but Augustana Lighthouse commented that those who felt ostracized by the event should note that "gays are ostracized from society, in general, 365 days a year."

## 2002

Voices of the students have always held power, but these voices are amplified when faculty listen and speak with them. In 2002, a custodian employed by Augustana College found his car spray painted with racial slurs. An incident report was distributed campus-wide and there were efforts to unveil the responsible parties. No success.

Students of color began confiding in faculty—advisors, favorite professors and mentors. Seeing the pain of students and how many felt unsafe to attend classes, Jeffery Strasser of the geology department started an email thread between him and his colleagues. In the exchange, they discussed how to react as individuals and as a community to support their students.

On April 30, 2002, a letter from the faculty was sent to the college community. It read: "It is not enough to say that such acts have no place in a community of learning... Such acts have no place anywhere." The letter condemned any bold or subvert acts of racialized speech and actions and affirmed the experience of Black students.

## 2008

In early spring, students brought forth concern over a 'Viva La Mexico' themed party hosted by Phi Rho Sorority. Notes from a faculty retreat presentation detail the consequences of this insensitivity.

The Director of Diversity Services organized a discussion between students of color and sorority leaders. All members of Phi Rho attended diversity conferences,

completed a mandatory number of service hours and designed a diversity workshop for other Greek groups.

## 2014

The summer of 2014 marked the tragic deaths of Tamir Rice, Michael Brown and Eric Garner. The Black Lives Matter movement was just beginning and people demonstrated across the United States against violent force from police. Support for this movement reached Augustana's campus. Students self-organized to hand out information addressing racial issues.

Darien Marion-Burton, then president of BSU, said in a campus-wide email, "I felt compelled to send out a call for campus unity." She mentions that BSU had no involvement in handing out pamphlets, but asked the students, faculty and administration to "support the efforts of engaged students who operate within college guidelines."

In addition to pamphlets, students staged a 'Die-in' on December 11, 2014 to protest racial profiling. Students, faculty, and families gathered and laid down silent for seven minutes.

An article titled "Change missing after protests" was published in the Observer on December 13, 2014. Shylee Garrett wrote about being Asian-American on campus and walking past student protests on the way to classes. "The only change I've seen is an increased hostility and raw emotions toward race on this campus," Garrett said. Concluding this article was an invitation to all students to attend a town hall forum hosted by the Observer.

## 2016

Early April, a resident in Erickson reported that a swastika had been carved into a bathroom stall. Rather than imposing a fine on the floor where the vandalism was found, Residential Life set aside their own Housing Code of Conduct and assumed the cost of the damages.

See *HISTORIC* p14



# Historic action at Augie

continued from p13

On May 13, 2016, Provost of the College Pareena Lawrence sent a campus-wide email detailing several racial incidents reported within the previous three weeks. The incidents included racist language being used toward other students, along with defacement of school property with hate symbols.

In the message, Lawrence says “It grieves us when a small group among us engages in hate speech and creates a climate where we experience our core identities being devalued and dismissed as irrelevant.”

The summer came and went, but racially motivated events only escalated with the onset of the 2016 presidential election. In an incident known as The Chalkings, insensitive and racist comments inspired by former President Donald Trump were chalked around campus.

Anticipating an escalation in racialized events, the administration created a Free Expression Zone. This was a portion of campus sidewalks outlined in dark blue stripes that chalk could be used on. In announcing this, the administration made clear that “messaging that goes against [Augustana’s] community principles of purpose, openness, and respect, accountability and care is subject to removal and disciplinary action as appropriate.”

On September 30, 2016, in the midst of Homecoming Events, Latinx Unidos held a march to protest the lack of diversity on campus and to critique the administration’s passive reaction to the chalking events. Signs displayed during the march included ‘#HoldAugieAccountable’, ‘Hate Speech Doesn’t Equal Free Speech’ and other phrases intended to support inclusivity. Student leaders gave speeches at the conclusion of the event calling on Augustana to adopt an official hate speech policy.

After the 2016 presidential elec-

tion, the Women and Gender Studies department hosted a Post-Election Sticky Note Therapy that resembled a movement started in Manhattan Subway tunnels.

In a campus-wide email sent November 13, 2016, Jennifer Popple and Umme Al-Wazedi invited students to “show that we care for not only our African-American, Latin-American, Asian-American, immigrant, international, and trans/LGBTQ students/

**[Provost] Pareena Lawrence sent a campus-wide email detailing several racial incidents reported within the previous three weeks. The incidents included racist language being used toward other students, along with defacement of school property with hate symbols. (2016)**

peers and other marginalized entities but also for ourselves as a community.”

The post-its from the event can be found in Augustana College’s Special Collections.

## 2018

In spring of 2018, Student Government Association (SGA) organized a walk-out protesting gun violence. This followed the Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland Florida, shooting only a month earlier.

## 2020

In February 2020, the Observer published a story in memory of Chauncey Morton, a Black student who was killed in his Andreen dorm in 1958. After continued student advocacy, Augustana Administration created a Chauncey Morton Task Force.

The meetings are closed and no public statements have been issued, but this committee is currently investigating the circumstances of his death and attempting to track down surviving family members.

On September 25, 2020 Augustana culture groups partnered with different offices across campus, including the Office of Student Inclusion and Diversity (OSID), to host a Vigil for Lives Lost. This event honored people of color who have been lost to police brutality.

The OSID partnered with the student-led movement “I stand with you.” November 7, 2020, marked the kick-off of this event, which raised funds for national Black Lives Matter movements and Augustana culture groups.

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Faculty can set deadlines for classes and administration can write a handbook for how students should behave, but the students are in control of their college experience.

From Augustana culture groups banding together before the 2020 election, to preventing an anti-integration senator from speaking in the Quad Cities, to staging a sit-in at former President Sorensen’s office to adopt an anti-racism policy, silence has never been an option.

Augustana students have collaborated, organized, marched, protested, sat-in, ‘Died-in’, stood up and spoke out.

Student activism shaped Augustana into a community we know. It’s a core value that Augie students have shared since the college’s founding, and it is something that will continue on.

# Letter to the Editor: SGA

**Student Government Association President Kaitlyn Watkins and Vice President Peyton Couch submitted a letter to the editor about social injustice.**

**Dear Augustana Community,**

It is undeniable that social injustices exist in the world that surrounds us. In areas of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, economic status, religion and ability, it is clear that our society has not yet achieved equality. In our nation, our communities and on our own campus, deeply ingrained obstacles and barriers to equity still exist.

In order to change this, we all need to collectively work together to find solutions. And even though many of us know this, many of us also struggle with finding ways to help. Although there is no clear path in fighting injustice, we believe there are some small changes we can all make to help find the solution.

First, we should all take the time to listen more. Valuing another person’s experiences and hearing their perspective is an amazing way to learn more while also demonstrating care and empathy. You can easily help to eliminate

injustice by spending more time talking to people who have a different background from yourself, by attending awareness events on campus and by listening to hear instead of listening to respond. Push yourself to listen to and engage in uncomfortable conversations as you go about your daily life on campus and take time to consider beliefs that you have never thought of before. This is a great first step towards solving the injustices that define the world around us.

We should also further consider how our individual actions impact issues of social injustice. When we see injustices occurring, we need to step up, speak out and help. Staying silent or turning a blind eye can be detrimental to achieving equity and justice. Instead, we should lead by example in our own social circles and communities by calling out non-inclusive language, by advocating for underrepresented populations and by kindly encouraging your friends,

**“Push yourself to listen to and engage in uncomfortable conversations as you go about your daily life on campus and take time to consider beliefs that you have never thought of before.”**

family and peers to do more.

Finally, and most importantly, we have to remember that in order to make progress we must find a way to come together. Divisiveness has plagued our society and is hurting us more than it is helping. As members of the Augustana community, we have to remember that despite our differences, we also have many shared commonalities. Instead of seeing one another as being on different sides, we should break down walls that divide us and learn from each other’s experiences.

The work of combating social injustice is in some ways invisible. Although large strides are made and this progress is apparent, we have to remember that meaningful and deep progress is made in our daily lives. Our smallest actions, thoughts and decisions have an immense impact. It may not always be visible, but your choices make a difference.

And if all of us commit ourselves to making a difference, we can achieve incredible things together. Let’s all commit ourselves to being active in the fight for social justice.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Watkins & Peyton Couch  
SGA President & Vice President



Kaitlyn Watkins and Peyton Couch/SGA submitted photo



# Ashanti Mobley speaks out through spoken-word

by *Olivia Doak*

When she was 11 years old, Ashanti Mobley went with her siblings to the corner store to buy snacks. But while she was waiting in line to pay, her eight-year-old brother started getting screamed at by the workers.

They yelled at him to take his hands out of his pockets and to come forward, accusing him of stealing. They told him that he had to pay for whatever he was hiding in his pockets.

The situation escalated as the workers continued to get angry, even as her brother said that he didn't have anything in his pockets. The kids, 11 and eight-years-old, were terrified and had no idea why someone was yelling at them.

Fortunately, Ashanti's older sister was there to defend their brother. She de-escalated the conflict, and the workers reluctantly let them go once they saw that nothing was stolen.

Although she was just 11 and didn't fully understand what happened, Ashanti, now an Augustana senior, said it bothered her. "It didn't make sense to me," she said, "and it was just unnecessary."

Later, Ashanti realized the reason for the incident was that the workers saw her brother as a young, Black boy and stereotyped him as a criminal. Ashanti said this experience forced her to develop an awareness of racism early in her life.

"Just being young and not even understanding all the things with race, I just knew that if we're Black we're viewed as bad," Ashanti said.

These kinds of experiences continued throughout her childhood, starting as early as elementary school.

Anytime she asked a question in class, her teachers became angry. They'd immediately get irritated and yell at her not to act up. Or, they would remind her to behave herself as she sat quietly waiting for class to start.

As a good student and a quiet,

timid young girl, Ashanti said she felt singled out and, "guilty, even though I did nothing wrong."

"At the time, it made me want to go above and beyond with my accomplishments to prove that I'm a good, smart kid and that I follow the rules," Ashanti said. "And then other times it would make me just kinda shut down and not want to participate or talk to anyone in fear of being accused of something or stigmatized."

While school was a toxic environment, it also gave Ashanti an outlet for expressing herself.

In seventh grade, Ashanti's English teacher taught her class different types of poetry. Ashanti started writing poems for class but continued to write in her free time. Specifically, spoken word poems.

"Spoken word is a very distinct cultural construct and use of language," said Monica Smith, Augustana's vice

president for diversity, equity and inclusion. "The genius behind it, the talent behind it, is being able to rhyme when you need to but not soften or veil the message in any way because you can't

**"Just being young and not even understanding all the things with race, I just knew that if we're Black we're viewed as bad."**

**-Ashanti Mobley**

find the right words."

The same year, Ashanti published her first free-verse poem, for which she won an award. From there, her passion for poetry grew.

"It's just being able to carry this weight that she's had on her, and the

experiences she's had all throughout her life, and being able to get in front of an audience, and be able to express that," said Ashley Allen, interim director of the office of student inclusion and diversity. "And even though it is something that is hard to carry, she was willing to offer that experience to everyone else to open up and see how she's feeling and how she's navigating this world as a Black woman."

Ashanti said she feels people can relate to her through her poems. She said writing poetry helps her express herself more so than just saying something.

"She's a quiet person," Smith said. "You'd think she was shy, she doesn't say much. But when she does speak, you better listen."

Ashanti came to Augie after graduating high school. As a first-generation college student, she said she was both excited and nervous to come to school. Most of all, she had no idea what to expect.

But that excitement quickly turned to dread when she got to campus her

say, so hearing it in college really kind of shocked me," Ashanti said.

Ashanti said the fact that the girls denied saying it upset her. It took a lot of nerve to get up the confidence to express how she was feeling. When she did, all she got was eye-rolls and sighs.

"It made me doubt myself and question if I was really valid in what I was thinking and feeling, and it felt like no one really cared much at first," she said. "Like is it even worth it telling these people what's right and wrong? Because they're not even listening."

The next year, her sophomore year, there was an incident where a sign was found on the Black Culture House. It had the Planned Parenthood logo and a slogan on it that said Planned Parenthood had killed more Black children than the KKK.

Outraged by the racism and ignorance of the act, Ashanti and her friend, Talayah Lemon, were part of a group that took it to administration and Student Government Association (SGA) and were frustrated with a lack of action.

So, in the spring of their sophomore year, Ashanti and Talayah organized a demonstration in the quad. They organized a gathering and speakers meant to start a conversation about inclusion on campus.

"We wanted to help protect Black students here. When you mention the KKK, that's sparking fear," Ashanti said. "A lot of people were uncomfortable just going into [the] Black Culture House because it was posted there. And that's supposed to be a place where people can go and feel safe, and we didn't feel safe."

Since she arrived on campus,

**"She just brings it out [passion] when she does perform, and that's inspiring."**

**-Talahyah Lemon**

Ashanti has been committed to being an activist for racial justice. Throughout her four years, she's organized multiple protests, given speeches and presentations and been active in groups like Black Student Union that push for racial justice on campus.

But a lot of the activism that she does is through her spoken-word poetry. As president of Dat Poetry Lounge, Ashanti uses her poetry as an outlet to express her frustrations about racism, but also about celebrating Black identity to inspire people.

"She usually writes about identity and Blackness and what that means to her," Talayah said. "She writes things that are centered around power and they inspire and empower people."

But Ashanti's words, while meaningful to her, hold even more meaning with those who hear them.

"It makes me feel proud and powerful that I'm able to turn whatever I'm feeling into something for others to uplift them or give them something to relate to," Ashanti said. "It's like I'm doing a service for other people and to myself to share that so other people can relate and know that they're not alone, and so I know that what I'm feeling is okay."

Said Talayah: "When I hear her read her pieces, I can just see that passion that she has inside her. She just brings it out when she does perform, and that's inspiring."

**"You'd think she was shy, she doesn't say much. But when she does speak you better listen."**

**-Monica Smith**

first year. Almost immediately, Ashanti came into contact with racial slurs.

She heard girls in a dorm near her singing along to the song and saying the n-word. After it happened multiple times and Ashanti got up the nerve to ask them to stop, the girls denied it and said it didn't happen.

"Growing up [around Milwaukee], that wasn't a word that everyone would



Ashanti Mobley/Submitted Photo



# 'Roses' under concrete

## The Roses

by Ashanti Mobley

Since they snatched the seeds from their rich soil  
And buried them underneath the cold concrete  
Across oceans and seas, I guess  
We've been grounded in more ways than one  
Constantly trampled and stifled  
I'm learning how roses can grow between the cracks of  
sidewalks  
Maneuvering through the stomps of ignorance, racism,  
hatred  
To reach past the skyscraper's cast blocking the sunshine.  
Systematically oppressive shadows we peer past  
And stretch to catch a ray, a glimpse at least so  
We rise  
Like the roses in Selma, Chicago, LA, Birmingham  
We rise  
After the ignorance  
After the beatings  
And the killings  
They act like they don't know why roses have thorns  
We rise  
We learn  
Spoke up  
Stood up  
You think we'd cower down?  
No we keep rising  
I was dreamin'  
Of a people so free  
Who could rise in glory  
Breaking generational trauma  
I was dreamin'  
That raisin' my hands in submission  
Wouldn't be taken as a submission for violence  
Or an invitation for death  
I was dreamin'  
Of innocent black bodies with abused spirits,  
Because their lives were never yours to take  
I was dreamin',  
I put my fist up to show you  
I won't submit any more,  
What freedom we fought for, secure in my hand  
I woke up with my fist balled,  
That's my form of protection.  
I mean, yeah, I can dream  
But, Black people so powerful  
We been makin' dreams happen since we started budding.  
The wildest dreams of our ancestors  
We keep rising, makin happen what seems impossible  
Fighting to make our dreams come true  
Cause, that's what roses stuck in concrete do.

# Equal rights still a fight

## by Aubrey Lathrop

Opinion Column

Women's rights are not a new, radical concept by any means. In fact, women have been battling for better treatment and more representation in the United States since 1776, when Abigail Adams wrote a plea to her husband, John Adams, telling him to "remember the ladies."

Recently, however, women have been facing a backward slide in progress regarding women's rights.

The induction of Vice President Kamala Harris marks an important moment for women, but the damage caused by the Trump administration has led to an overall downturn in rights. One way is the defunding and limited access to women's healthcare clinics. According to a 2019 Washington Post article, Trump's family planning "gag rule" was projected to cut \$60 million from Planned Parenthood's Title IX funds.

The Trump administration was openly against abortions, and as a result, organizations like Planned Parenthood suffered major cuts in federal funding. But these organizations don't just perform abortions, they offer many different general health services to women.

Besides abortions, Planned Parenthood also provides birth control, HIV and STD testing and treatments, pelvic exams, cancer screenings and other general health services.

Augustana College senior Sage Sanders is president of the Generation Action club at the college, which aims to educate students about reproductive freedom for women.

"The nearest Planned Parenthood is 45 minutes away in Iowa and almost over an hour in Illinois from this location," Sanders said. "And it makes me sad because there have been

a few women on campus that have reached out to me to help them look for places that will help them.

Another way the administration threatened women's rights was by quickly replacing Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a champion of women's rights, with conservative Amy Coney Barrett, who has previously spoken out against topics like abortion.

"She was like, 'I'm not gonna let my viewpoints change the way I do it,' but then she would also make comments about how she would stick to the Constitution. And the Constitution was made for white men and not minorities, not people of color, not women," Sanders said.

Just like the constitution only included white men, for a long time, the term "women's rights" only applied to white

women. However, the movement is beginning to adapt to encompass women of color and LGBTQ+ women. And it's these groups, minority groups, that have always been disproportionately affected.

Jane Simonsen teaches women's and gender studies programs at Augustana.

"I think we've taken a step backwards, I think we continue to diminish the ability of women of color, gay and lesbian people or trans people to have access to resources they need to be equal," Simonsen said.

Immigrant women are also treated disproportionately in places like detention centers. On Feb. 22, 2019, a Honduran woman delivered a stillborn baby while at the Port Isabel Detention Center.

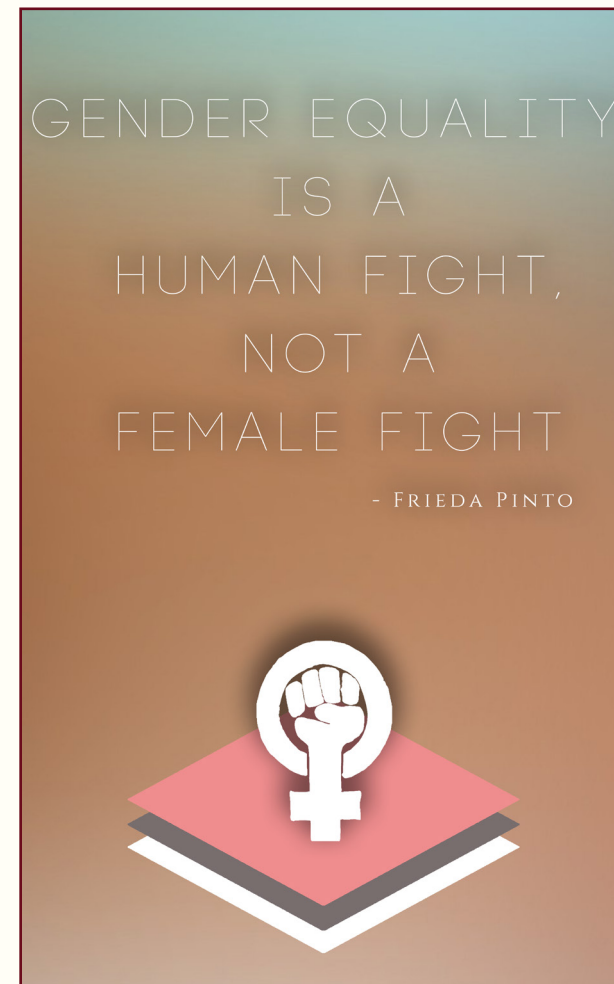
Injustices like these bring forth a lot of questions in regard to the treatment of immigrant women.

Umme Al-Wazedi teaches women's and gender studies courses at Augustana and has the experience of being an immigrant woman in the United States.

"We need to ask the question, what were the circumstances surrounding her premature labor, number one. Was she given proper medical care? Did she suffer additional abuse because of her pregnancy? Because in the U.S., there has been a history of sterilizing immigrant women," Al-Wazedi said.

This year signals one of the most tumultuous times in recent history. Hopefully, the United States as a whole can work to recover under the new Biden administration, but there is a lot of work to be done.

Women have been working for equal rights since the start of the nation, and an aggressive past administration isn't going to stop them now.



Michael Tarchala/Freelance



# COVID-19 has revealed inequalities across U.S

by *Bethany Abrams*

The Coronavirus pandemic continues to impact everyone as we reach a year of living amidst the virus. The virus, though, affects people differently depending on different factors, such as their environment, income and race. With these differing factors, underlying conditions in society are revealed as we are faced with inequalities and insecurities.

According to Johns Hopkins University, the United States of America has surpassed 28 million cases with over 500,000 deaths. With such growing numbers, we have to continue adapting to living with the virus as hope of a quick end to the pandemic has dwindled.

Since cases are only growing, colleges and universities across the nation are losing funds and are allocating their money towards COVID-19 in areas such as testing, financial aid, and more. According to the New York Times, Ohio Wesleyan University chose to eliminate 18 majors as a way to save money.

In order to learn more about Augustana College's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Observer interviewed staff members Matt Walsh, Kent Barnds, Kirk Anderson and Kirby Stockwell, all of whom work in the Financial Aid Office or specialize in public relations.

In response to Ohio Wesleyan University's decision to eliminate majors due to COVID-19, both Anderson and Barnds agreed that was likely due to other underlying issues in addition to the pandemic. They reassured that Augustana College is not going to be making any significant cuts, and that only temporary cuts have been made thus far. These include halting capital spending and using additional funds from endowment.

Anderson explained how they have allocated upwards of \$1.5 million for

COVID-19 purposes for this academic year. This includes money for testing, the health clinic, quarantine housing and supplies. It also includes things like plexiglass dividers in the dining hall and paying for shifts for extra custodial help. During the spring, the money spent may increase if athletic programs open up and more tests are needed.

Nevertheless, with "fiscal strength and effective management," Augustana College has been withstanding the pressure, Anderson said.

In fact, rather than an active consid-

**"International students lack access to financial tools that domestic students have such as the CARES Act funds."**

**-Kent Barnds**

eration of eliminating programs, Augustana College is working to expand with three new varsity athletic programs and the creation of the Lindberg Center. 60-70% of the creation of the Lindberg Center has been financed through donations alone.

In the spring when COVID-19 was beginning to hit the United States, the college introduced a program called the Emergency COVID Grant. "This was created to reduce some burden on a family," Barnds said.

According to Walsh, up to \$2500 were given to families who reached out and sent in documents for the Financial Aid Office to review. Roughly 50 students received the package. That financial aid is there as a temporary solution until circumstances change for the better for that family, such as if the

parent's job reopens.

"It (the virus) has affected everyone," Walsh said, after being asked if COVID-19 has affected a specific group of students more.

"The impact is spread out everywhere," agreed Barnds.

However, Barnds also mentioned that a specific sector who are struggling are international students. "International students lack access to financial tools that domestic students have, such as the CARES Act Funds," Barnds said.

With that and the overall ineligibility to borrow federal loans and grant programs, Augustana College is sensitive to these struggles and doing what they can to support international students.

Businesses are either having to close or continue to stay open whilst also risking contracting COVID-19. In Chicago, Mercy Hospital was planning to shut down in 2021.

"According to state records, the majority of those served at Mercy are low income and people of color- many elderly and suffering from chronic diseases," ABC 7 News stated.

This shows financial insecurities as well as spatial inequalities since Mercy Hospital is one of the few hospitals in Chicago and serves predominantly Black neighborhoods. ABC 7 News reported Dec. 15, 2020 the Illinois Hospital Facilities and Services Review Board denied the closing through a unanimous vote.

Those classified as essential workers for those businesses are exposed to the virus more, which can be incredibly dangerous. Many essential workers are from lower-income households and need to work to support their families. At the beginning of the pandemic, the New York Times reported that "[i]n cities across America, many lower-income workers continue to move around, while those who make more money are staying home and limiting their exposure to

the coronavirus."

According to the New York Times article, even if they tried to quit and prioritize safety, the likelihood of them being able to claim unemployment benefits is low.

Chris Strunk at Augustana College specializes in geography, Latin American and Latinx studies and food studies. He said that the meat-packing industry is more prone to high COVID-19 cases due to working in smaller spaces with less room to be socially distant and safe.

Specifically, the Tyson food meat-packing plants in Iowa experienced a surge of cases in the spring. On May 7, 2020, the Des Moines Register reported that "More than 1,000 workers at the Tyson Foods plant in Waterloo have tested positive for the coronavirus."

Another large problem lies in the growing unemployment rate. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) documents that "[r]oughly 43% of parents living with children report they or a family member has lost a job or work hours due to the pandemic. That includes 62% of Hispanic families, 50% of Black families, and 36.5% of white families."

The rates of unemployment can cause great psychological, physical and financial effects and many needs are neglected. Utility and mortgage bills become harder to pay.

The AAP article specifically touches upon food insecurity by stating, "[o]ne-quarter of families experienced food insecurity, including more than one-third of low-income, Black and

Hispanic families."

Strunk explained how things are somewhat "out of our hands," and that federal aid will be the main thing that can financially support everyone in need.

He also mentioned the power within local communities in supporting one another. For example, Augustana College's local food bank, Campus Cupboard, organization supports college students in need who are unemployed and facing food insecurities.

Farrah Roberts, director of student well-being and resiliency, runs Campus Cupboard, said, "we are seeing an average of 25 students a week in the Cupboard and giving out anywhere from 50-100lbs of food a week. This is actually very similar to our pre-pandemic numbers."

Although not much has changed within the pandemic, more is being done to further support students in need just in case conditions worsen. Roberts said that "we also had open hours every week all summer to accommodate the students that needed to stay on campus. We have expanded our volunteer base to include Greek Life and hope to increase our open hours as well in the future to make it more convenient for students to get the items they need."

In that way, through organizations at Augustana College, students are provided with access to free food that they otherwise may not be able to afford.

Also, the problems associated with large meat and food processing plants is mitigated by Augustana College's own agricultural society.

Darby Burk, a biology major and the president of the Augustana Local Agricultural Society (A.L.A.S), recounts the ways in which the club has helped during these trying times.

"Every fall we donate the produce from our orchard to NEST, a pay-what-you-can kitchen.

They then use the produce we give them to cook for the community," Burk said. "We donate every year to NEST, but in COVID-19 everyone has been hit harder than usual."

Not only has A.L.A.S helped to mitigate food insecurities specifically by growing and giving produce, but also through financial donations to nearby food pantries that help both the community and Augustana students.

"In late October, as a group, we donated 400 dollars to the St. Mary's Food Pantry," Burk said.

Burk and the A.L.A.S have plans for future donations and have done what they can locally to help to alleviate food insecurities. The local organizations that A.L.A.S supports help by providing the opportunity for those who are in financial distress to still receive food.

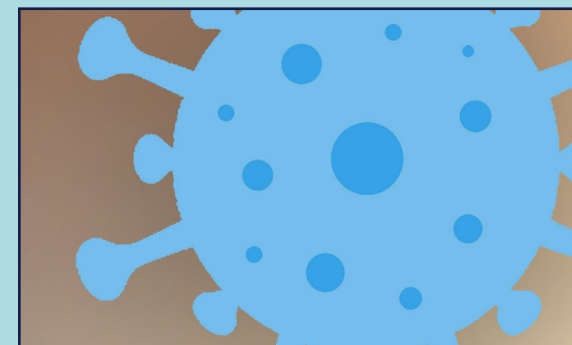
Sometimes, one of the best ways to help mitigate inequalities besides direct help is through education.

A J-term opportunity that Strunk of ten runs is to Cancer Alley, in Louisiana. In this area, about 150 petrochemical plants line the bank of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. He mentions that environmental pollution worsens COVID-19, using Cancer Alley as an example.

It is important to first note what Cancer Alley is and who lives there. "The residents of this 85-mile stretch, known since the 1980s as Cancer Alley, are predominantly Black, and according to the EPA's 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment, their risk of getting cancer from air pollution is 95 percent higher than most Americans," Sierra Club said.

Cancer is not the only concern now. "Despite the fact that African Americans account for only a third of the Louisiana population, they account for 55 percent of COVID-19 deaths," Sierra Club said.

Strunk believes that there is still hope for our nation. He uses a global scale to support his hope, explaining that many countries have been able to mitigate the virus even with fewer resources and advancements.



Michael Tarchala/Freelance



# A chewed wire: Struggling students online

by Brady Johnson

It has been a year since the pandemic gripped the world with its contagion. Educators were thrown a curveball to continue teaching in the midst of a crisis affecting students, especially lower socio-economic, in a multitude of ways. Suddenly access to technology and wifi dictated how well a student would perform through distance/online learning.

"Last spring we had to pivot. We tried to collect as much information as we could from students to see what kind of technology needs there were. We really did not know what we were going to find," Kristin Douglas, associate dean of the college and the head of the Learning to Learn Committee, said.

Augustana College started spring break one week early, March 23, 2020, after cases of the coronavirus sprung up around the Quad Cities. Shortly after, all in-person learning was moved online for the remainder of the term. A large number of students had to rush home, if possible, while state restrictions limited travel.

Matt DeBaene, assistant superintendent for secondary teaching and learning, oversees more than 7,000 students in

the Moline-Coal Valley district. "Truthfully one of my biggest concerns is we know the spring was not good academically for our students in the country," DeBaene said. "A lot of students missed instruction. I am particularly concerned for the kindergartners to third graders because it is so developmental."

Principal Steve Etheridge, who leads Bicentennial Elementary School, is a part of the Moline-Coal Valley district and for six years he has been overseeing 3,000 students ranging from kindergarten to fifth graders. Over the last decade, the Moline-Coal Valley district made a goal to give each student in kindergarten to fifth grade a Chromebook according to Etheridge and they achieved that goal.

"Learning without that technology during a pandemic I don't know what we would have done," Etheridge said. "At first things were very overwhelming for the staff, but also for the parents and students at home." Etheridge said the spring term had some growing pains as teachers were having to not only teach curriculum

online but also help fix technical issues.

**"[O]ne of my biggest concerns is we know the spring was not good academically for our students...A lot of students missed instruction."**

**-Matt DeBaene**

## The Student Teachers

Last fall, across the Mississippi River in Iowa, senior Emily Brooks was a student teacher to sixth graders in Bettendorf. Brooks said she had been understanding and graceful with a lot of late night emails detailing tech issues. "I think one of the biggest things I had to learn was to not generalize anybody.

"Teaching in Bettendorf is an

affluent district so there shouldn't be too many kids who have a lack of internet access. That was a shocker to me when I started. The amount of kids who didn't have internet at home or even reliable internet."

Factors of multiple guardians with differing wifi setups, rural students and just the overall demand for bandwidth in households with multiple individuals contributed to the struggle.

Michael Scarlett, chair and associate professor of education, said his group of students last spring were getting a first hand look at adapting education in the midst of the pandemic.

"Many of them are in communities of color, communities in lower socio-economic areas, areas particularly being hard hit with this transition to remote learning," Scarlett said. "They're in the trenches right now. They're experiencing it and seeing the issues that families are facing right now."

Now, many of those students were in charge of teaching the youth in the Quad Cities this past fall.

"I know at the beginning of the school year there was a [student] who didn't have wifi at home," Eric Johnson, senior teaching at United Township High School

(HS) in East Moline, said. According to Johnson, there was only one student with a wifi issue for the courses he taught, but the student was unable to turn in assignments. After a lot of paperwork and forms, the school was able to provide wifi to the student's home with the assistance of Mediacom. Johnson had "no doubt" the issue was occurring to others.

Mason Sargent, senior student

**"That was a shocker to me when I started. The amount of kids who didn't have internet at home or even reliable internet."**

**-Emily Brooks**

attended in-person. Even then the unpredictability of running in-person instruction with usually asymptomatic youth had its bumps.

"There was a potential positive case and students had to sequester, and along that process, a couple of my students had to and they didn't have reliable internet access at home," Sargent said. "This was during a time I assigned a big project. We worked around being more forgiving and graceful."

The weather, also unpredictable, caused mass outages in the Quad City area early in the academic year. Naomi Beckley, senior student teacher at United Township (HS), said the derecho caused a full week of inactive wifi for her students who had no way of completing work.

"It has happened a couple times where students are having technology and wifi issues," Beckley said. "There are students who are weeks and weeks behind because they don't have access to online work and have to spend [more] time to catch up."

Typically, according to Beckley, those affected students would come in during her lunch break to work on assignments. This would be the only extra time she could meet students in person.

Back

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Alyssa Duckett/Observer Staff



# Access to technology + wifi dictate success

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in Bettendorf, Brooks mentioned cases of broken and malfunctioning Chromebooks where already slim time in the classroom had students headed to ITS.

"It has been tough for some of my students who come into class say[ing] their Chromebook isn't working that period," Brooks said. "So we send them down [to the media center] and in a good situation they are gone for maybe 5-10 minutes. That is 5-10 minutes of class that was cut off."

Grace Harvey, senior student teacher at Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Moline, also mentioned episodes of malfunctioning school tech. Yet, her biggest struggle is seeing students who are unable to attain connectivity assistance.

"We did have a student last quarter who did not have wifi," Harvey said. "The school and [the] Moline school district do provide some free hotspots to families, but they only had so many. This particular student did not get a hot spot, so basically

when they went home after 12:15 [p.m.] they couldn't do any work."

Harvey is unaware if the student was later able to get assistance because after the quarter ended classes and students were

**"There was a potential positive case and students had to sequester, and along that process, a couple of my students had to and they didn't have reliable internet access at home."**

**-Mason Sargent**

changed up.

DeBaene said Mediacom helped connect rural families and those with poor connec-

tions. For families who were out of range they were given T-Mobile hotspots.

"It comes down to sustainability," DeBaene said. "The hotspots you buy them one time and you're good, you're under a contract. You have to end up knowing how many you need. And then what funding source to sustain those with." DeBaene mentions how teacher and student laptops have a recycling budget, but with the added stress of online learning the new unfunded mandates need bankroll.

"The revenue sources we have to maintain and lawmakers need to make sure the cost is supplemental in these feel good laws," DeBaene said. "We're in a recession and in a couple of years the effects will hit school districts. I am worried about unfunded mandates and having to spend our money in different ways."

## **'Learning to Learn' the Uncertainty**

The task for accessibility and technology was no different for Augustana students.

"The biggest issue that we faced and our students was connectivity to the internet rather than having hardware, a

computer or a camera," Douglas said. Over the summer, staff and students met under the Learning to Learn Committee to discuss how the college could assist students in need.

A mass survey was sent out to see which students needed hardware like laptops and cameras. According to Douglas, the college vied for laptops, "so did the rest of the world," and sent out at least 20 laptops to students.

Yet, the issue of connectivity was harder to confront as students were scattered across the country and overseas. Douglas recounts one example of the digital divide over the summer.

"I talked to one faculty member this summer who said that she had phone calls with her student who didn't have internet access and the student also did not have a computer," Douglas said. "The student hand wrote papers and took photos and sent them through their smartphone. The instructor was 'Okay, I can take this. This works.' Which was not ideal in any shape or form for anyone, but hopefully there was some learning that was happening. Even under those circumstances that were not ideal."

Douglas heard from many students that were using their smartphone hotspots, but they were not reliable methods. Before

Thanks-

giving break, another survey was sent out by Douglas and most students out of 2,385 responded. "We have tried exhaustively to get that information from students," Douglas said. "It has been helpful."

ITS and the associate dean's office asked students who voiced concerns of home wifi and tech issues to stay over the break and end the term on campus. This allowed students access to labs and campus wifi, as well as providing hardware tech to students who needed assistance.

Wendy Ramsdale, IT specialist and student computing coordinator, wants students to know that ITS can hand out ethernet cables, allowing wired connections in residence halls, adaptors and other technology. But when it comes to remote learners off campus, there isn't much ITS can offer. ITS expanded the network bandwidth last year as many colleges and universities face greater wifi demand.

Ramsdale has been working with students over the last twenty years while at Augustana. The virus has stressed departments and shown a need for improvement.

"Except for hiring

**"The student hand wrote papers and took photos and sent them through their smartphone... Which was not ideal in any shape or form for anyone..."**

**-Kristin Douglas**

more people, I don't think that is going to happen," Ramsdale said. "They are supportive [admin], they ordered what we needed, but the manpower is lacking. I think they know that. We are down at least four positions and our students are managing the check out, which is also a struggle. We are managing the best we can, just like everybody. We are hoping people are patient with us."

Student Government Association (SGA) members Russell

see *DIGITAL* p26

Alyssa Duckett/Observer Staff



# Digital divide hurts us all

continued from p25

McNab, chief of staff and senior, and Senator Caleb Minnis, junior, were a part of the Learning to Learn Committee. They both reached out to students to help facilitate dialogue to see what could be done. Minnis said that even though we all attend Augustana, our backgrounds are not the same.

“For just the Augustana community, we often think just because we are in residence halls together and we are all eating together at CSL that everyone is similar in socio-economic standing, which is obviously not true,” Minnis said. “Students need to have more of an accepting, understanding of the demographics of Augustana and realize that not everyone is coming from the same background.”

Minnis mentioned that many students rent laptops through ITS. “Obviously when you apply to Augustana the wifi comes with it, but if you’re miles away at home, away from the Augustana community, you have to rely on that yourself.”

Michael Schroeder, professor of education, oversaw three science student teachers last fall and helped with

crafting hybrid learning plans. At the beginning of August he was unsure on how long they would be able to meet students, but said they have done “remarkable” work with remote learning.

“We don’t know when students will be in this position again, hopefully never,” Schroeder said. “You don’t know that. I think beyond that it’s kind of opened our eyes to possibilities.”

Schroeder said the education department includes agenda setting time to discuss new tools and tips to better teach with technology.

## Community Limited to Screens

Xong Sony Yang, director of student scholar services, said over the term the office would check in with international students around the world.

“What we found was students being deducted points for not participating in class,” Yang said. “For not attending class when it was 3 a.m. their time. They were not high functioning at the time.”

Yang said the office has become attuned to the applications that international students can use to communicate and reach out for assistance. They have been working with the administration to find solutions to a series of unique issues affecting connectivity. Including, but not limited to, monsoons, frequent outages and national shut downs of internet access.

“The only problems I think we are still facing are the international students that live in different time zones,” McNab said. “I know in a lab class we have [a student] living in a time zone where the lab would be at 3 a.m. The professor is working with him later at night and giving him the simulated lab. I know that is being worked out on a case by case basis.”

According to Yang, one of the largest issues felt by many international stu-

dents is the screens themselves.

“Our international students continue to say it is either they are so Zoomed, Googled in for every single meeting and every single class,” Yang said.

“Of course on top of that activities are on Zoom again and Google again. The one thing they say is ‘I miss the connection,’ you know connecting is so different when we are on a technology interface and it is much more difficult for them.

Trying to is an added stressor. You can see them, but only on a computer.”

## Effects on Our Mental Health

As Yang shared, many international students are only communicating with the Augustana community through 14-inch screens. The sudden move to online and the ongoing struggle to adapt to isolation, at least physically, is causing great strife to many students of all ages.

“Sometimes it is killer to try to get them to respond to you, talk to you, and they bury their faces into their laptop,”

Johnson said. “That is a whole other issue this year.”

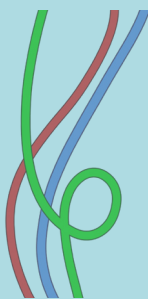
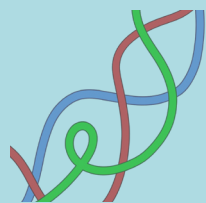
Johnson said student participation is low and shared that teachers at United Township believed the masks were an “involuntary muscle” for students to hide behind.

“This is an emotionally difficult time for students,” Beckley said. “I see

teachers taking time during class to ask students how they are doing and giving extensions to students. That is something we need to keep doing after the pandemic is over.”

According to Harvey, each student has different learning, behavioral and emotional needs and it has cemented a large learning curve.

“[T]here are a lot of families struggling in a remote setting,” DeBaene said. “Without the support of the teacher, many students struggle.”



**“[S]tudents being deducted points for not participating in class. For not attending when it was 3 a.m. their time.”**

**-Xong Sony Yang**

# LGBTQ+ athletes forgotten

by Julie Lombardi

## Editor's Note:

Gay athletes are not talked about much, and whether that's because there aren't many out athletes or because nobody has asked to talk to them is an interesting question. I reached out to numerous friends and groups that I thought could help me find athletes to interview, since doing so on my own was proving unsuccessful, and it was still not easy. I received the names of about ten athletes, with only two being out and comfortable with an interview. A couple were out but not too keen on being interviewed, and there were numerous times the athlete in question were not out to many people, or mistakenly identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

While same-sex marriage was legalized in the United States in 2015, and while that was a big step forward, that doesn't mean discrimination against those in the LGBTQ+ community has stopped.

Amy Nicholson of the women's dive team opened up about her experiences as being an openly bisexual athlete at Augustana.

“I'm comfortable with my team, but I'm lucky,” Nicholson said. She described the environment on the swim-

ming and diving team, explaining that though the men's and women's teams are technically separate, they practice together and act as one big team.

Nicholson suggested that being in an environment where the teams are not divided by gender may be a contributing factor to her team's acceptance of her sexuality.

Annie Timm of the women's tennis team, another athlete identifying as bisexual, said that she felt safe and included at Augustana in general, and within the athletic department specifically. Both Timm and Nicholson said that they felt as a whole that Augustana is a very accepting community, yet the athletic department falls short in promoting inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community.

“They don't really ask. They always focus on diversity as an aspect of racial or ethnic background. I don't think they pay much attention to [LGBTQ+ athletes] or consider it as something important,” Nicholson said. “I don't think it's malintent, I just don't think they consider it really.”

While Timm feels comfortable in her own sexuality, she believes that some sort of inclusivity training regarding LGBTQ+ athletes may be beneficial to others in feeling better about coming out to their team.

Jon Miedema, head coach of the women's tennis team, described his ap-

proach to including every player on his team. One way he does this is by breaking up his athletes into smaller groups and giving them a space to talk about what's going on in their lives and how they can be supported by each other.

He also talked about the message ‘respect yourself and respect others’ he tries to instill in his team. “How we talk and how we interact with others matters,” Miedema said. “I trust that our players are respectful of everyone in any situation.”

Out of all the athletes interviewed for this article, the Observer was unable to find a LGBTQ+ identifying male athlete to speak on the subject. While it could be because there are simply not many LGBTQ+ athletes on any men's teams, or because men, particularly male athletes, are less likely to feel comfortable or accepted when they come out.

“Guys are taught their whole lives ‘don't play like a girl,’ or that sports are a manly thing,” Nicholson said. “I think guys just feel like they have to be a man in the sport they're playing, and whether it's your sexual orientation or gender identification, identifying as anything other than a straight male takes away from those manly qualities.”

Timm said the general characteristics of women's teams versus men's teams seem to differ in accepting different sexual identities. “I feel like girl sports are a lot more inclusive,” Timm said.



Michael Tarchala/Freelance



# LGBTQ+ students find faith despite past prejudices

by *Fernanda Rubi*

Augustana College's Lutheran religious affiliation welcomes all students, regardless of gender, sex, race, and religion. Today, we can see this inclusion present in the relationship the church has with the queer community and its efforts to make queer-identified students feel safe on campus.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been welcoming and affirming to the LGBTQ+ community.

Jason Mahn is a religion professor at Augustana and the director of the presidential center for faith and learning.

"We [Augustana College] belong to a church that believes that all people are the image of God and that all of us are loved and affirmed by Him," Mahn said. "So, we want to be inclusive of all people, including all sex and gender identities."

Through the years, Augustana has been open about the inclusive stance they have toward sexual and gender diversity.

said that it is open to all community members and that same-sex weddings are permitted.

Retired Augustana Chaplain Richard Priggie said that there are Christians who have different interpretations of whether the Bible supports same-sex relationships.

"While some Christians support LGBTQ+ people, others do not. But Augustana is solidly behind the understanding of the Christian Church as being welcoming in diversity," Priggie said.

Because Augustana is a religious-affiliated institution, some students may have doubts about its stance toward the queer community.

Iliana Smiser, junior and identified queer student, was worried if she would find a supportive community on campus. "In my past personal experience, religiously affiliated organizations haven't been the most accepting," Smiser said. "So before coming to Augie, I was concerned. But as soon as I came, I discovered it is an accepting and welcoming place."

For junior Kristen (Kiki) Lancaster, it was different. Although she was not looking for a religious institution, she considers the LCA to be inclusive, and diverse institutions were a factor she thought of when applying to college.

"One of the reasons Augustana was in my list was because my mom is an LCA pastor, and I know they support

LGBTQ+ issues," Lancaster said. "I needed to consider a religious institution that was supportive and accepting."

Naomi Beckley, a senior and queer-identified student, has had negative experiences with religious insti-

**"In my past personal experience, religiously affiliated organizations haven't been the most accepting."**

**- Iliana Smiser**

tutions before coming to Augustana. Beckley is thankful for the supportive stance the college has toward the queer community.

"Augustana being ELCA has worked in our favor rather than against since the church has been supportive toward the LGBTQ+ community," Beckley said.

The previous year, she was part of the Gender and Sex Alliance (GSA) and said the organization had received campus pastor's support.

"Pastor Priggie has been a big support system for us as an organization. He has spoken at rallies for the GSA, and Damascus Road Pastor Suddarty has been a wonderful resource for the last couple of years," Beckley said.

For some queer students, Augustana offers a liberal arts education that has helped create a safe and supportive environment.

Sara Prier, senior and co-president of the GSA, thinks she does not often encounter uncomfortable situations because of it. "If homophobic students feel the institution backs them up, they would be bolder in their actions," Prier said.

"I think the fact it is a liberal arts campus has helped foster the supportive community toward queer rights."

Grace Kim, junior and secretary GSA on campus, also has found a supportive community in Augustana.

"As the secretary of our school GSA, I know safe places, and I also have professors that are willing to do anything to make sure we [the queer community] are safe," Kim said.

At first, Kim felt uncomfortable attending a religion class as part of Augustana's Reasoned Examination of Faith (REF) requirement. "Religions and sexuality go against each other a lot, so I know some people, like me, didn't like to be forced to take a religion class at first," Kim said.

According to Dr. Mahn, at Augustana, it is important to show a broad diversity of the different ways sexuality and religion can interact.

"I think you can be deeply religious and LGBTQ+ affirming; it is something we are interested in exploring in many of our religion courses," Mahn said.

For Lancaster, her department, women and gender studies, is one reason she feels supported on campus. "They [the professors within her major] are one of the biggest supporters I have on campus," Lancaster said. "I am lucky that my department is super accepting and open to everyone; I get to talk about my

life and experience in class."

However, she believes it is partly because of the relationship her major has with the topic. "I think it is a little hard if you are not in a major centered around LGBTQ+ community, so I can't say everyone has had the same experience as me," Lancaster said.

Smiser is majoring in biology and has found professors who create an environment she can feel comfortable in. "Although not everybody on campus is super accepting, professors are open with their sexuality, and some have safe zone stickers that indicate they are an ally to the LGBTQ+ community," Smiser said.

Recently, some professors started asking for students' preferred pronouns. "Professors do a good job making us feel supported by asking for our pronouns; however, not only in some classes student's pronouns should be respected," Beckley said.

Despite Augie's effort to create a safe and supportive environment for queer students, some say there is still room for improvement.

Beckley is sometimes asked by professors to speak on behalf of the whole commu-

**"Regularly, professors rely on an openly LGBTQ+ identifying [person] to speak for the entire community. I don't deserve to speak on behalf of anyone else; it should be avoided if we want to create an inclusive environment."**

**- Naomi Beckley**

nity. "Regularly, professors rely on an openly LGBTQ+ identifying to speak for the entire community," Beckley said. "I don't deserve to speak on behalf of anyone else; it should be avoided if we want to create an inclusive environment."

According to Kim, GSA can receive more monetary support since most of the events are student-led and could benefit more from a larger budget. "We have the money they give us, but sometimes we [members of GSA] need to pay out of pocket because our budget is not great."

Moreover, Prier believes that religious emails can be filtered. "I don't enjoy seeing those religious emails all the time; it could make me feel more comfortable not receiving them," Prier said.

For Lancaster, Augustana should talk about inclusive sexual diversity throughout the school, not only in specific areas. "I think people are kind of oblivious, unless they have a friend that is part of the queer community. If people are more aware of how precarious some rights are, we would be able to have more inclusive views."

**"Religions and sexuality go against each other a lot, so I know some people, like me, didn't like to be forced to take a religion class at first."**

**- Grace Kim**

Augustana is part of The Reconciling in Christ Program (RIC), a program within the ELCA to provide representation and support to the queer community. The RIC publicly encourages the LGBTQ+ community to be active and serve as leaders of campus ministries.

In 2012, President Bahls put out an official statement from the college about The Ascension Chapel on campus. He



# My Story: A photo essay

by Lauren Pillion and  
Chris Ferman

My name is Rachel Galluzzo and I am a freshman here at Augustana College. Social justice wise, I care most about women's rights because of the fact that I am a woman, but also because it is not acceptable in any way to treat women as less than men. I am not okay with men trying to tell me what I can and cannot do with my body. Racism and Black Lives Matter is also very important to me as well. First off because it is a very prevalent issue that can be seen almost everywhere and needs severe help to be addressed, but also because I went to school in a fairly low-income area with a large number of minorities in our district. Additionally, I grew up in the suburbs right outside of the district where I went to school where the population was majority white. So, I got to experience the differences in cultures between the two areas and know how racist both people and the system can be. Finally, I know and understand the importance of intersectionality, but for the sake of highlighting my most talked about issues, I chose to focus on racism and sexism.



My name is Claudia Vallejo and I am a sophomore at Augustana College. I am MPB Campus Awareness and Outreach co-chair and the historian for Latinx Unidos. For me, environmental justice is most important to me. Marginalized communities are disproportionately at a higher risk, and the environment is something I've always cared about. I care because I feel that I have the power to speak up for others who can't. On-campus, I work for MPB, which creates multicultural events around campus. These events are always fun, but their purpose is to be educational as well as fun. I would like the "Augie Bubble" to know that microaggressions on campus are more common than you think. It's better to educate yourself to prevent them from occurring.



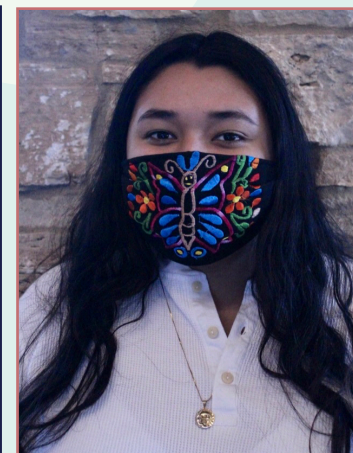
My name is Nick Teng and I am a junior at Augustana College. My main role on campus is being the president of LatinX Unidos. I care about creating a safe and welcoming space for students of color on this campus while also creating a safe and welcoming space to educate other students who do not know about social issues and issues pertaining to the Augustana Campus. We [LatinX Unidos] work towards racial justice on campus by hosting events that educate our peers on different cultures and social issues. We also speak out to hold peers and administration accountable when we see clear issues with what happens on campus. I would like the "Augie Bubble" to know that the best way to learn about social justice is to actively engage with students of color and culture groups. When you get to personally know and have relationships with diverse people, you can better understand the issues they have to face and have a better understanding of why social justice is so important.



My name is Tristyn Escobedo and I am a sophomore here at Augustana College. Some of my roles on campus include being the vice president for Latinx Unidos, diversity chair for my fraternity (OZO) and I am a PACE and EMERGE Mentor. In regard to social justice, I care most about establishing a community that is fair and equitable to all no matter the background of the individual. The most important aspect of a human being is the content of their character, and this is how we all should live in our own Augie community and on this planet in general. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, and justice for all is of utmost importance. As a member of the Office of Student Inclusion and Diversity and Latinx Unidos, I am always collaborating with my peers to ensure that everyone in our campus community is treated fairly and that we are inclusive to all. I hope that this community understands that there are always allies on this campus and people you can turn to who are advocates for diversity, equity and inclusion. We are the future, let's set an example.



My name is Stephanie Carreno and I am a sophomore at Augustana College. My main roles on campus include secretary for Latinx Unidos, PACE mentor and public relations chair for Zeta Phi Kappa. What I care about most, social justice wise, is everyone (especially non-POC) having the opportunity to educate themselves on social issues around them. I believe that this is the most important thing to me because going to a predominantly white institution made me realize that a lot of people do not experience or know about the struggles POC face on a daily basis. One thing that I do to work towards social justice on campus is create events with the rest of the Latinx Unidos executive board to promote Latinx traditions and identity. I also like sharing a lot of infographics on Instagram because the majority of my college friends/acquaintances follow me there. I try my best to promote events held by the culture groups on campus on most of my socials. Something I would like the "Augie Bubble" to know is that it is okay to be curious about different cultures and identities. I would much rather give you an insight rather than having you just assume certain things about cultures/identities.



My name is Sage Sanders and I am a senior here at Augustana College. I am involved in Zeta Phi Kappa where I am a new member educator, Tri Beta where I am president, Gray Matters where I am a co-lead, Students for Reproductive Freedom where I am president and SASS where I am vice president. I care about social justice because everyone should live in America as equals. Our country was founded on principles that made it so white men could be superior. We are now in 2020 [and] people of color and women now have more rights and should be able to show more for that. It is not fair to these groups that they still have to fight for what is right. America is not home to just whites, and it needs to start showing that. A country can not be a welcoming place if the society is always favoring the wrong side of history. I want to tell those that are in the "Augie Bubble" that there is so much you can do with your voice. If you see something that is wrong, you need to speak up about it because if you say nothing you are agreeing with the wrong. Things in the bubble are not always perfect and you need to use your voice to make it right. Things can not change if people remain silent.





# **The work continues.**

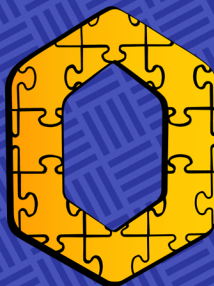
**Social justice requires action.  
Social justice requires community.  
Social justice requires listening.  
And we are not going to stop listening to you.**

**Thank you to our staff that worked to create this issue:**

**Bethany Abrams  
Phoenix Agyepong  
Giselle Barajas  
Bri Berndt  
Olivia Doak  
Alyssa Duckett  
Chris Ferman  
Brady Johnson  
Aubrey Lathrop  
Stuart Lombard  
Julie Lombardi  
Lauren Pillion  
Michelle Quinn  
Fernanda Rubi  
Olivia Smith**

**A huge thanks to members of the Augie community for your submissions:**

**Daisy Lorenzano  
Ashanti Mobley  
Destined Darlington Sehgbear Jr.  
Michael Tarchala  
Student Government Association  
Black Student Union**



**Augustana Observer**