

Quote of the week

"To abandon affirmative action is to say there is nothing more to be done about discrimination."
— CORETTA SCOTT KING

Nick's Picks:

Got Dumplings brings variety to campus

NICHOLAS BARAHONA
Contributing Writer

WELCOME TO NICK'S PICKS.

Join me, Nick Barahona, on our journey through the city of Richmond where I review and showcase the different cuisines and restaurants in close proximity to campus, from the lens of a VCU student. To all new and returning Rams, I welcome you to an exciting time ahead filled with great deals and good eats.

Got Dumplings opened just over a year ago and has already made its mark on campus. Replacing what was previously Deep Run Roadhouse, this North Laurel Street location is an accessible spot for students on campus.

Got Dumplings adds yet another cuisine option for college students, bringing more diversity to the area and complementing its neighbors like &pizza, Chipotle, Cava, Panera and Five Guys.

Given its name, it's no secret that dumplings are the highlight at Got Dumplings — but that's not all it has to offer.

As you enter the restaurant, you immediately catch a whiff of the dumplings being prepared in the kitchen. Dining in will lead to an open space with tables and plenty of seats to enjoy your meal.

What I really like about this space are the abstract lights hanging from the ceiling and the ancient Chinese paintings on the wall, which give off an ambiance of authenticity.

The menu options include dumplings, dumpling soup, noodle soup — ramen or udon — Asian street food, signature drinks, sides and combos that mix a few of these together. Pick from either the original pork, curry chicken, shrimp, chive and, for vegetarians, tofu dumplings. Dumplings are offered steamed for the chicken and pork and fried for all other selections.

The Asian street food consists of either salt and pepper or chili sauce popcorn chicken, Japanese takoyaki or octopus dumplings and spicy dumplings that mix chicken and pork dumplings with a spicy house sauce.

As for the sides, Got Dumplings offers white rice, fried rice, seaweed salad, edamame, cold peanut flavor noodles and kimchi. All of these are great choices to go with dumplings or to enjoy by themselves.

The real deals, though, are in the combo section: dumplings are offered in a five, six and 10 count with each combo having one or two sides to go along with it. I tried out two different combos: a five fried pork dumpling combo with kimchi and a five steamed curry chicken dumpling combo

with white rice. This came out to about \$20 total with tip included — a great value for ten dumplings and a pair of sides.

I enjoyed both the fried pork and steamed curry chicken dumplings. The difference between the fried and steamed options was the chewing consistency. The fried was slightly crispier and more flavorful, while the steamed was softer and more chewy. I tend to always order my dumplings steamed, though I must admit that the fried dumplings hit the spot and were more enjoyable. The kimchi was an excellent pairing with the dumplings — it added just the right amount of spice and crunch, which made the entire meal for me.

Although the dishes are flavorful, I would not rely on Got Dumplings to take care of a hungry stomach. It seems more of a snack or quick bite on the go. However, considering its convenient location, I could see myself coming here in between classes during one of my busier days.

In many ways, Got Dumplings is a breath of fresh air in the community. I'm excited to try their signature drinks, as well as their soups once temperatures begin to drop. Solid four out of five stars on the day.

As always, eat up!

For all things food, feel free to check out @nxreview on Instagram and TikTok for many more recommendations and reviews.



Illustrated by Killian Goodale-Porter

Affirmative action's presence in college admissions is in danger, BUT IT MUST BE UPHELD

ISHAAN NANDWANI
Opinions Editor

Diversity is almost certainly the buzzword of the 21st century for institutions of higher education.

It has been celebrated in charts on college pamphlets and brochures, lauded by admissions officers in presentations to prospective students and served as the focal point of countless schools' mission statements.

There's a reason why diversity is so sought after though, particularly at elite schools. These institutions recognize that while Black, Latino and Indigenous students have historically been at a disadvantage in the education system, their perspectives and experiences are vital. Affirmative action has been the solution to increasing diversity at prestigious universities and one that I believe to be essential.

Affirmative action allows colleges and universities to consider an applicant's race and background when making admissions decisions, although it forbids explicit racial quotas. Despite its benefits, this practice has been frequently contested by those who argue that applicants should be evaluated by their credentials alone.

Frighteningly, despite its longstanding history in college admissions, affirmative action is at risk of being banned. On Oct. 31, the Supreme Court will hear two cases that could overrule this precedent.

The first case alleges that Harvard University discriminates against Asian American applicants. The second case argues the

University of North Carolina consistently uses race to give admissions boosts to underrepresented minorities. These lawsuits were filed by Students for Fair Admissions, an anti-affirmative action organization run by a coalition of students and parents.

Although lower courts have ruled in favor of Harvard and UNC and the Supreme Court has upheld affirmative action in the past, given the court's shift to the right — exacerbated by the three justices appointed by former President Donald Trump — the danger of this precedent being overturned is real. We've already seen abortion rights stripped away and gun rights expanded; another controversial decision from this court would not surprise me.

The overruling of affirmative action would be catastrophic, both for our universities and greater workforce.

Affirmative action has been consistently proven to be the most effective way to increase diversity at selective colleges. At the University of Michigan, an institution that is not permitted to practice affirmative action by state law, diversity has suffered. According to a brief from the university in support of Harvard and UNC, Michigan has engaged in countless outreach efforts to increase enrollment of underrepresented minority students, but these efforts have been unsuccessful. Enrollment of underrepresented minority students has fallen.

Diversity in itself is essential for a myriad of reasons. A racially homogenous student body would suffer from not only a lack of physical dissimilarity, but also from an absence of diversity in ideas, worldviews and cultural perspectives.

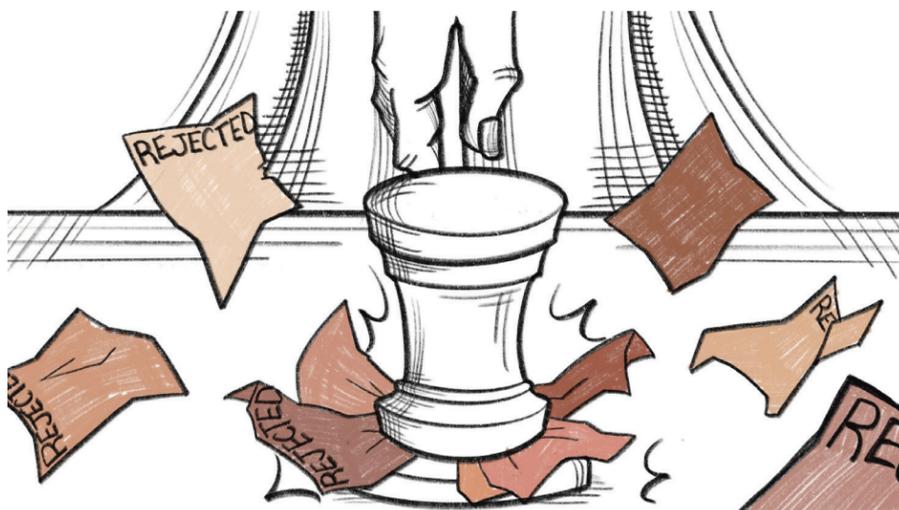
Additionally, representation is essential — whether for the Black student who's the only one of his race in his engineering lecture at Harvard, or the young Latina student who dreams of attending Brown but yearns to see someone like her admitted.

If affirmative action is overturned, the mental health of underrepresented minority students may suffer as their enrollment at elite schools plummets, leading to a vicious cycle that prevents these students from achieving the same success as their white and Asian counterparts.

The impact of this decision will also be felt in the workforce. We will see less underrepresented minorities who are physicians, lawyers and engineers. In the medical field, my personal career path, studies have consistently shown that Black patients have better health outcomes when treated by providers that match their racial background. Thus, this decision has far reaching implications that extend far beyond the racial makeup of a university, affecting something as sacred as one's health.

The Supreme Court must confront this sobering truth when deliberating these cases this fall.

Ultimately, as the best method to increase diversity at selective schools, affirmative action is an essential aspect of the admissions process. We can't let it die out.



Illustrated by Killian Goodale-Porter

CT Opinions

ISHAAN NANDWANI
Opinions Editor

HEADLINES BUZZED ACROSS THE WORLD on Sept. 8 as the United Kingdom's longest reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, died at 96 years of age.

The reactions to her death were as wide ranging as the U.K.'s history of conquest: shock, sadness, apathy and even joy.

While many civilians were desolate at the loss of their queen, who has been an enduring symbol of leadership throughout their lives, others began to call into question the history of the monarchy and what it represents: colonization, white privilege and elitism.

One Twitter user went so far as to say that although the establishment wants us to believe that the monarchy represents the "best of Britain," it is actually the "enduring embodiment of the worst of Britain."

I express my condolences to all those who mourn the queen, but I also concur with the sentiment of the many individuals who criticize the monarchy's lasting presence in the U.K. — it's time for a change.

While the outright eradication of a system that has prevailed for centuries may be out of reach, at the very least, the monarchy must be held accountable for their past grievances and strive to uplift the communities it has historically harmed.

Gone are the days in which the royal family held any real legislative power; today, that belongs to the prime minister and parliament. However, with the continued tradition of succession in the U.K., many consider it unfair that the royal family still



Illustration by Vivian Trinh

Re-examining the British monarchy in the wake of Queen Elizabeth II's death

holds a considerable amount of wealth and influence throughout the world.

Today, the monarchy adds little value to British society outside of celebrity culture. Since the inception of Queen Elizabeth II's reign in 1952, many former colonies have gained their independence, and Britain's global power has declined.

The queen's stable presence as a leader was a reason that many supported her, despite the political impracticality of the

monarchy. She has lived through important historical events, such as World War II, and has seen 15 different prime ministers of the U.K.

There is no reason to further the monarchy's tradition after the queen's death.

The incumbent King Charles III does not possess the same charisma or experience as his mother. He will take the throne at 73 years old — the oldest person to do so in the history of the House of Windsor.

While the monarchy's lack of contemporary purpose warrants its removal, it's naive to believe that it's going anywhere anytime soon. The royal family is deeply entrenched into the social and cultural fabric of the U.K., and has been since 1603.

It may be futile to get rid of a system that has been exalted for generations. In this case, the conversation should center on how those in power can use their influence to impact social change.

The monarchy may never be able to completely rectify their past, but it can certainly do better. The royal family has been notably silent on movements like Black Lives Matter. Queen Elizabeth II has never apologized for the monarchy's link to the slave trade. In 2021, Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex came forward about experiencing racism within the royal family and alleged concerns about the dark skin color of her son.

The royal family's accountability for their past racism has been sorely lacking, but they must take responsibility. They should use their platforms to amplify movements supporting underrepresented communities and have open conversations about subjects that they have avoided talking about, such as race and imperialism.

There are certainly nuances to the royal family's rule in the U.K. that I haven't explored, and I acknowledge that it hasn't been all bad. I admire the charitable efforts that they've engaged in over the years, and the national pride it ensues in [British people].

However, if the monarchy is to endure, it must redefine its narrative and become a force for social good.

NICK'S PICKS:

Govinda supporting the community with affordable, healthy Indian cuisine

NICHOLAS BARAHONA
Staff Writer

WELCOME TO NICK'S PICKS. Join me, Nick Barahona, on our journey through the city of Richmond where I review and showcase the different cuisines and restaurants in close proximity to campus, from the lens of a VCU student. I welcome you to an exciting time ahead filled with great deals and good eats.

Today's review is for the vegans and vegetarians out there looking for a new taste in Richmond. Let's check out Govinda and the delicious, cruelty-free and affordable meals they are serving to the community.

Govinda is an Indian vegetarian and vegan restaurant that opened about a year ago. Located on West Marshall Street behind the Broad & Belvidere Apartments, it is open Sunday through Friday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Outdoor seating is available at the front and side of the restaurant, and there are a few tables inside. The space is not particularly big, which makes it more of a grab-and-go deal. There is a surprising amount of parking available on the side of the restaurant, which is rare to find in Richmond.

Walking in, guests are instantly greeted with warm hospitality from the staff.

The white walls are embellished with images of Krishna, the Hindu God of protection, compassion and love. The restaurant stays true to Krishna's values, engaging in efforts to distribute meals to the Richmond community and partnering with various humanitarian organizations. I deeply admire this about Govinda: their mission extends beyond serving delicious food.

Govinda is known for its "Govinda Thali," or just "thali," which translates to "a plate" in Hindi. A traditional thali comes with a mix of vegetables, rice, bread and a sweet. Govinda's \$8 thali consists of rice, sabji, roti, pakora, dal and halva sweet. If you're unfamiliar with some of these dishes, worry not — I haven't had much Indian food, but the staff was extremely helpful in explaining the different foods on my plate.

Sabji is a dish composed of different vegetables mixed together. Roti is the bread of the plate, similar to a round flatbread. Pakora is a vegetable fritter that is often spicy, depending on the vegetable from which it is made. Dal is dried, split lentils. The sweet of the plate, halva, can range from a thick flour paste to ground seeds and nuts sweetened with sugar or honey.

My favorite parts of the thali were the roti, pakora and halva. I had never tried any of these dishes before, but they were delicious. The roti was perfect for eating

with the sabji and the rich flavor of the pakora effectively complemented the other items. The halva, with its crumbly consistency and sweet taste, made the ideal dessert for the end of the meal.

The menu changes daily in terms of the type of pakora or roti you get, and sometimes they serve vegetable pasta along with the rice. What is consistent on each plate is the rice, roti and dal.

Govinda also offers vegetarian cooking programs for people interested in becoming vegetarian or trying out the lifestyle. This includes a 30-day lesson teaching the fundamentals of cooking vegetarian meals that are both affordable and delicious.

Not only have I gone outside my comfort zone with this review, trying a new diet and cuisine, I have also deepened my understanding of Indian culture and the Hindu religion. It is always amazing to see a message or mission taking place behind the plates. This is why I love food — not just for the taste and comfort, but the opportunity to expand one's worldview.

For an \$8 vegetarian plate of food, I was pleasantly surprised in how good the flavor was and how well it satisfied my appetite. Although I wished the restaurant was open during lunch hours,

I would not hesitate to come again for dinner. An easy thumbs up and five out of five stars for me.

As always, eat up!

For all things food, feel free to check out @nxreview on Instagram and TikTok for many more recommendations and reviews around town.

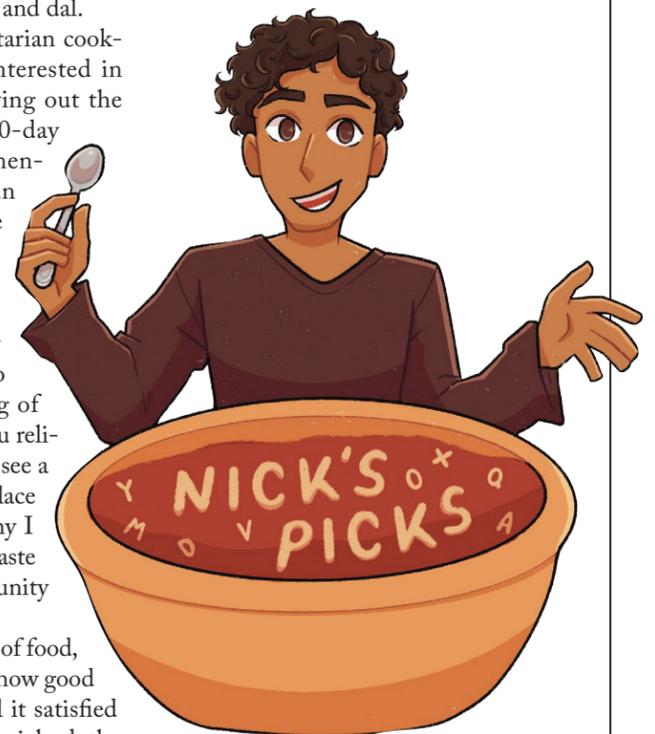


Illustration by Killian Goodale-Porter

CT Opinions

Quote of the week

"When we vote, things change."

— KAMALA HARRIS

English Language Learners in Richmond high schools are struggling — *here's what we can do*

ISHAAN NANDWANI
Opinions Editor

LET'S FACE IT — HIGH SCHOOL IS HARD.

Between challenging classes, novel social expectations and the impending uncertainty of adulthood, it can be draining and overwhelming on many occasions. I certainly felt that way.

Now picture attending high school in another country, with an entirely different language and culture. On top of that, your parents are unable to assist you in navigating your education because they themselves do not understand. Without any support, high school is no longer just draining — it's next to impossible.

Unfortunately, this is the reality for countless immigrant and refugee English Language Learner students across the United States. The increased barriers that these students face in their education have led to high dropout rates in this population.

This issue is especially pronounced in Richmond Public Schools. In 2022, just 38.2% of English Language Learners in RPS graduated, with numbers falling to 27.9% at George Wythe High School, where English Language Learners make up 38.4% of students.

I've been fortunate enough to serve as a bilingual tutor in the science department at George Wythe, and through my interactions with the students and conversations with faculty members, have identified solu-

tions to these barriers. Additionally, I affirm George Wythe assistant principal Jennifer Blackwell's list of recommendations to the Richmond School Board, and will provide my ideas to feasibly implement them.

One of the most significant challenges facing English Language Learners is the

this is not an effective or long-lasting solution.

One of Blackwell's recommendations to George Wythe is to implement bilingual tutors into every classroom, which I believe will make a significant improvement in students' grasp of the material and their self-confidence. In my personal experience

ship with George Wythe and the VCU School of World Studies, through which foreign language majors can get course credit for serving as bilingual classroom tutors for a specified number of hours each week throughout the semester. This can also be implemented at other local colleges and universities, such as the University of Richmond.

Parent involvement in their children's education is also low at George Wythe, which serves as yet another barrier for students. However, this isn't from a lack of wanting to be a part of their kids' lives — language barriers provide yet another constraint, with only one bilingual office assistant at the school who is available to speak with and support parents.

There's another opportunity for VCU to fill this gap. Students in the Spanish-English Translation and Interpretation program have the opportunity to select from a variety of internship placement sites to fulfill a requirement towards their certificate; adding this position as one of the encouraged placement sites for students can provide students with critical experience and George Wythe with the support that they need.

The problems facing English Language Learners aren't unique to George Wythe, but understanding and filling the gaps at this institution can serve as a model for the work we do across RPS and the entire nation.



Illustration by Tess Wladar

students' ability to comprehend content in class. The teachers are predominantly English-speaking with a classroom full of students to teach.

Although they try their best, it's impossible to cater instruction to each student without support. As a result, students are often lost and withdrawn. Many resort to using translator apps on their phones, but

working with individual students using Spanish to familiarize themselves with the concepts, I've seen significant improvements in their understanding.

I understand the difficulties of implementing a wide-scale effort to further bilingual instruction in this way, in terms of both obtaining qualified tutors and funding. One strategy could be to create a partner-

Nick's Picks

Try Harrison Street Cafe's vegetarian breakfast and lunch

NICHOLAS BARAHONA
Staff Writer

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Today we have our palates set for an all-vegetarian cafe with an assortment of vegan options to choose from. With a great location on campus, let's take a look at what Harrison Street Cafe is serving up.

Located at 402 N. Harrison St., Harrison Street Cafe is right next to the extremely popular Christian's Pizza, about a six minute walk from Monroe Park.

The cafe takes pride in serving an all-vegetarian menu, while also providing a wide selection of vegan options. Open Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the cafe only serves breakfast and lunch.

Harrison Street Cafe is open for takeout, delivery and dine-in. You can place an order easily through the cafe's website or by calling in. The cafe also delivers within a 2 mile radius.

Along with the espresso, coffee, tea and assorted pastries, Harrison Street Cafe offers breakfast burritos and sandwiches. For lunch, it offers wraps, sandwiches and salads. Some vegan highlights are the soysage biscuit, vegan breakfast burrito, vegan breakfast scramble, vegan potato salad and vegan cinnamon sugar cream cheese bar.

My experience at Harrison Street Cafe was a quick and easy one, with little wait and no hiccups. I placed my order online, and within minutes walked in and picked up my food. I went with the vegan deluxe burrito, which had the cafe's signature breakfast tofu, potatoes, tomatoes and vegan sausage in a warm tortilla.

The cafe brings a sense of good vibes — perfect for anyone looking to dine-in or drink a cup of coffee and do some work. There are lights hung across the walls and paintings and art scattered across the building.

The staff was kind and helpful and made my visit a quick and happy one.

The burrito was exactly what I was looking for to satisfy my breakfast craving. The potatoes in the burrito is what really did it for me, as it was well seasoned and had a little char to it that added flavor. When ordering the burrito, you also have the option to add extra sides such as cheese, spinach, onions and mushrooms. I was happy with the burrito's size, as it was enough to fill my morning appetite.

At the cost of about \$10, this vegan burrito — to my surprise — got the job done. As someone who is not vegetarian or vegan, I thoroughly enjoyed this burrito. As a bonus, there are no other places on campus where you can easily snatch up a breakfast burrito. Thus, this cafe is a great place to order from when on the way to or coming back from class and in need of something quick and enjoyable.

Although Harrison Street Cafe is one of the few vegetarian places I've tried, it's one of many in Richmond. Its quality of taste makes me eager to search for more vegetarian and vegan locations around town. Considering its convenient

grab and go style, fair price point, diverse diet selections and quality, I give Harrison Street Cafe an easy 5 out of 5 stars overall.

As always, eat up!

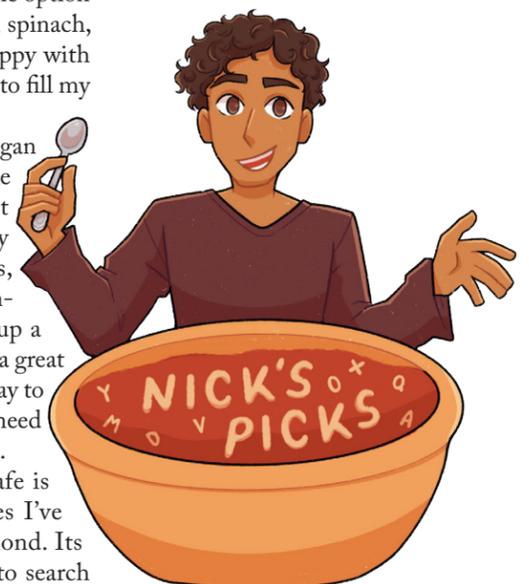


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