

Photo of the Day | Horse’n Around



Workers handle horses at Horsebarn Hill at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Conn., on Thursday, April 2, 2026. Horsebarn Hill houses different farm animals, many of which include horses. PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

‘PROJECT HAIL MARY’ AND FILMS MADE TO UNITE



Ryan Gosling in a still from the movie “Project Hail Mary.” Gosling played the main character, Dr. Ryland Grace. PHOTO COURTESY OF @PROJECTHAILMARY ON INSTAGRAM

by Isaac Grad
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
isaac.grad@uconn.edu

Ryan Gosling’s latest film, “Project Hail Mary,” was a gorgeously shot film with great acting all around. More than cinematography and acting, though, it also encouraged a subtle message of unity in a time when many could use a reminder on the importance of connection and communication. The film, unlike many recent movies, opts for a lesson that is shown, not shoved down the audience’s throats. As movies should do, it trusts the audience to come to realizations on their own.

Gosling’s character, Dr. Ryland Grace, meets an alien, Rocky, while on a space mission. He’s alone and scared, and his initial reaction is to flee the alien ship approaching him. When that fails, he accepts an invitation for communication from a great distance — an agreement to send messages to one another in the form of containers. These containers have objects representing where they are from and what they are doing. When that builds enough trust between the pair, Grace ventures out of his ship to that of the alien. In doing so, a bridge connecting the two is created, offering a chance at face-to-face communication.

Delivered in a discrete manner, this lesson allows the conclusion to be drawn by each viewer, hopefully leading to a stronger impact — one which doesn’t cease to exist the moment viewers leave the theater.

This is important in understanding why the message pushed is as such. It doesn’t take much for your everyday person to look around and see a startling lack of community, understanding and unity, particularly for those considered different. Grace, despite his fears, learns first and foremost how to understand Rocky, translating each sound to something he can understand himself.

The pair learns they have the same goal, similar experiences and many shared emotions. They go beyond the simple motivation of saving their respective worlds; they form a bond and a close friendship. This love and care stretches far beyond even our already excessive views of categorization, as they are literal aliens to one another and differ in just about every sense. The idea that two beings from entirely different solar systems could work together, played for an audience living in a world where people in the same town can hate one another for entirely arbitrary and self-imposed differences, makes the message of the film all that more glaringly apparent.

Both Grace and Rocky have to adjust to get along, more or less (Grace was annoyed with Rocky at points). However, neither held an expectation that they had any say in what the other should be willing to alter to get along. Grace didn’t understand all of Rocky’s practices, but he accepted them and worked to understand as much as he could, and vice versa.

Along with the idea of commu-

nity, “Project Hail Mary” has an overall emphasis on the good of humanity. By framing the scenario as one where the two main characters leave the traditional categories of human and non-human, the film emphasizes humans as one group as opposed to focusing on the smaller divisions we’ve created and chosen to concentrate on. We also see a general feel-good ending, as well as a variety of moments throughout the film that show hope and beauty. Dealing with something as universally considered amazing as outer space, the film gives the audience a chance to marvel at the wonder of the world we live in. In doing so, there’s a comfortable balance of learning and lessons with a positive, hopeful feeling.

“Project Hail Mary” manages to bring contemporary issues to the forefront and offer a reminder about their origins and their foundational solutions. It brings human issues to outer space, where they can be distanced from whatever biases an audience member might bring into the film, allowing each individual to learn the lessons woven into the movie in hopes of encouraging unity and communication. In doing so, “Project Hail Mary” offers hope and positivity, helped immensely by the charm of Gosling and the arguably uncontrollable urge for the viewer to relate and aspire to his character. Grace, in his dynamic with Rocky, ultimately emphasizes the importance of understanding, sacrifice, care and community.

Performative Policy: INACTION VEILED AS ‘CHANGE’

by Azhaan Khalid
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
azk23005@uconn.edu

Yesterday, in the Daily Campus article “A Hierarchy for Crimes: Why the UN’s latest resolution is UNprofessional,” a fellow writer sought to explain the moral hypocrisy in declaring one inhumane tragedy as greater than the other and the systematic obscurity in their call for reparations. While I mostly agree with that argument, my main concern is the performativity of the United Nations’ declaration — it doesn’t meaningfully do anything. Instead, it dovetails into a broader tradition of political gestures designed to sate public sentiment without producing anything of substance — it’s a delusion of progress.

This declaration isn’t even entirely new. It bears similarities to the UN’s Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in

2001 which also recognized the transatlantic slave trade and the lasting colonial legacy as crimes against humanity. In 2008, the U.S. House Resolution 194 cited “a genuine apology is an important and necessary first step in the process of racial reconciliation.” While I agree, in part, no genuine and substantive policy has been derived from this declaration — nothing has happened!

This isn’t limited to a U.S. context. The Paris Agreement calls for emission reductions that each country can set by itself with no penalty for failing to meet them. The agreement aims to reduce projected global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-Industrial levels; we are not on track. Up north, the 2008 Canadian Residential School apology recognized the abusive and societally corrosive immorality of their forced assimilation policy, but no complete steps were taken to reduce its lasting

legacies and dysfunctions. A recognition of wrongdoing and injustice is necessary and well-intentioned but means nothing without actual ensuing change.

Recently and historically in the U.S., the War Powers Resolution is considered ineffective and a political prevarication of unchecked executive power. It seems to further codify and corroborate congressional authority on war under Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution, but U.S. presidents have ignored it or falsely and self-servingly reinterpreted it. Some have argued drone strikes, cyberattacks, or “limited” operations do not qualify the 60-day requirement of the resolution. Formalist etiquette and a sociogovernmental apparatus reduce enforcement.

This ethos exists beyond government and reveals a commercial culture in which public relations are ever-changing

and morally capricious to favor public sentiment over a genuine ethical stance — a culture which prioritizes profitability over possibility. That is, the possibility of progress. We can think back to the oh-so world-changing efforts by some companies to post black squares during the Black Lives Matter movement without addressing labor discrimination or the Greenwashing declarations by some firms to become net-zero by X date without any latent advance or transparency. This culture can and has ingrained a defeatist mindset in the American public in which many politicians feel more a representative of self-interest than people, eroding the perception of democratic agency and integrity.

Symbolic actions lack legitimacy and are gross substitutions of humanitarian reform. However, many have argued recognition to be a precondition

for material reparation by broadening the Overton window. I agree: symbolic recognition can be substantive and can construct moral consensus but not when met with stagnation — where the urgency impetus that drives reform dissipates. 25 years later, we still lack a binding mechanism for the DDPA; we still fall short of the aggregate goals of the Paris Agreement and Congress still fails to significantly restrict executive wartime action. Allowing such a culture structurally incentivizes inhumanity and tragedy.

We must call out this performativity and be more cautious as to not mistake such declarations and legislation as action. Binding mechanisms must be integrated into the Paris Agreement, UN declaration and others alike to avoid a moral hazard problem. Progress cannot become a simulacrum.