

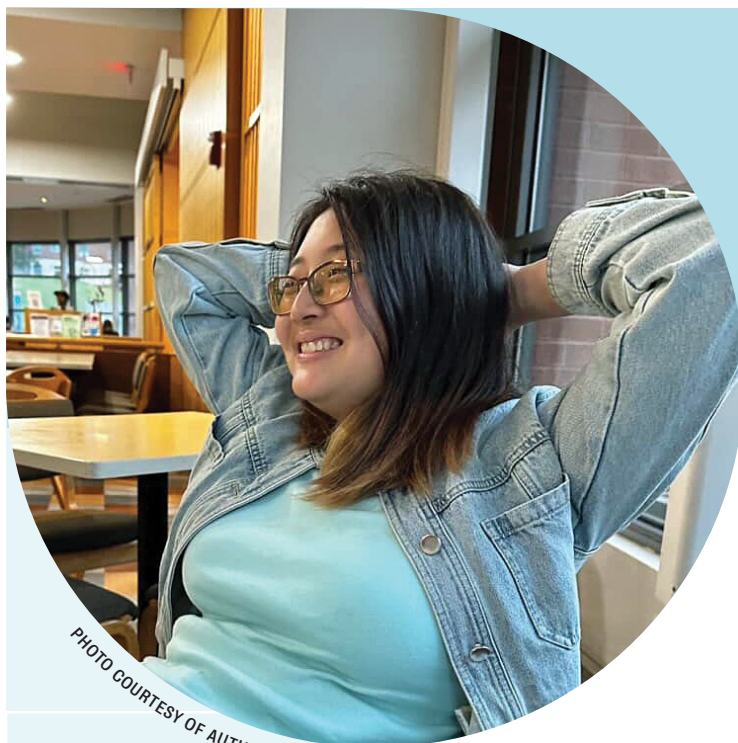


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FEAR, BACTERIA, CONNECTION AND RISK

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SHE/THEY/THEM

I'm always scared.

Human interaction especially frightens me. People scare me. Talking scares me. Being perceived scares me.

So when I joined The Daily Campus as a copy editor last year, I had no plans of becoming more involved. Involvement, after all, means being perceived and talking to people, and that is terrifying business.

But once I was at the DC, I changed my mind. Being around cool people and reading other people's writing reminded me how much I want to believe in communication. Because I think what's at the heart of communication, writing and the newspaper is an attempt to connect with other people. And what else is there?

The DC made me want to try and connect with people, despite my fear. And so I wrote.

Somehow, it's worked out pretty well. I wrote a couple pieces where I read way too much into movies, and I got a column where I get to nerd out about science every two weeks. In said column, I talked about being comforted by how small we are, and I mean it. Look at the Great Oxygenation Event; it caused so many species to go extinct, but

also set the stage for countless more to evolve. And it was all because of cyanobacteria. One of the smallest organisms imaginable was enough to create the basis for every living thing we know and love today.

To me, the Great Oxygenation Event is a microcosm for everything done in a group. Take the newspaper: We all come together with our contributions, however small, to make a greater whole.

So maybe on some level, I am no better than a bacterium. Maybe everything I do and say and write is tiny and insignificant.

But maybe it isn't. Maybe it's all going to be part of something bigger someday, even if I never get to see it.

The way I think about it, putting any writing or any kind of communication out into the world is always going to be a message-in-a-bottle type of situation. You don't actually know if anyone is ever going to see it. And even if they do, you don't know if it will resonate.

But it could, and I think the chance that it could is always worth taking the risk. The Daily Campus helped me believe that.

The center of all communication and connection is people, so I want to take some time to shout out some:

To my friends: Love you all. I am so lucky to know you. I wish I could put all of you in a suitcase and carry you around with me everywhere I go. (There will be air holes in the suitcase, don't worry.) You mean the world to me.

Shoutout to Jordan, my co-copy editor for the past two years and one of my best friends, who put up with me constantly forgetting where the master budget

is. The DC wouldn't have been half as much of a joy without you. Stay octagonal, baby squirrel.

Shoutout and also apologies to the Sunday night production crew, who had to hear my incessant yapping and pterodactyl noises while I worked.

Shoutout to everyone I've crossed paths with at the DC, to all the lovely folks I wish I had more time with and gotten to know better. You all are so fantastic and fascinating.

Shoutout and thank you to the editors and executives I've worked with, past and present, who inspired me, and to the writers who did the same. Not to be parasocial, but I'm going to miss working with and editing for y'all.

Shoutout to anyone who's read or supported my writing, to anyone who's made me believe, for even a second, that it isn't such a horrifying thing to be perceived after all.

And to The Daily Campus, and everyone who's ever given me space to speak, on the off chance that I might have something to say worth hearing: Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm glad I took the risk.

The Nicaraguan sign language started by people from different backgrounds signing at each other over and over, until they managed to reach a common ground. And isn't that just beautifully representative of how every communication occurs? We go and we toss our unfamiliar words and gestures at each other, over and over, until they become familiar. Despite everything that could go wrong, we just try. We just keep trying.

I tried. I'll keep trying.
I hope you do the same.