Opinion

The Daily Campus

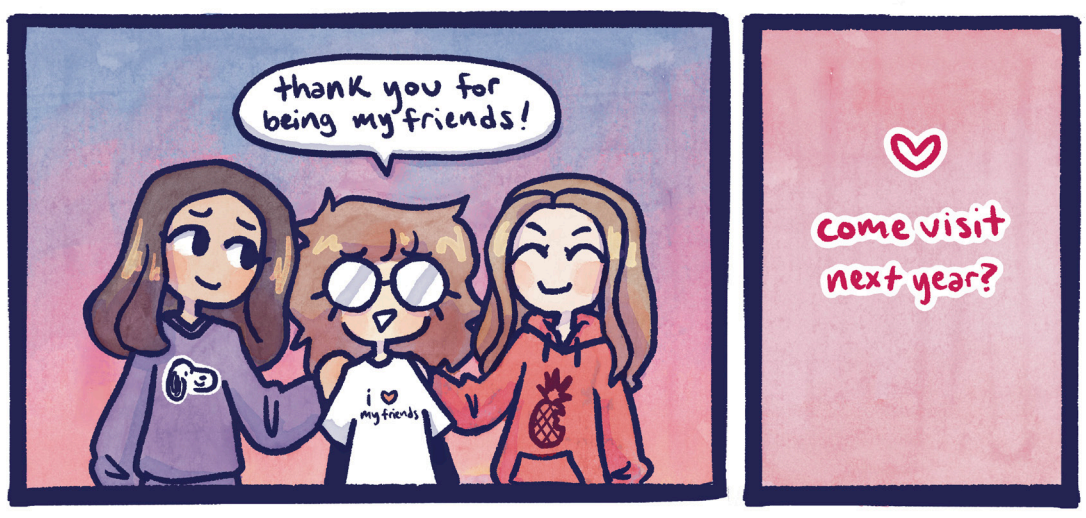
EDITORIAL BOARD:

Karla Perez.....EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Tomas Hinckley.....OPINION EDITOR
Patrick Minnerly..ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

Gianna Cassino.....WEEKLY COLUMNIST
Colin Hamilton.....WEEKLY COLUMNIST

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by individual writers in the opinion section do not reflect the views and opinions of The Daily Campus or other staff members. Only articles labeled "Editorial" are the official opinions of The Daily Campus.



COMIC BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Talking With No Mouth



FILE LOGO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

by Tomas Hinckley
OPINION EDITOR
HE/HIM/HIS
tomas.hinckley@uconn.edu

When I first became a weekly columnist for The Daily Campus, I was presented with the question of giving my column a special name. The title by which it's known, the set of words that would follow all my writing thereafter, the pressure to choose something "good" was immeasurable; something that could follow the column as it lives, grows and changes over the years. I was having the veritable crisis of a first-time father. The answer I chose — the title of this piece — is what I reflect on now, for its last official edition.

The concept of "Talking With No Mouth" came from a twisted mash up of two disparate parts, both deeply important to me. For the first, it is reflective of the mindset and feeling I've put towards all my writing here, which has been best put by someone that is not me. That is, for the first year of writing here, I felt viscerally that my writing was not real. I mean, I made it, put it in a Word document, had it published and then it disappeared into the ether. The DC website, the physical newspaper — both were not real. I could not place this feeling until I read a piece from a writer I've never met, someone who left this institution before I even arrived. He said, discussing his departure from the University of Connecticut and The Daily Campus:

"Over the past four years, my naive hope for encouraging radical politics within a business — albeit a student-run one — was curtailed... I say with love that [young writers] should look for outlets beyond Tier III student groups to seriously affect political change."

A very cynical message for an 18-year-old to internalize, but that's exactly what I did with it. When combined with some aesthetic phrasing borrowed from the classic horror story "I have no mouth but I must scream," the four-word header that would define my time here at UConn was born. Attempting to make radical political change from within The Daily Campus is a bit like trying to talk without a mouth.

But the issue is not specifically with the DC — as our lovely hate commenters have correctly pointed out over the years, this is quite obviously a left-leaning institution. The crisis is in the modus operandi of journalism within the American political sphere. We live in a post-truth, post-Epstein files society. Incomprehensible amounts of information about the vilest parts of society are available and widely dispersed. People have watched a genocide carried out before their eyes, they have seen mountains of evidence that a pedophilic cabal of billionaires runs the government and the only thing it has led to is complete intake paralysis. We have reached the carrying capacity, the point of diminishing returns when it comes to "informing" as action. A politic focused on exposure is not enough anymore.

"Shifting discourse" as an end goal of action and writing is insufficient. What matters is changing the material world and the interactions that exist within it; discourse is only the first step toward that. We live in a system of concrete power relations and inequalities, that shift and change in response to attacks against them, that push people to move on and forget with time. As The Occupied Times puts it, "any change in the debate that surrounds this process dissolves into nothingness once the space is gone, the novelty wears off and the news cycle moves on."

As we move away from these means and toward a viable alternative, it is not enough to just slow down the news cycle or focus on "solutions journalism" to regain some place for journalism. It is not enough to remove the visual excesses of the industry; the problem goes to the root. In fact, it is that journalism can be conceived of as an 'industry' in and of itself which demands that it reinforces capitalist realism. This type of production of storytelling based on market values will only continue isolating the reader and provide for their lack of self-image as a 'subject' in the world.

So, I speak to all my writers in the DC who continue after me — those who hope to make change with their writing and serve as a voice for good — that writing for a newspaper alone will not be enough. The only way forward is to bring your work into the real world, in coming together with people and facilitating collective action. The world we live in is deeply corrupt and the desire to make change is good and necessary. Instead of dimming the spark for those who would want to use the written word to act, I hope they find too that the best remedy is in participating in the lived struggle of the real world.

Editorial

The semester is winding down, but your activism doesn't have to

As the spring semester comes to a close, student protest movements at the University of Connecticut have reached a momentary crescendo. On Wednesday, the student-led UConnifer coalition joined with local Mansfield community residents in a demonstration against the proposed construction of a golf facility on top of the existing UConn-owned Conifer Collection. This was not the first time a student protest had taken place on campus this year. Demonstrations and events organized by the Coalition on Immigration, the Solidarity Fund and several of our university's unions have occurred with semi-regular frequency. All of this activity comes as our nation approaches midterm elections in November and continues to face a swarm of civil, environmental and human rights movements. With this political backdrop in mind, the Editorial Board strongly encourages UConn students and staff to take note of how they can make their voices heard this summer.

Contact Your Elected Officials

Elected officials hold power on the premise of representing their constituents on the wider political stage. That includes you, regardless of who you may have voted for in past elections. As such, elected officials can be powerful resources for advancing an agenda on the political or legal stage. When contacting elected officials, remain focused; only address one issue. This puts emphasis on your cause and makes your position clear. Applauding your official's previous actions is also important, as it underlines that you are aware of their legislative record. This understanding often makes representatives more receptive to your argument. If possible, find historical decisions that align with your own position. Finally, take the time to fully explain your issue. Simply telling an official that what they need to act on is not enough. They must understand why this issue matters, how it will affect their constituents and how they can help. For information on your local officials and how to contact them, check out Ballotpedia's "Who represents me?" website.



ILLUSTRATION BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Attend and Participate in Government Meetings

It is your civic right and responsibility to attend government meetings, to ensure transparency between the public and their elected officials. Attending public meetings can bring awareness to your cause and put your statements on the legal record, ensuring accountability. Local government meetings, such as town halls, are a great way to spark change on a local level. These spaces are often underutilized by local activists, making your attendance much more impactful. Make sure to coordinate with friends or allies to draw a crowd, as collective demands are perceived as more compelling than a singular individual's ask. When attending a meeting, make sure to stay respectful of any rules and regulations, including whether you need to sign up in advance or if there is a limited time for public remarks. Following these regulations is important in ensuring your cause is compelling to local officials without alienating them through disrespectful conduct.

Protest

Whether organizing a sit-in, walk-out, rally, march, boycott or strike, protests are a powerful tool to bring public awareness to your campaign and put political pressure on both your opponents and policymakers to act. However, these protest movements will be ineffective without proper publicity. To ensure these aspects, reach out to local news and media stations to notify them of your group's demonstration. Explain what you are doing, why you are doing it and where and when the protest will take place. As with attending government meetings, a protest is made more effective when incorporating large groups. Make sure to find like-minded individuals willing to back your protest. Do not be afraid to reach out to groups you might not otherwise agree with. When building a coalition, the enemy of your enemy is almost always your friend.

Regardless of the causes advanced by UConn students and staff, The Editorial Board believes that effectively using one's voice to spark meaningful political change is both a civic right and a personal responsibility. We encourage members of the UConn community to spend their summer creating the change they want to see in their world.