Two USC alumni create urban planning podcast

By EDITHA SINGHAL

Last year, USC alumni Samantha Ellman and Natalie Ikhrata created a podcast to interest young people and those unfamiliar with urban planning in the discipline and its applicability to how they live their lives. A year later, they’re still going strong, releasing episodes a few times a month ranging in topic from housing development to disaster planning.

Ellman and Ikhrata, who both graduated in 2023 with master’s degrees in urban planning, were inspired to start the podcast when they realized the dearth of resources to explore urban planning outside the classroom. There were very few podcasts and those they could find weren’t engaging, they said.

“I am excited to try and find a way to discuss topics about urban planning that are easily accessible, easy to understand and in-reverse excitement,” Ikhrata said.

They also aimed at making urban planning a more relatable topic for young people who often notice the problems related to the field of urban planning — such as zoning or unlivable cities — but are unable to put a name to them. The podcast, which often brings on guests, sought to inspire people to pursue urban planning professionally or, at least, become more aware of its impact on their daily lives.

The podcast mostly caters toward a younger crowd, especially those entering the field or those interested after prior exposure to the field. Ellman and Ikhrata said they want to make urban planning accessible to everyone.

“Our biggest goal is to emphasize that you do not need an urban planning background or an urban planning degree to understand these topics because they are about your lived experiences,” Ikhrata said.

Ellman and Ikhrata’s favorite part of the podcast is meeting the guest speakers and discussing their backgrounds, their careers and current projects in urban planning. These connections are useful not only for the podcast but also career advice, Ellman said.

“I’ve loved meeting everyone,” Ellman said. “There are people like professors that we’ve had on and then there are people that we’ve never met in person that we’ve spoken to — it’s opened a lot of doors for us professionally.”

The guest speakers included adjunct instructor at the Price School of Urban Planning Association President Angela Brooks and Urban Design Director at Studio One Eleven Shrut Shankar.

Despite these challenges, Feingold said the podcast is a great tool to spark interest among prospective planners and spread awareness about the field. He said the creators successfully provided listeners with a higher-level view of the variety of topics covered in an urban planning program.

“Ellman and Ikhrata have really pulled guests and topics that are really far-reaching. There are areas that even as an experienced professional I don’t have exposure to.”

— BEN FEINGOLD

Adjustment at Letter Price School of Public Policy

Students/alumni: Did you live in Marks Hall or Trojan Hall your freshman year?

To commemorate the demolition of those longstanding dormitories, the Daily Trojan is compiling stories of former residents and their memories. Please submit details to be published in the near future.

Experiences of all kinds are welcomed. Send your OK conf below to submit.
in universities recommended for students with disabilities, yet there is still work to be done.

I found support in unexpected places, yet I still wonder if I’ll ever feel that same support from USC at large. I wonder when my university will realize what a permanent and powerful difference it can make in all students’ lives if it intentionally invests in making a USC education truly accessible for disabled students.

Improving systems supporting disabled students helps all students. So what if USC led the charge? What if USC could be the place students with disabilities want to come to because of how valued they are? To USC, I say thank you for accepting me and for pushing me to learn self-advocacy the hard way. To the future students and alumni of USC, I say be unafraid to call out injustices and ask for something better. If you’re a prospective student with a disability or a current student, know you deserve to be here — take up space. Even places like a well-endowed USC need changemakers to lift the veil on the disabled student experience and advocate for a better, more inclusive future.

At times, these systematic flaws made me want to give up, drop out, and even made me hate my body — simply because advocating for myself as a disabled student was utterly exhausting. However, as Carrie Bradshaw so eloquently puts it, “Maybe the best any of us can do is not to quit, play the hand we’ve been given and accessorize the outfit we got.” And just like that, my time at USC is up.

With love and fabulosity,
Chronically Catherine

Writer’s note: Chronically Catherine will continue on outside of the Daily Trojan. You can still reach out to Chronically Catherine if you’re also a student with a disability working to coexist with daily adversity without losing sight of your fabulosity — @itschronicallycatherine on Instagram, or chronicallycatherine@gmail.com.

Catherine Ames is a newly graduated senior writing about life as a young person coexisting with chronic illness in her column, “Chronically Catherine.”

The Office of Student Accessibility Services and USC housing promised more than they delivered in Catherine Ame’s experience as a disabled student.
What it’s really like to be a student with a disability at USC

Catherine Ames

CATHOLICALLY CATHERINE

W

hat it’s really like to be a student with a disability at USC? It’s a question I had before my first day of classes and the one that prompted me to start this column. The final installment of Chronically Catherine at the Daily Trojan, my parting gift to you is an answer.

Let me make one thing clear — this isn’t some Regina George-style takedown, but the reality is that students with disabilities at USC need better.

I became chronically ill and disabled at age 20. Forced to transfer universities, I visited USC where admissions officers ensured me a seamless transition into the life of a Trojan with a wide variety of resources available to students with disabilities — from guaranteed housing to academic accommodations through the Office of Student Accessibility Services. My acceptance a year later distracted me from my first hospitalization in two months, I had hope for the first time in years.

Sadly, I quickly learned that Admissions’ promises were fragmented from reality. First, I faced housing hurdles. It felt like pulling teeth trying to get Housing to acknowledge my need for a room close to Student Health which would allow me to maintain my health; a “reasonable accommodation” supported by the Americans with Disability Act at schools that receive federal funding. It wasn’t until my mom stepped in to help me escalate the issue to senior leadership — and President Carol Folt — that I finally got an on-campus apartment a week before the start of the semester.

I learned recently from my friend Rachel Miller, an incredibly talented scientist, Sophomore, and wheelchair-using student, that she experienced similar difficulties with finding accessible housing. “My freshman year was a bit challenging as all the doors with automatic doors were full, so they placed me in an ADA-compliant dorm in BRC,” she said. “However, because it was an extremely heavy safety door and not automatic, I could not open it. USC’s solution was for me to text my roommates anytime I needed to open the door. It was quite frustrating because I felt like it shouldn't be someone else’s responsibility to make sure I can get into my own room.”

After this, I was wary of how USC supported disabled students. I learned from friends and readers that OSAS case managers were either largely unhelpful or literal godsends — to my luck, I experienced the latter.

Outside of my OSAS case manager, the people who were most helpful to me were junior and mid-level staff. Unwavering angels championed my educational journey in the most unexpected places.

Students at the Cardinal Gardens package center would hand-deliver boxes of medicine to my apartment when I was too weak to get them myself. Kind professors subtly dimmed the lights because they knew I had a migraine, which helped me through my toughest days. It’s been small acts of kindness like those that make me feel like a Trojan.

For every tiny victory — represented by a supportive professor or TA — I had twice the number of horrible experiences. Sometimes I couldn’t reach my academic advisors for weeks despite my priority registration accommodation, something they controlled. Professors openly questioned my disability because it’s invisible, and department heads never responded to my emails asking for help navigating academic issues while I was in the hospital. I felt abandoned. In several posts on the USC Reddit, students with disabilities also expressed their deep anxiety over their disability being questioned by professors.

“I’ve had some professors act like it’s optional for them to accept my accommodations, even though they’re required in law,” one user posted. “I’ve also had professors see my accommodation and ask questions whether I’ll ever come to class or if I’ll just constantly miss for medical reasons, which I think is a rude assumption to make.”

But the problem isn’t USC Housing, OSAS or even academic advising; they’re symptoms of poor investment in the disabled student experience — and the silence from the top is deafening. Students with disabilities are led to believe by admissions that housing is a shoe-in when, in reality, Housing struggles to provide rooms to disabled students every year, like myself and Rachel experienced.

While Rachel was eventually placed in a dorm with an automatic door, this delay in accessibility impacted her, and OSAS was her only advocate. “The USC Office of Student Accessibility Services has the support of the University for the resources needed to serve our students,” wrote Debbie Jih, senior director of OSAS, in a statement to the Daily Trojan. “Our team of 25 is one of the largest teams among our peer institutions in the country and serves about 4,700 students.” That means the OSAS case-manager-to-student ratio is roughly 1:188. Worse so, the USC Housing struggles to provide accessible rooms to students with disabilities, something Ames said she and other students experienced.

Catherine Ames

Catherine Ames shared her true experience living with a disability at USC after recently graduating, from difficult experiences to tiny victories.
The Bear’: A decadent second course

Christopher Nolan, director of “Oppenheimer,” first used IMAX Film cameras in 2008 while producing Nolan’s newest epic will get a rare theatrical rollout well worth the extra bucks.

Nolan’s epic new movie will get a rare theatrical rollout well worth the extra bucks.

**IMAX 70mm**

“Oppenheimer” is showing in this fast growing format — the moth- er of all screens — in only 30 locations across the world.

When a movie is shot on IMAX, it means that in certain scenes or sequences the film is projected digitally. Though these prints are wider in size and aspect ratio than 35mm, they don’t technically add any sound value compared to digital or Laser. This is why IMAX is used in spades last season.

What really matters at the end of the day is the extra screen space and priority the format.

**IMAX**

Regular, non-70mm film IMAX is projected digitally.

If you’re lucky enough to have several IMAX screens available near you, go for the one that says IMAX with Laser if it’s available. IMAX with Laser is still being developed and expanded, but it provides a brighter image and richer contrast than traditional IMAX screens. If there are no specifications of Laser near you, don’t sweat it. What really matters at the end of the day is the extra screen space being filled and explored in any IMAX screen. Laser or not, a few differences in contrast are nothing compared to the additional sound and screen that you’ll always be getting in IMAX compared to any standard showing. There’s a reason why Mr. Nolan and his fans love moving image possible. Don’t get lost in the mechanics of it all, just understand that it truly does not get bigger or better or realer or reeler (no pun intended) than this.

**Dolby Cinema and Cinemark XD**

Since “Oppenheimer” and “Barbie” will both be released July 21 (Barbenheimer weekend, here we come), they’ll be sharing these two premium options. The greatest takeaway about Dolby Cinema or Cinemark XD is that, though they have larger screens and greater sound — a very obvious plus compared to digital or 35mm — they don’t technically add any visual to the screen in the way IMAX does. Dolby and XD simply take the standard image and sound then blow it up to greater, richer heights.

If what you’re looking for at the end of the day is the extra screen space of it all, and all of these premium large format options are near you, your best bet is going to be IMAX in 70mm engagements. If the situation were more appropriate, I’d tell you to have a blast, but for now, I’ll just say that I hope you have a great time and an even greater at the cinematic experience. Roll the credits.

**No Hard Feelings’ is dumb and fun**

Kimberly Aguirre

L ast week, I entered my local cinema, prepared to enrich my mind with the latest piece of artwork. Film is a powerful tool that has the ability to create discussion, form bonds and make change. As actor Diego Luna said, “Cinema is a mirror that can change the world.”

Equipped with my blue raspberry ICEE — which was left largely unaccompanied by — I took my seat, ready “to laugh, to cry, to care.” (Unfortunately, my local movie theater is a Cinemark, so I’ll never fully experience the joy of cinema.)

After innumerable ads, the lights cut and the culture experience began. "No Hard Feelings’ follows Maddie (Jennifer Lawrence) — a 32-year-old woman at risk of losing her childhood home. When her car gets repossed, she loses her Uber side gig, and things are looking bleak. Desperate enough to do anything, she eventually answers an ad (to do more than) date her 19-year-old son, Percy (Andrew Barth Feldman), before he goes to a more lucrative exchange for a car.

What ensues is somewhat predictable — through a series of hijinks, the unlikely duo ends up gaining a mutual appreciation and learning from each other. Thanks to Mr. Fields, of course. Morrie does not get overhyped, and the two do not actually end up together. This isn’t a perfect movie, and I am not claiming it is "the one" — just here to say it made me laugh quite a bit.

Some highlights include Maddie fighting a few teases on the beach while completely naked. Maddie trying to walk up the stairs in rollerblades and Maddie saving Percy from an Irish-bred alcohol-filled night. Basically, “Jane is a comedic mastermind.”

Despite many laugh-worthy moments throughout the movie, there were some curious chinks in the theater. Being the insecure person I am, I stifled my would-be chortles into chucks. An especially grueling moment was when X’s "girl next door" Mooney popped up as Jody, Percy’s childhood nanny. Honestly, just looking at Mooney is enough to start the chuckles sometimes.

When he was — frustratingly — only in two scenes, he proceeds to do absolutely nothing and is never asked for with the time he was given. My favorite scene — and the one I had to watch the past few days — took place after Jody attempted to get revenge on Maddie for breaking Percy’s heart after Percy discovered she was hired by his parents.

Trying to explain it will completely butcher the comedic
**BEAR** | Show’s second season showcases characters beyond the kitchen walls

Another new character is Claire, depicted by Molly Gordon, an actor who is as charming as the script lets her be but is definitely the weakest point of the season. In Carrey’s renewed romantic interest in high-school classmate Claire, the writers bring a certain one-dimensionality to his storyline that is more sentimental than expected. Altogether, it’s clear with season two that creator Christopher Storer is uninterested in making “The Bear” fall into a predictable rhythm. With this change in tone and content, the show continues to wow with its fast-paced editing, performances and outstanding soundtrack. For fans of the first season who were unsure about whether the second one lives up, rest assured that all you have to do is come hungry and open to a richer, more complex meal.

**AGUIRRE** | Jennifer Lawrence delivers star performance in new comedy film

Andrew Barth Feldman stars alongside Jennifer Lawrence in comedy film “No Hard Feelings.” Directed by Gene Stupnitsky, the movie was released June 23.

Andrew Barth Feldman | © 2012 Sony Pictures Digital Inc.

David Giesbrecht | © 2012 Sony Pictures Digital Inc.
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ANSWER TO TODAY’S PUZZLE

**PUZZLE BY KAVIN PAWITTRANON AND NIJAH MORRIS**

Edited by Will Shortz

No. 524
But even with all of the high praise for the tournament by the participants, the WBC was marred by controversy. There were cries the MLB season was too close to the WBC, with the MLB season starting March 30 and the WBC finals taking place just nine days prior. Players sustained injuries throughout the time of the tournament, including high-profile names like Edwin Diaz, Jose Altuve and Adam Wainwright. Diaz tore his patellar tendon while celebrating a Puerto Rico win over the Dominican Republic, Altuve broke his thumb after getting hit by a pitch and Wainwright strained his groin while lifting weights prior to the WBC finals. Even with a number of injuries, Stock thinks the positive outcomes from the WBC outweigh the bad. “What’s gained by bringing the game to such an international crowd is very important for growing the game of baseball and that the injuries that happened would happen in spring training,” Stock said. “Edwin Diaz’s [injury] was from celebrating, jumping up and down. I don’t know, that’s a tough one. That’s an anomaly right there.” With injury concerns and the WBC bumping right up against the MLB season, which ranges from March into early November, some have suggested moving the former to a different time. “There just needs to be a better time to do it,” Stubbs said. “After the season would be tough, too. I definitely think the World Baseball Classic needs to happen. It blew up baseball right before baseball was about to happen, which is amazing. So, I definitely don’t know if it’s going to or not going to, but I want it to happen, that’s for sure.” As a pitcher, Cooper said there’s no great time for the WBC and sees no better alternatives to the current format. “There is no time that is perfect for every single person because pitchers and hitters are just so different,” Cooper said. “I feel like hitters could play at any time, and I don’t know when would be a better time for pitchers.” With some pitchers making over 30 starts in an MLB regular season, multiple elite arms opted out of the Classic. Even though Cooper knows it is hard for pitchers to compete in the WBC, he hopes more elite pitchers will do so in the future. “We’re in spring training, [I] totally understand pitchers not quite being ready for it, but at the same time, I don’t see why we can’t make the World Baseball Classic like how the World Cup is with soccer,” Cooper said. “I don’t get why people don’t want to represent their country and go play the sport they love for their country. It seems crazy to me.” MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred has confirmed the World Baseball Classic will return in 2026. He has the backing of many players who participated in the tournament, including USC alumni. While there are logistical problems to solve to try to prevent injuries that impact the MLB season, it seems baseball will return to diamonds around the world in just a few short years.
A new trend in the NBA puts Lakers at a crossroads

Sahil Kurup
ROAD TO REVIVAL

Trends constantly come and go in the NBA. The Superteams theory of ‘06, played by the traditional big man off the floor in the latter half of the last decade — every team now pine’s for a rim protector. The effectiveness of the mid-range jump shot peaked in the Kobe Bryant era before the explosion of the three-pointer — stars now lean on their perimeter shooting to dominate the game. It’s easy for teams to continue to play that way and win a championship, but in order to truly keep winning, there needs to be more balance. That’s where the Lakers are at.

The last two NBA champions point to a potential new trend on the horizon — continuity.

The Brooklyn Nets took this league by storm in the 2010s, climaxed by the greatest team of all time: Kevin Durant’s Golden State Warriors in 2016. Subsequently, Kawhi Leonard migrated to the Toronto Raptors and instantly won a championship. The Lakers shipped every semblance of cohesion to the New Orleans Pelicans for Anthony Davis and hung a banner in Staples Center the very next season. Even the Milwaukee Bucks traded the farm for two-way star Jrue Holiday and immediately won the 2021 Larry O’Brien trophy. The ensuing seasons were met with different stories. The Warriors rose to the top on the shoulders of Stephen Curry, sticking by their homegrown talent with Klay Thompson and Draymond Green through peaks and valleys. The Denver Nuggets torpedoned the NBA behind the two-man game of Nikola Jokić and Jamal Murray, who entered the stage he’s ever played on. The Brooklyn Nets were a team where you all have many different shared experiences — as it’s the third game rolls around and I’m getting ready for spring training, and they call me up and said, ‘Hey, it’s time to go. Do you wanna come play?’ And I so hopped in my car, drove an hour south down to Miami from Palm Beach and just kinda got thrown in the fire.”

Robert Stock, who played at USC from 2007 to 2009, also played for the Lakers in 2009. The Lakers were in transition, and it was a new chapter in the team’s calendar. The Lakers acquired a player in the draft and signed a free agent, and the front office was determined to get the team back on track to contend for championships. The Lakers were rebuilding, and they had two main objectives: (1) Acquire multiple young talents to build around, and (2) Develop a strong bench. The Lakers acquired players like Kyle Kuzma, Devonté Graham, and Alex Caruso, and signed big names like LeBron James and Anthony Davis in 2020. The Lakers were hoping to create a superteam approach that would allow them to compete for championships. The Lakers had the cap space to签 players like Davis and LeBron, and they had the resources to sign players like Kuzma and Caruso. The Lakers were looking to create a balanced team that would allow them to compete for championships. The Lakers were looking to create a balanced team that would allow them to compete for championships.

A $16 million team option for Malik Beasley and non-guaranteed contracts for Jarred Vanderbilt and Mo Bamba give General Manager Rob Pelinka leeway to free up a maximum contract slot for a big name with a big financial commitment — such as Kyle Irving, James Harden or Green. The Lakers have the decision to roll the dice or be prudent in their approach to free agency. Pelinka took a massive swing this past offseason, signing Davis and Irving. Irving, who has been heavily linked to the Lakers, is undoubtedly a better player and a more natural fit next to James and Davis. And, for nostalgic purposes, who wouldn’t want to see Irving throwing lobs off the back court to James like they did in their Cleveland Cavaliers days? But if Lakers fans are already frustrated with Davis’ inconsistencies, they would not take kindly to Irving. Unlike Davis, Irving’s salary on the game ebb and flow. Irving has no problems on the court — he’s a freak of nature. The problem is, between injuries and off-court issues, Irving has not played more than 65 games in a season since 2018. Combine Irving’s unrelievability with Davis’ inability to stay on the court — the latter hasn’t played more than 65 games in a season with the Lakers -- and an aging James, how many games are the Lakers really going to get from that big three? "LeGm" has preferred to surround himself with superstar teammates to take the burden off him as he’s aged, but it is time for the Lakers to value continuity and cohesiveness. Here’s what they should do.

Bring back Rui Hachimura, a versatile forward who can score off the bench or create an eye on, a "three-and-D" wing that can handle the ball and has championship pedigree. Pelinka doesn’t need to go home run from home plate. Play bust-ball and round the bases one by one — trust what is being built.

The team just made the Western Conference Finals after half a season together. Give it a full offseason to work out its wrinkles before jumping ship off a boat that isn’t sinking. Wallpapers will continue to rain down from the air, but it’s the Lakers that are the favorite to win the Western Conference and make a deep run in the playoffs.

Sahil Kurup is a rising senior writing about the Los Angeles Dodgers and the endless dreams that follows them in his column, "Road to Revival."