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Big Way Hot Pot to open new location at USC Village

Big Way, a malatang-style restaurant, is scheduled to open its doors in February.

By DUO YANG
Assistant News Editor

Native to Vancouver, Canada, Big Way Hot Pot, a malatang chain, is set to open a new location at USC Village. Though the location won't open until February, the chain currently operates locations in Monterey Park and Rowland Heights. California is the only state in the United States with Big Way locations.

A precise date of opening in February has yet to be confirmed.

Malatang, a Chinese street food similar to hot pot, lets customers choose their own ingredients to cook in broth before serving.

Compared to traditional hot pot, malatang is more on the go. Although both traditional hot pot and malatang allow diners to self-select the ingredients to be cooked in broth, traditional hot pot is more social and lasts longer, while malatang offers convenient cooking in less time.Ingredients vary by region in China and by restaurant, but most places offer a variety of vegetables, proteins and noodles.

In a statement to the *Daily Trojan*, Big Way said it anticipates it will operate daily from 11 to 2 a.m. Currently, only three locations in the village operate until or past midnight: Bruxie, Rock & Reilly's and Insomnia Cookies.

They will offer dine-in, takeout and delivery options, making it "a convenient option for lunch, dinner, and late-night meals," the statement read.



Duo Yang / Daily Trojan

Customers can build their own pots from 90 ingredients, cooked in their choice of over 10 flavors of either dry mix or soup, including broths such as signature mala, collagen bone and tomato.

"We believe this flexibility is particularly appealing to students, whether they're grabbing a quick meal between classes, enjoying dinner with friends, or looking for a satisfying late-night dining option," Big Way wrote in a statement to the *Daily Trojan*.

While these options are featured across other Big Way locations, the USC location will add a pay-by-weight fried-snacks bar not currently offered at other stores.

Robert Ho, a sophomore majoring in accounting, previously visited the chain's Monterey Park location. Ho said he found the restaurant on TikTok and suggested a visit with friends. Although the restaurant is casual, Ho said that it is more upscale than Yangguofu Malatang, another popular malatang restaurant in the USC free Lyft zone.

Ho said he enjoyed aspects of Big Way more than YGF during his visit.

"I'd say I go there over YGF. It feels cleaner. It feels healthier. The soup felt healthier. When I walked out of that restaurant, I [thought], 'Wow, I don't feel bloated; I feel happy with myself,'" Ho said. "In the end, they give you a little ice cream cone, and that made the experience really beautiful. ... That's [the kind of] customer service you want."

YGF isn't Big Way's only competition; FIG's Corner is another hot pot restaurant near USC that offers non-traditional small pots: Rather than self-selection, FIG's Corner offers pre-selected hot pot and soup combinations with add-ons available. Hanyu Chi, a junior majoring in electrical and computer engineering, is a regular.

Chi said that existing options like FIG's Corner, are pricier than an average meal; however, USC Village restaurants are decently affordable for him. Big Way will need to prove it has good food for him to choose to dine there, he said, given that he enjoys the social aspect of the traditional hot pot environment and that other familiar USC Village dining options are available.

Big Way wrote in a statement to the *Daily Trojan* that both their cooked ingredients and self-serve snack bar will be priced by the pound.

The option to customize exactly what customers want to eat based on their personal price ranges can be a way for students to keep to their budgets, the statement read. Affordable pricing is of importance to students: food affordability remains an issue at USC, despite the variety of dining options the school offers.

Ho said that he prefers food trucks just outside USC Village to its restaurants due to both dining habits and affordability concerns.

"There is a big price disparity when we look at the restaurants versus the food trucks. For example, the kebabs [truck] — they do $5 shawarmas. That is [a] really good value-to-food ratio," Ho said. "I'd say all the food is cheaper than [USC] Village food, and you get more."

In a statement to the *Daily Trojan*, USC Real Estate and Management wrote that USC Village tenants can offer the option for students to use their USCards to pay at stores, although this is limited to discretionary dollars, which are not included in current meal plan offerings. Currently, Rock & Reilly's and Simply Nail Bar are the only USC Village establishments that accept discretionary dollars.

Big Way was chosen as a tenant for the Village based on how it fits into the current mix of shops, as well as the restaurant's "experience, quality and likelihood of success," the statement read.

For now, the restaurant is a ways away from its opening early next year, when its popularity and price feasibility will be put to the test by students and USC Village visitors.

Big Way said it's looking forward to the move-in.

"USC Village is a vibrant community that brings together students, faculty, and local residents, making it an exciting location for Big Way Hot Pot," Big Way's statement read.

Student LunchBox fights food insecurity on campuses

Food insecurity stigma is often the biggest barrier to support for most students.

By ANYA MOTWANI
Associate Managing Editor

College grind culture often means students are weighing their basic needs against academic, professional and social success. Even in media surrounding university life, the archetype of the struggling college student — who relies on instant noodles for sustenance — appears.

For Liliana Naranjo, a student assistant lead at the Student LunchBox, this misconception is more dangerous than one might think.

"There is [an] understanding that college students are meant to struggle, and you're in college, you're supposed to not be eating the best," said Naranjo, a junior studying human development, family studies and related services at Cal State Long Beach. "There are resources that can help you eliminate that understanding that you need to struggle when you don't really."

Not far from USC, a non-profit in Historic South Central is bringing aid directly to campuses to assist college students facing food insecurity.

The Student LunchBox is a non-profit organization less than two miles away from the University Park Campus that collaborates with Los Angeles County universities and other organizations to support students. Founded in 2020, the organization serves 17 campuses, according to its website, by bringing free weekly food distributions and basic needs support. It also works with existing on-campus support systems like food pantries and serves over 8,000 students monthly.

"I was a college student a long time ago, and I have experienced food insecurity and homelessness personally," said Karlen Nurijanyan, the founder and CEO of Student LunchBox. "The mission of the organization is personal."

High tuition costs and food-related school fees are an exacerbating factor for several students experiencing financial insecurity, according to Nurijanyan.

"There's an additional burden you get while you are trying to support yourself [and] trying to succeed academically," Nurijanyan said. "Meal plans can lock thousands of dollars into one type of expense, which is food, even when the plan does not really match the student's schedule, eating habits or financial priorities. Some students just don't want to deal with it because they cannot pay $4,000 or $3,000."

Even for students who have other means of financial support, like their families, if they work in addition to school or receive financial aid, Nurijanyan said "it's never enough."

"Most of our population that we serve are low-income, coming from low-income backgrounds, ... and while they're in college, it gets worse," Nurijanyan said. "[People think] you get financial aid, but nobody actually realizes that whatever you get for financial aid literally gets absorbed by the university for textbooks or whatever tuition that you pay for."

Nurijanyan said food insecurity among college students has been a prevalent issue for a long time, but only during the COVID-19 pandemic did it get spotlighted in the mainstream media. A 2023 study published in the Journal of American College Health found that about 44% of surveyed students attending 22 universities in the United States faced food insecurity.

"The [public] is not used to seeing a college student going broke; [they are] not used to understanding why food insecurity or economic hardship affects the college student," Nurijanyan said. "The more [the] public knows, the more acceptance there is."

The resources to support students facing food insecurity are often already available at colleges, Naranjo said, but the shame and stigma around using them are often students' biggest barrier to access.



Student LunchBox

Student LunchBox is a non-profit organization less than two miles from the University Park Campus supporting students facing food insecurity.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time, a student will find out about our resources and be like, 'I wish I knew about this two years ago when I started school here,'" Naranjo said. "How can we push the education and knowledge about these resources to incoming freshmen [or] incoming transfers? A lot of the times, I notice when I'm working in the pantry that people feel a little bit scared to ask for help, and that's completely normal."

For Naranjo, a main concern is how to dismantle these barriers to support. This includes providing aid to students facing food insecurity or other basic needs concerns without them having to ask for help.

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Third-country deportations are deplorable

Deporting undocumented migrants to countries other than their home must stop.

By YIYI XU
Staff Writer



Sherry Tang / Daily Trojan

On Sept. 29, the United States Supreme Court sided with President Donald Trump in an interim order to temporarily allow his administration's deportation of undocumented immigrants to third countries — nations that are not the immigrants' home countries — without notice. These third countries that immigrants have previously been deported to include Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

The case has not been fully settled yet, and the Supreme Court is set to hear oral arguments Dec. 9. The question is whether the Trump administration's deportation policy violates the Due Process Clause, a decision that may steer the direction of U.S. immigration policy and set a precedent that would be hard to overturn.

Among these third countries are some that the U.S. government itself determines as the most dangerous in the world: South Sudan and the Central African Republic are labeled by the U.S. Department of State with warnings like "Do not travel for any reason" due to "risk of unrest, crime, kidnapping, landmines and health risks."

These countries have agreed to accept deportees who are not their citizens in large part because of arrangements with the U.S. to receive millions of dollars in payments to their governments. Yet, despite the extremely poor humanitarian records that some of these countries hold, the Supreme Court's majority has decided that it would be permissible for individuals to be immediately deported to these countries without notice, nor with the chance to raise fear-based claims: a right to express fear of torture of prosecution upon deportation.

This is not the first time the Supreme Court has sided with Trump during his term: In June 2025, the Court issued a shadow docket in the Department of Homeland Security v. D.V.D. to pause a district court's injunction, which requires defendants to get a minimum of 10 days to raise fear-based claims and notice. Following the suspension, the administration deported eight men from six different countries to South Sudan.

Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the time ,Tricia McLaughlin, claimed that "[Immigration and Customs Enforcement] deported these eight barbaric criminal illegal aliens who are so heinous, even their own countries will not accept them."

But this claim doesn't justify immediate deportations without due process, nor does it justify setting a precedent to lift the requirements of notice to deportees in other cases. Out of the eight men deported to South Sudan, one was released upon arrival and two have managed to return to their home countries through repatriation, but four of the original group still remain in South Sudan.

Beyond third-country deportation, the Supreme Court has also made many other rulings in favor of Trump's policy agenda, including expanding the President's authority by allowing the mass firing of independent agency heads in Trump v. Slaughter.

In January, U.S. legal scholar Erwin Chemerinsky also found that out of the 24 shadow docket rulings that were related to Trump, 20 were ruled in favor of the administration. In a tilted Supreme Court with six conservative judges — among which three were handpicked by Trump himself — the increasing trend of partiality of the Supreme Court is undermining its legitimacy as an independent branch of government.

The eventual decision the Supreme Court makes could have an especially significant impact on the Los Angeles community: According to data collected by the USC Equity Research Institute, an estimated 35% of L.A. County's residents are immigrants, and 27% of this group is undocumented, amounting to nearly a million individuals.

Trump has also been known to be hostile and dismissive to L.A. and its residents. In 2025, he sued the city over its inclusive immigration policies for establishing sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants.

More recently, in Nebraska, he suggested in a midterm campaign he would "let [Iran] take out Los Angeles," referring to the U.S.'s ongoing War in Iran. "It is a very small price to pay," he said.

If Trump decides to further crack down on undocumented immigration, it's possible that L.A. could be his first and largest target.

As Justice Sonia Sotomayor put it in her 2025 dissent of the shadow docket in Department of Homeland Security v. D.V.D.: "In matters of life and death, it is best to proceed with caution."

However, the increasingly partial Supreme Court seems to be more concerned with appeasing the Trump administration's interests rather than upholding the constitution and carefully handling human rights.

To ensure that freedom and constitutionality is more than just window dressing for politically biased decision-making, we need a more impartial Supreme Court. At the oral arguments coming up on Dec. 9, the justices should keep in mind their commitment to due process and constitutionality. Anything less could risk setting a dangerous precedent that will be hard to remove.

K-pop's ambition should surpass Grammys

The genre needs to to turn its modern global influence into lasting cultural legacy.

By TIM HAN
Assistant Opinion Editor

When the Grammy Awards announced a Best Asian Pop Music Performance category, BTS made the decision to boycott the Grammys. Fans didn't even blink; they didn't see it as a loss for the group. Many showed support for the decision — even another renowned boy group, Stray Kids, followed suit and joined BTS in protesting the Grammys.

Throughout the past years, K-pop groups always had to knock on the doors of the Billboard charts and the Grammy Awards, almost having to demand respect from Western music institutions. BTS intended to challenge this paradigm through their boycott, hoping their music would be "heard and loved for what it is" rather than being divided by region or language, as stated in their announcement.

For K-pop to build a lasting legacy, its stars must take bold actions like this to make their statement of not needing Western approval.

K-pop currently holds the potential to define excellence and sustain Asia's growing influence in global music. And not just with BTS — there are many stadium-level K-pop groups, including but not limited to Stray Kids, BLACKPINK and SEVENTEEN.

As K-pop grows, so do concerns surrounding the culture. K-pop has always been tested on its legitimacy — rapid globalization has blurred its identity as a music genre. Internationally localized groups like KATSEYE and SANTOS BRAVOS face gatekeeping and intense scrutiny from some Korean fans. Concern arises over the idea of getting rid of the "K" in K-pop when a majority of the song is in English.

"[Defining] K-pop as 'Korean pop' is very outdated," said Chase Kang, an Los Angeles-based K-pop and entertainment journalist. "It still has its core, but now people are finding what would be the appropriate definition to describe and explain that cultural phenomenon."

With K-pop struggling to clarify its sonic identity, fans and industry insiders are demanding greater authority over how their music is judged and celebrated.

"[K-pop's] origin is very hybrid-genre. They adapted a lot of different sounds from all around the world," Kang said. "It's not that surprising that K-pop sounds like [mainstream] pop music, but I do think K-pop still has their own culture [and] roots."

Perhaps now is the time for the K-pop industry to understand what K-pop really has been the whole time: a tightly-knit cultural system — a highly industrialized entertainment mechanism and a multi-sensory cultural phenomenon that follows a proven playbook.

Meticulous training prepares trainees to become pop stars pre-debut. Countless music genres intermingle to convey new impressions and catchy tunes. Albums roll out in great detail with conceptual photoshoots, eye-opening music videos and collectible merchandise. Performance stages boast perfectly synchronized, elite choreography through months of hard work. Fans have countless ways to connect with their favorite members, from private messaging and artist communities to fan meetups and full-scale concerts.

This is what brought the indomitable cultural surge and the global popularity of K-pop, not just the music.

For K-pop to establish a legacy, it must build even more ambitious institutions and brands of recognition entirely targeted towards global fandom. K-pop insiders must crave the "Asian Grammys" now more than ever.

As K-pop seeks a higher purpose, a greater mission to bring cultural order to the industry emerges. "Fanomenon" is an upcoming 11-day K-pop music festival, fan awards ceremony and cultural exposition planned to take place annually, starting in winter 2027. The project aims to bring together Korea's "Big Four" entertainment agencies — HYBE, SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment and YG Entertainment — for the first time in a joint venture, a rare opportunity for the agencies to pause the competition and work toward establishing K-pop's global legitimacy.

"There are a lot of talented people in the South Korean entertainment scene," Kang said. "Rather than just compete [against] each other, they could make a breakthrough."

BTS passed on the Grammys not only because they wanted equal treatment, but because the state of the industry demands it. The group bravely challenged the expectation for K-pop artists to become more Westernized to get global acclaim worthy of Grammy nominations. They're hoping this message resonates with people who love K-pop's culture, doing what they can to make this phenomenon last longer.



AJEONG_JM / Wikimedia Commons

BTS won a Bonsang award at the 31st Golden Disk Awards in 2017, a South Korean awards ceremony dedicated to the local K-pop industry.

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Family ties unravel in 'Oliver Creation'

A USC student film draws on real relatives to surface underlying family tensions.

By RIYA KALRA
Staff Writer

For producer Maggie Colombo, a senior majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production, the grief in "Oliver Creation" had a familiar face: Photographs of her father appear as the film's late patriarch, a role that made her appreciate the time she still has with him.

That personal connection runs through "Oliver Creation," a senior thesis short film project at the School of Cinematic Arts. The story follows an Italian family grieving its patriarch. When the oldest son, Oliver, goes missing from the funeral gathering, the family's anxiety reveals problems that extend beyond his unknown whereabouts.

In the film, Oliver faces the expectation that he will become the new head of the household. His absence unsettles relatives for whom stepping into a new hierarchical familial position carries considerable weight.

Writer Luca Riggs, a senior majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production, drew inspiration from his Italian family on Long Island to explore what happens when an established hierarchy changes.

The family's divisions also involve prejudice: Mama, the grandmother at the story's center, holds racist views that keep a family member's Black boyfriend out of the home. By making Mama the protagonist, Riggs places someone whose beliefs cause harm to others at the center of the audience's attention.

"All these people have terrible things about them. They all have bad qualities," Riggs said. "At the end of the day, they come together and love each other."

Centering Mama's character asks viewers to consider how the family's love for her coexists with the harm she causes with her racist beliefs.

Director Bella Crowner, a senior majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production, recognized the script's emotional depth before learning its characters drew from real people.

According to Crowner, four directors were selected from about 40 applicants for the "Advanced Production Workshop" thesis course. She read all 24 shortlisted scripts in one night before contacting Riggs, whom she had worked with in their junior thesis class.

The opportunity also prompted Crowner to investigate the program's history: Crowner said she requested a list of the past directors in the course from USC Archives. Her research suggested she was the second Black woman to direct a project for the course after the first in 2023. She also cautioned that her findings were not definitive.

"I feel particularly honored and also sad that this is the case of representation," Crowner said.

She hopes seeing her in the role of director will help other Black women recognize directing as a possibility for themselves.

Crowner envisioned a gritty, grainy look and grounded performances for the film. Over about two weeks of auditions and callbacks, she tested combinations of actors who, she said, could convey years' worth of shared family history.

Before a chemistry read, she paired performers and asked them to find three things they had in common. Discoveries such as matching ear piercings or time spent in Texas helped strangers connect.

"There's so much playfulness that started in auditions and carried through production," Crowner said.

Sienna Barker, one of the film's producers and a senior majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production, said that those relationships resonate across cultural differences as someone from a Korean and white family.

"I see my parents and my grandparents and my sister in this," Barker said. "Even though we're Korean and white and not Italian ... there's common ground there that just comes with the dynamics of being in a family."



Marcus Heatherly

"Oliver Creation," written and produced by cinematic arts and film and television production seniors, is a thesis film project based around familial conflict and responsibility.

Barker and Colombo worked to protect that emotional core in the creative process through logistical uncertainty. Shortly before filming, their shooting location became unavailable for the final day. Moving the schedule forward required coordinating scenes, rentals and crew availability all over again.

The producers combined their industry experience and personal backgrounds to shape both the story and its production: Barker secured filming locations and used her experience reading scripts at Miramax, a film production and distribution company, to help refine the story. In turn, Colombo contributed her Italian background to cultural details and applied her experience at production company Legendary to scheduling and budgeting.

"We had the best group — so kind and hardworking," Colombo said. "This is a student film, and it's important, and it's a big deal, but it's also just a film."

That group included Carol Cadby as Mama. Crowner credited Cadby with anchoring a demanding scene, in which adjusting her character's energy helped shape the other actors' performances.

Part of Crowner's approach was beginning morning safety meetings with mindfulness exercises.

"It starts with a calm understanding that you're here for one job, and you're already doing your job, and you don't need to move at lightning speed in order to do a good job," Crowner said.

The atmosphere changed how Colombo felt about being on set.

"I loved coming every day. I loved our crew," Colombo said.

The producers' work extended to Emerging Producers In Cinema, a USC student organization they created to help aspiring producers learn and connect. The group links students seeking on-set experience with USC student productions.

The project also pushed Barker to consider how she wanted to lead her set. Before filming, a Miramax executive encouraged her to think about the presence she would bring to the set.

"Who do you want to be on set while you're talking to these people? What's your personality? How will you engage with these people?" Barker recalled him asking.

Barker carried those questions into production, developing her own approach to leadership.

Riggs also brought a lesson in navigating relationships to the project: The screenplay grew partly from his experience helping resolve a falling-out between relatives.

"It takes effort to understand each other," Riggs said, "and that effort is worth it."

"Oliver Creation" is scheduled to premiere Dec. 15 at USC's Norris Cinema Theatre at 7 p.m.

Energy courses through beabadoobee's spectacle

The indie alt-rock artist's 'Powerlines Tour' filled the Kia Forum with electricity.

By SOPHIE LANDRY
Assitant Arts & Entertainment Editor

The band riffed on their guitars, the Kia Forum was jumping and sparks came from the fake transmission tower on stage: Beabadoobee was clearly in her element. They're playing "In Motion," a song off her new record "Pylon."

The energy was palpable at beabadoobee's Los Angeles show Wednesday. She performed on an elaborate set with powerlines — a nod to the title of the tour — shrubs and a road that led to nowhere. The crowd was buzzing with excitement as the songs filled the room; a sea of black leather and earth tones bounced throughout the venue.

Before she and the band came on, alt-rock artist Wisp opened with a sonically similar set to beabadoobee. She wore white and sported a guitar with Hello Kitty on it and expressed her gratitude to be playing at the famed venue.

After a brief pause, beabadoobee and the rest of her posse entered the stage, instruments in hand. Within a few songs, she performed fan favorites like "Apple Cider" alongside newer material like "Radio." Both songs had added intensity live, relying on a more unpolished, guitar-heavy sound rather than simply recreating the recordings. The tone of both felt more like a guitar jam session than a polished arena performance.

The crowd was invested in the set from the get-go, and the energy both on and off stage was palpable. A fan project even illuminated the Forum: Rainbow tape was passed out to crowd members to put over their phone lenses, creating a colorful, iridescent sea of light in the crowd.

Her performance of "Care" was a standout, with what felt like the whole venue singing along. Guitarists Jason Vance Harris and Eliana Sewell were riffing on their guitars, reinvigorating each note. All these aspects made the song feel even bigger than the recorded version.

As a throwback, she played her viral song "Coffee" on acoustic guitar, a tribute to her humble

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Margaret Qualley is the love of her own life

Fiona Feingold
FEMININOMENON



In Hollywood, guys journey through the wilderness to find themselves — à la "Into the Wild" (2007) — while women "Eat Pray Love" (2010), traipsing their way through Europe in search of introspection.

"Love of Your Life" is one of Amazon MGM's newest original films, releasing in theaters Oct. 7 and on Prime Video on Oct. 14. The movie is carried by Margaret Qualley, who stars as Maya, a grieving nurse attempting to physically escape the pain of losing her husband by jet-setting across the globe.

Maya visits Portugal, Spain, Japan and New Orleans — all the places she talked about visiting with Charlie (Gabriel Basso), her late spouse — in the hopes of building a new life for herself. Variety somewhat-aptly dubbed the film "Grieve Pray Love," a nod to Elizabeth Gilbert's 2006 memoir-turned-film.



Chiabella James / Prime

Margaret Qualley, who stars as Maya in "Love of Your Life," takes romance out of the equation for a happy life.

"Love of Your Life" is a heartfelt — albeit veneered — exploration of love after grief. Not all of us look as good as Qualley when we drown our sorrows in bread and wine, but Maya's lingering survivor's guilt and fear of getting hurt again are sentiments that many can relate to. The film is a welcome addition to the escapist romantic-comedy canon.

To be sure, the travel rom-com genre contains some truth: Ask anyone who has studied abroad about their experience and be prepared to hear the words "life-changing," "eye-opening" and "unforgettable," possibly all in the same sentence.

If you've ever been heartbroken in Europe, you know that experience is infinitely more romantic than in the United States. My semester abroad contained many a wistful walk, accompanied by Jeff Buckley and Bob Dylan, down cobblestone streets. I'll take that over crying in the Target parking lot any day.

The problem with many of these films, though, lies in the irksome privilege wielded by many of their protagonists. In "Eat Pray Love," for instance, Liz's (Julia Roberts) divorce-induced mid-life crisis results in her

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Nova Wang / Daily Trojan

Even if you don't have an answer, it's likely you know someone who does. We are living in an age of casualty and ephemeral bonds, where people and moments can pass us by if we move too quickly. But beyond romantic love, this idea of almosts and what-ifs can be applied to any aspect of our ever-changing lives.

As we approach the end of October, we say goodbye to a month of metamorphosis, a time of ghouls and gourds. Perhaps we should look to the relationships we have with our city, with our heritage, with others and with ourselves, and bask in all the ways they are constantly severed and constantly reforged.

This supplement is an exploration of the things left in the shadows, the marks we leave behind on the world, the ruins we work to rebuild and the things we choose to remember. Whether you're curious about the stories that haunt our campus, communities and our cities or the ways we reconnect with nature in a concrete metropolis, there's something here for you.

So, like the apparitions that haunt this season, take a moment to linger.

— Emily Loleng,
Features Editor



Nova Wang / Daily Trojan

USC is haunted by more than just ghosts

The ghost stories around campus represent various hidden cultural histories.

By VYOLET BURRUS & TEIA DE MESA
Staff Writers



Aislinn Meza / Daily Trojan

As the night wears on, USC's libraries gradually empty, leaving students alone with nothing but their thoughts. The building smells of musty books and something stranger. The dead are immortalized in writing. A noise echoes in the distance, but there's no one else around. It could be someone reshelving books — or perhaps it's something paranormal, a presence inexplicable by science. Regardless of what really happens in the dead of night, that is when ghost stories come alive.

On campus, the story of Bertram Hancock, the son of successful businessman and philanthropist George Allan Hancock, is especially haunting. The Hancock Foundation Building houses the Newman Recital Hall, a nod to George Allan Hancock's affinity for music, and the Hancock Memorial Museum, which includes four rooms taken directly from the now-demolished Hancock family mansion.

Philip Ethington, professor of history, political science and spatial sciences, led haunted campus tours until 2021 as faculty-in-residence at New North Residential College and described the Hancock Memorial Museum as his most haunting stop on the tour.

"They hear things at night attributed to Bertram [Hancock] because he grew up there, and the whole building was built as a memorial to him," Ethington said. "That's where he finds his home on campus."

On June 29, 1925, George Allan Hancock and Bertram Hancock were staying at the Arlington Hotel in Santa Barbara when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit.

The hotel was designed with a 50,000-gallon water tank installed above the tower suites in case of a fire. During the earthquake, the tank broke loose and fell through, causing the tower to collapse. Bertram Hancock was found dead with a fractured skull and broken neck.

"[Bertram Hancock's] father was basically grooming him to be the heir apparent of his empire," Ethington said. "He was taking him out to their property in Santa Maria, and this was going to be his first test of learning how to run the business."

Bertram Hancock's memory seems to haunt the Hancock Foundation Building not only because it contains remnants of his home, but also because his death prompted his father to insist on the building being earthquake-proof.

"On the outside, [the Hancock Foundation Building] has all these bas-reliefs of Pleistocene megafauna, these giant animals," Ethington said. "That's another way that I think this building is haunted, because it has these monsters that came from [George Allan Hancock's] fortune … [with the] La Brea Tar Pits."

These campus stories about ghosts are not the only ones haunting USC students: Teaching professor of anthropology Tok Thompson teaches "Ghost Stories: Throughout Time and Around the World," which explores various paranormal phenomena and their connections to history, culture and entertainment.

The course's curriculum includes classical literature such as "Hamlet" and "A Christmas Carol," as well as films, songs and folklore from numerous cultures that allow students to discuss different beliefs regarding the afterlife.

"It's a good icebreaker," Thompson said. "You don't tend to share ghost stories with everybody, so you tend to create a sense of intimacy, and I think it's a very, very interesting topic. You can do a lot by looking at societies and different cultures' beliefs and stories about ghosts."

In his course, Thompson requires students to collect their own ghost stories and write analytical reports of their findings for USC's Digital Folklore Archives. The online database dates back to 2010, featuring thousands of stories cataloged by USC students. Many of these stories contain reports of hauntings on campus, primarily in the libraries and dorms.

"Before I took the class, I was a bit unsure if I believed in [ghosts]," said Isabella Sindhuphak, a sophomore majoring in business of cinematic arts who took Thompson's class in Spring 2026. "What made me start thinking about it a little more deeply was having to go out and get field research of actual ghost stories … Maybe these energies of certain locations and spaces stay over time. They don't just leave once a person dies."

While ghost stories can be an entertaining forum for discussing spirits and the afterlife across diverse groups and cultures, these tales also serve as representations of culture and history.

"History is written by the victors, but ghost stories are the opportunity [to hear] the voices of underrepresented groups like women [and] Native Americans — populations that have suffered genocides and wrongdoings in history," Sindhuphak said.

The overlooked and underrepresented groups in Los Angeles that suffered injustices throughout history also haunt the area. An example of this is the Los Angeles Chinese Massacre of 1871, during which 18 Chinese men and boys were killed — 10% of the Chinese population in Los Angeles at the time — and was almost immediately forgotten.

"[Injustices like this one] haunt the present, in that they inscribed a geography of injustice into the region that had long-term consequences," Ethington said. "That haunting is like the afterlife of this injustice, and it limited many people's lives intergenerationally until that racism was finally combated."

The 1965 Watts Rebellion and the 1992 L.A. uprisings are similar manifestations of these hauntings: They were uprisings against systemic racism and injustices, with police brutality and violence that were left unresolved.

"It was a boiling point," Ethington said. "They were explosions that resulted from many generations of injustice that had confined people of color to segregated neighborhoods and police violence."

Ghost stories come with a purpose beyond scaring friends at a slumber party and stay relevant outside of the Halloween season. They can also embody cultural values, family legacies, and the tragedies and wrongdoings faced by underrepresented communities.

"[These stories] reflect our histories. They reflect what we were haunted by: ethical failures in the past," Thompson said.



Navin NaRanong

Nicole Blaine and Toby Lehr co-produce "The Kids Are Fine, Not Great," a comedy show that aims to bring together both college-aged and professional comics.

'The Kids Are Fine, Not Great' opens doors for LA comics

The show brings together professional and college-aged comedians on stage.

By ANYA MOTWANI
Associate Managing Editor

Hanging out in the green room is a comic's love language. It's where stand-up comedians connect, share advice and try to carve out a place for themselves within the community. For Nicole Blaine, founder and creative director of comedy club The Crow, cultivating these interactions was key when starting the show, "The Kids Are Fine, Not Great."

Hosted at The Crow in Santa Monica, "The Kids Are Fine" brings together professional and college-aged comedians onto one stage. In 2023, Blaine was approached by then-student at Loyola Marymount University, Zoe Zakson, with an opportunity to co-produce the show — which debuted that year.

Blaine was a theater kid her whole life — she knew she wanted to be up on the stage at just three years old and could see her dreams coming true right out of college. Her first production, a play, was written by her then-boyfriend as well as produced and cast by herself. The show's performers outnumbered the audience, but Blaine didn't let that deter her.

"I ended up running into my [long-time] favorite actor ... Jennifer Aniston. She came into my work one day, and I was like, 'Can I ask you a question? Were you afraid of failure before you were famous?,'" Blaine said. "She said, 'No, I was happy being a waitress.'"

Aniston, Blaine said, imparted advice that would inform the rest of her on-stage career: to keep learning. She then asked her boyfriend to write her a one-woman show.

It took Blaine a year before the show was complete: a meditation on her childhood and growing up with parents struggling with addiction.

"I picked a theater in Hollywood, ... I booked it, put all my money [toward it] and I did that one-woman show, and it changed my life," Blaine said. "Because it was about forgiving my mom, I decided to also run it at sober-living houses and rehabs, and take it on tour and then take it to the Fringe Festival in New York."

Blaine ran the show for two years, and with it being half comedy, half drama, it was also the catalyst that turned Blaine toward stand-up.

Thirty years old and pregnant, Blaine entered as a new comic into the Los Angeles comedy scene.

"I started writing jokes and going to open mics, and being this old lady who was breastfeeding and pumping milk outside ... feeling like a total fish out of water," Blaine said. "I started to realize, ... if I want to get stage time, I'm gonna need to produce a show, and I'm gonna have to host it, and I'm gonna have to book comedians, and I'll get to know people that way."

Her guiding practice to making it big? Opportunities don't present themselves; you have to make them on your own.

Decades into her career, Blaine "risked it all" and opened The Crow, a space she wanted to use to uplift underrepresented voices in comedy.

"I [wanted] to make a comedy club for all the people who felt like they didn't belong," Blaine said.

Enter "The Kids Are Fine," a show meant to uplift young comics and provide them with an opportunity to sample what being a professional in the comedy field looks like.

For Ella Grossman, a senior majoring in film and television production, The Crow has been an "incredible space" as a young woman comedian trying to find her place in a male-dominated discipline.

"[Comedy is] both a tool that's being used for liberation, for people to be able to heal through trauma and work through things, and really shine. Comedy was a place where women in entertainment found really early success, and that's really important," Grossman said. "But at the same time, it's built on the foundations of male, white supremacy."

Having performed at two "The Kids Are Fine" shows, Grossman emphasized the industry connections and empowerment she's gained through such experiences, being seen for the quality of her material above anything else.

"Especially for up-and-coming female comedians, those spaces where it's physically [and emotionally] safe to be a woman are really important ... because it's really hard to go onto a lineup after someone [was] talking about a woman's body in a really gross way," Grossman said.

Now co-produced by Toby Lehr, a senior majoring in screenwriting, the show regularly takes to The Crow's stage for a night of fresh and familiar faces in comedy.

For Lehr, seeing his friends gain experience and become more comfortable performing to an audience through the show — just as he did — has been incredibly rewarding.

"I've been able to go from feeling like I had no idea what I was doing to [feeling like], 'Okay I am a standup comedian.' ... I've [also] had two [of] my best friends perform in past shows, which was really fun," Lehr said. "I felt like a proud mother."

Lehr, who is in charge of booking the college comics for "The Kids Are Fine," said he pulls primarily from students in comedy classes at USC he has also taken in the past. Those classes were key in him realizing his penchant for comedy, as well as gaining the skills necessary to stun on stage.

"It's really all about learning to get comfortable on stage," Lehr said. "You start doing [a] one-minute set, then two minutes, and it ends with a three-minute showcase. ... At USC, there are a ton of people who want to do comedy and love comedy and want to try stand up. This is a really unique place to give those people the first, very low-stakes way of getting into stand-up."

For Blaine, community is at the core of these shows.

"What you can't replace is the feeling of sitting in a warm comedy club, and someone is on stage, and the entire audience is pulsating with laughter; ... it's a high that you only get in person," Blaine said. "One of the most important ways to still feel like a human is laughing. When the audience starts laughing and popping, ... we all start breathing the air differently, and it's harmonious."

For the love: Troy Philippines champions Filipino culture

TroyPhi highlights Filipino narratives during Filipino American History Month.

By KILEY HUANG & KYLEIGH ZVARA
Staff Writers

Over 7,000 miles away from the Philippines, Troy Philippines — better known as TroyPhi — works not only to keep Filipino culture alive on campus but to create a thriving Filipino community at USC.

In October, the group is celebrating Filipino American History Month, which commemorates the first time Filipinos arrived in the continental United States at what is now Morro Bay. The group focuses on three pillars: cultural, social and educational.

"In everything that we do, we try to strive for at least one of them," Josh Nicolas, a senior majoring in neuroscience and president of TroyPhi, said. "[We hope to be] a safe space to provide our students looking for community and those that identify with Filipino identity and being Filipino American."

For Ysabella Moss, a sophomore majoring in human biology and the co-director of cultural engagement, TroyPhi provided exactly that: a space to explore her heritage.

"I grew up in a very small town, and there were no Filipinos around me, so I never really got access to any of my culture," Moss said. "Being able to have a space like TroyPhi is very helpful."

TroyPhi is the one of the only Filipino organizations at USC and is open to all students. During club meetings, members of TroyPhi can learn about the Philippines and its traditions. Filipino politics, guest speakers and traditional dances are a few of the many topics covered each week — the wide array of topics allows for a more holistic understanding of Filipino culture.

"We have our Filipino American cultural night [every] spring semester, which is our biggest performance, and that's led by our e-board," Moss said. "It's a showcase of different dances, and people get to sing, and there's an orchestra. Every position tries to highlight each part of our culture."

As TroyPhi turns its attention toward Filipino American History Month, Nicolas emphasized that the history part is especially important.

"There's this famous quote: ... 'No history, no self. Know history, know self,'" Nicolas said.

Nicolas said that by having "history" replacing the word "heritage" found in most awareness months, the title better highlights and honors the social and cultural struggles that Filipinos have faced throughout time.

"There's a lot of [Asian] cultures that are ... romanticized," Moss said. "I feel like as Filipinos, we tend to be overlooked."

To remedy this, Moss and her co-director of cultural engagement, Alyssa Noelle Garcia, a senior majoring in computer science games, have organized events with sweet treats and guest speakers to discuss topics like the immigrant experience, health and wellness.

"The directors of cultural engagement [are] the spearheads of the entire [Filipino American History] Month," Davin Jeng, a junior majoring in occupational therapy and the internal vice president of TroyPhi, said. "[Filipino American History Month] is very important because we really focus a lot on educating our members about the history of Filipinos in [the U.S.]."

TroyPhi spends much of its focus and energy on sharing the culture of the Philippines to ensure that it isn't lost to time. But beyond cultural knowledge, the club also plants the seeds for close-knit, family-like bonds that bring members together.

Within TroyPhi, there is a program to foster these meaningful connections between members. The program is called Kapa — short for kapamilya, or family in Tagalog — and matches new members in a big-little program. Nicolas signed up to be a part of the program as a freshman and now has six littles of his own.

"[My big and I] had a really great friendship," Nicolas said. "She was like an older sister to me. ... [It feels like] someone is looking after you, and that really encouraged me to stay and keep going, ... to pass that feeling forward."

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Social media amplifies comparison, judgment

How social media presence is impacting opportuniy-seeking plus risk-taking.

By MORGAN BAO & OLAMIDE OLUMIDE
Staff Writers

When Joshua Kendrick, a freshman majoring in acting, started posting on social media, it was to share his fashion and lifestyle with the world, trying to make a name for himself. His page soon became a way to connect with the filmmaking industry, leading to roles in short films and features in School of Cinematic Arts student projects.

"Two directors from SCA have reached out to me because of my page," Kendrick said. "They saw my page, and they liked my specific look and my vibe for their short films. I've been in short films because of my page; that's specifically the reason I made it."

Although content creation can be daunting and Kendrick saw negative comments and judgment from his peers, he didn't let that stop him, confident this was the path he needed to follow.

"If you keep posting content over and over again, the first time, it's going to be like, 'Okay, what the heck is he doing,'" Kendrick said. "But once you do it three, five, 10 times, they're going to get used to it. I think a lot of people's judgment comes from [those] who think it's a joke, until it's not."

Shaping his presence on social media has only brought Kendrick closer to his initial goals.

"It definitely helped me specifically with my outreach, the people who know me ... and how [other people] see me ... before they even get to know me," Kendrick said.

Even for people who aren't content creators, a social media presence often serves as a first impression to others.

"People aren't blindsided if they do meet you the first time," said Kaela Almayda, a sophomore majoring in biochemistry and communication who has a public Instagram account. "Your [social media] pages play a part in how your first conversation will go with someone."

While one's social media can offer a new perspective into their character, presenting professional and social opportunities to connect with others, it can also give way to judgment.

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JUDGE | Posting on social media can lead to opportunities, at a cost

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Catherine Flores / Daily Trojan

"We all want to compare how we're doing with other people, and there's so much more information and opportunity to see the picture-perfect parts of people's lives [now]," said Alexia Holovatyk, an adjunct professor of psychology. "If we're not cautious and careful about what we're consuming or don't have the lens of, 'Oh, real life is more complex than what we see on social media,' it really changes our anchor of what's normal."

According to Almayda, this skewed judgment can drive people away from doing something potentially beneficial to their futures.

"There's a lot of people I know back home that want to [have] some sort of presence on social media, but they've never done it because they always get scared about being made fun of," Almayda said.

This fear of judgment and rejection is a human experience that may be made ubiquitous by social media, Holovatyk said. With everyone always watching, the fear of failing or not appearing perfect can become overwhelming.

"Our brains interpret rejection as rejection, no matter where it comes from," Holovatyk said. "Our brains are really wired to perceive and feel that social rejection is really painful, even if it's coming from a source that seems less important; it still really impacts us."

This fear is not limited to social media, though. For Almayda, it can also be found in familial pressure, especially for those coming from an immigrant household.

"When I was younger, I definitely put a lot of pressure on myself," Almayda said. "I didn't want to disappoint my parents because I always felt like if I did pursue something new, then [they] would have a different idea of me."

Despite how social media can amplify the effects of comparison and societal pressure, it still has its benefits. For some, social media can be seen as a source of distress or inadequacy, but that's not the intention behind most platforms.

The realization that he can always find someone similar to himself on social media is what Kendrick believes can change people's view of the platform.

"You start seeing social media as genuinely just a way to share your life," Kendrick said. "Why not be the person that you want to see on social media?"

According to Holovatyk, the point at which social media truly becomes harmful is when it's used in excess.

"There is some social value ... or survival value to [social media]," Holovatyk said. "There's also a point where something that is useful can cross that line of being not useful anymore when we're overusing it. Social media gives us endless opportunities to do that — essentially to compare ourselves to other people."

Creating a safe space is one way to combat the potential drawbacks presented by social media. Holovatyk encouraged people to build this feeling of safety in their lives, surrounding themselves with relationships that give acceptance unconditionally.

"When you feel safe, that's directly related to the amount of risks we're willing to take," Holovatyk said. "You don't feel like your sense of identity is going to be compromised if something goes awry."

Feeling "safe" can mean taking a step back when things become too much, but it can also mean pushing past the judgment and continuing despite fear.

"People should always just try because the worst that everyone can say is no," Almayda said. "And if you do get rejected, that means something better is gonna come out for you in the end."

The fight to conserve LA's historical architecture

Amid current urbanization and demolition, historical preservation efforts prevail.

By SAVANNAH ROBINSON & SOPHIE WU
Staff Writers

Los Angeles' rich history is reflected in the architecture scattered throughout the city. L.A.'s tourism is built around landmarks like the ornate Bradbury Building that incorporates both Romanesque and Victorian styles, the extravagant mix of Mid-Century Modern and Mediterranean Revival architecture in Beverly Hills, and the popularized celebrity home tours, bringing almost 50 million visitors to the city each year.

The semblances of history spread around this metropolis ignite shared knowledge, culture and, for some, memories, which cannot be replicated. That's why, when the devastating wildfires of January 2025 destroyed over 18,000 structures, including 32 historic buildings, an immense sense of loss was felt throughout L.A.

The Los Angeles Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to acknowledging and advocating for the historic physical and cultural resources of L.A. County. Since its inception in 1978, which began as an effort to save the Central Library in downtown L.A., it has been at the forefront of the fight to preserve L.A.'s physical history.

Though the organization fights to obtain historic designation for culturally significant buildings, its fight doesn't stop there; that's where it begins, according to Andrew Salimian, director of advocacy at the L.A. Conservancy.

"Just because a site is designated doesn't mean that it's preserved or protected," Salimian said. "The best way to preserve a building is ... for it to be a living place. Many of the places that we've worked to preserve, we continue advocating for them, finding new uses, working with architects and developers."

Salimian said the L.A. Conservancy has faced its fair share of challenges from the L.A. community, but among the most difficult are residents who attribute the Conservancy's preservation work to aiding L.A.'s proliferating housing crisis, which has seen a significant deficit in housing production in recent years.

However, Salimian said he believes there's almost always a "preservation solution" to balancing conservation and planning for more housing.

With a background in architecture and historical preservation, Salimian and the Conservancy work to create viable economic uses for conserved buildings by turning them into housing or workspaces. In this way, the organization bridges architectural and developmental needs with historical preservation so these buildings can live on.

Trudi Sandmeier, associate dean for academic affairs and director of graduate programs in heritage conservation, believes that change is both part of every process and the key to growth in embracing preservation and renovation.

"It's not [about] freezing a building [in] space and time," Sandmeier said. "It is about keeping the pieces and parts that matter, and allowing the other parts to change and grow and morph, so that we still can tell the story of that place, but it has contemporary relevance."

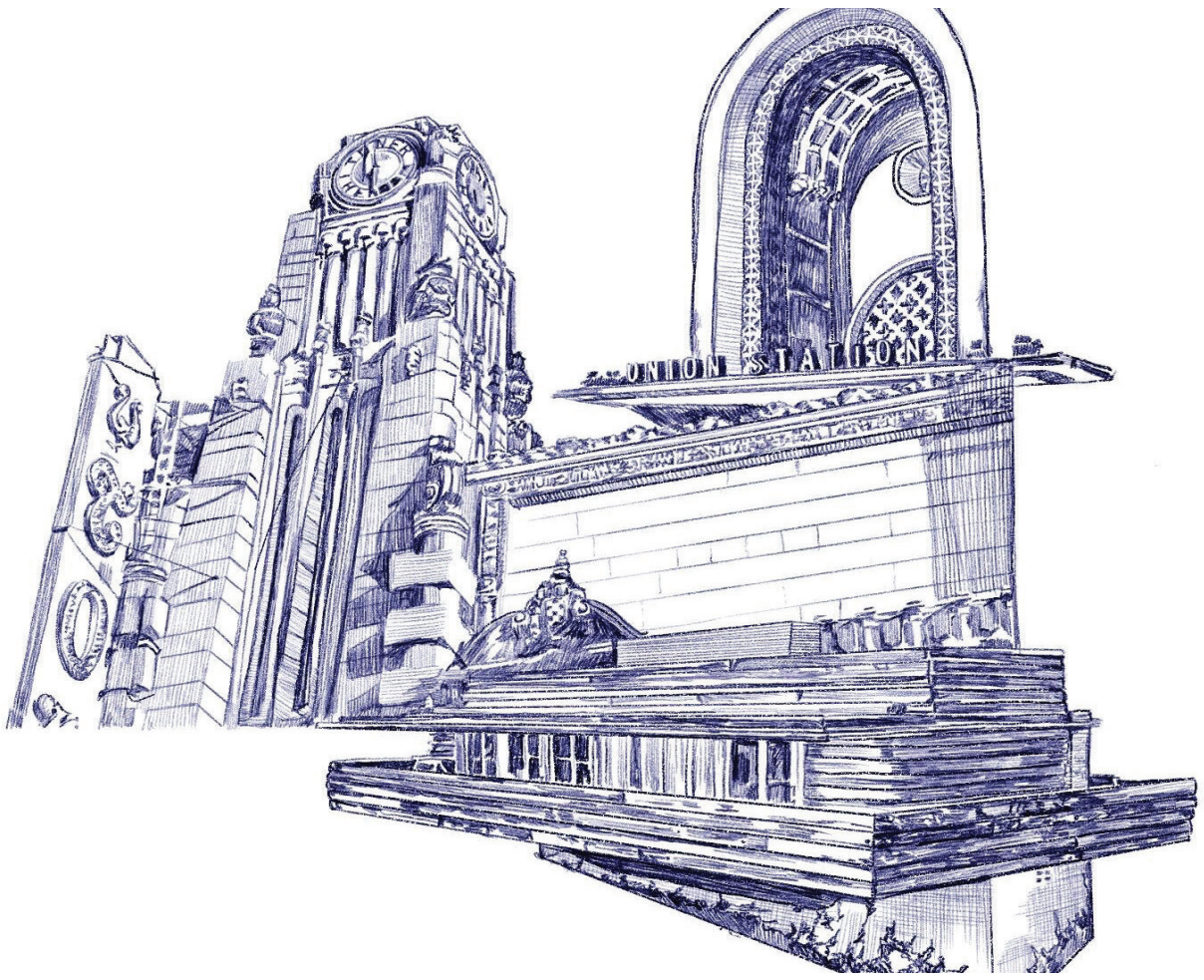
For Sandmeier, the practice of conservation is about taking the past into the future.

"[Places with unhappy histories] are important too, and important to help us remember the mistakes we've made and how not to make them again," Sandmeier said.

The Conservancy is also actively seeking to expand its commitment to sites with diverse histories, such as spaces that matter to LGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous and people of color communities, since these have been historically ignored, Salimian said.

The current generation of students, Sandmeier said, are thinking about architectural preservation in terms of sustainability while simultaneously exploring community and connection.

"When [people] travel [to new places], we always go see something that's historic that has some relationship to the past," Sandmeier said. "We want to immerse ourselves in that culture and their community a little bit, and that always is intriguing and interesting and different wherever



Maggie Soennichsen / Daily Trojan

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TROY | The student organization builds lasting social and cultural connections

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The big-little dynamic in TroyPhi helps keep members interconnected on a personal level. These bonds often continue post-graduation, with alumni events held each year to uphold the celebration of Filipino culture.

"The community that TroyPhi creates [makes] you want to come back," Moss said. "We had a [football] tailgate potluck, and we brought alumni back. There were people from the 1980s that were in TroyPhi that came back."

TroyPhi also creates a way for students to get involved in leadership. Students of any year or amount of time in TroyPhi can join the leadership intern program and attend executive board meetings, as well as be involved in planning events throughout the year.

"I was in this program ... my first semester here at USC, and [TroyPhi] was one of the first ever communities that I ever found at USC," Nicolas said. "I'm a senior now, and I live in a house off campus with five other people. Most of the people in my house are actually people that I met through this program my freshman year.."

Filipino or not, people are welcome to join TroyPhi's general meetings on Thursdays from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. to learn more about Filipino culture.

"This might be kind of cliché, but it's really the people that makes me love the club so much," Jeng said. "I was very inspired by a lot of the people in the club. It's really great to see and hear everyone's different stories and backgrounds. ... I can always feel the love, even with new members."



Rosalyn Amezquita

Members of the student organization Troy Philippines enjoy a beach trip in Santa Monica to celebrate new members, old members, and the kickoff the fall semester.

CONSERVE | The efforts to preserve LA continue

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you go. That's part of what makes each community unique."

Gabriel Torres Oaxaca, a junior majoring in architecture, emphasized the continued significance of sustainability and conservation.

"The way in which we build housing and the way in which we approach development maintains a very conscious effort at one, fighting gentrification and preventing the displacement of the residents that live in that neighborhood, and two, that we make an effort to preserve the cultural character of certain neighborhoods," Oaxaca said.

Salimian pointed out the L.A. Conservancy has seen a recent rise in the involvement from youth in urban planning and urbanism. Students like Oaxaca highlight this growing interest, representing those who are actively getting involved in the future of preservation and construction by looking to reconstruction.

"It's important to recognize that the act of reconstruction is an act of change. When you have something like a wildfire or a hurricane that effectively wipes out entire tracts of land, and you're left with a [blank slate], it's easy for developments and corporate interests to come in," Oaxaca said. "The point isn't [to] build new things. It's to rebuild the community that was there and make sure that their identity and their pride is preserved."

For those who want to get involved in architectural preservation across L.A., Sandmeier recommended looking into the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the L.A. Conservancy's community boot camp. Beyond education, students can connect with similarly-minded people who want to protect places of importance in their communities.

As L.A. continues to face demolition projects to popular spots like Mel's Drive-In and continued threats of natural disasters, Salimian said that it can be difficult to try to conserve places in the city compared to places like London where buildings can be hundreds of years old.

"Sometimes we're trying to save something that's 50 years old or even less," Salimian said.

Still, one thing remains true: L.A.'s culture is strong, maintained through careful conservation efforts, cultural understanding and an appreciation for the city's rich history that works to preserve its legacy for generations to come.

"Great architecture, great spaces are timeless," Salimian said. "You need to start now to preserve them."

USC students are reconnecting with nature

In a screen-age, students wonder if they abandoned exploring in the outdoors.

By EMILINE BELIARD & LAUREN PHAM
Staff Writers

Living in the car-centric city of Los Angeles can make it feel nearly impossible to cultivate and maintain a relationship with the surrounding world — especially when one lacks a vehicle. But even in the bubble of a college campus, some students are intentionally creating opportunities to connect with their environment, from daily mindfulness practices to outdoor-focused student organizations.

Allison Agsten, the director of the Center for Climate Journalism and eco-chaplain for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, said that as humans, we reach for the closest distraction we can when we're uncomfortable.

"When we are struggling with difficult emotions, the first impulse might be to grab the phone to narrow our worlds a little bit," Agsten said. "[Students] have a lot on your minds. School isn't easy. Everybody has relationship dynamics, whether it's family or friends that they're trying to sort through, and sometimes you just want to escape it, but there are other healthy ways to do that."

For Ryan Long, a senior majoring in criminal justice and president of SC Outfitters, this healthy escapism can look like spending time outside organically. When Long first came to USC, he was seeking ways to keep in touch with the outdoors; SCO, an all-student-run outdoors club, became that outlet for him.

"Getting out of our immediate surroundings ... is the hardest part; as soon as you get outside of the city block, you have a million things right at your fingertips," Long said. "[SCO has] all the gear, we handle all the logistics, including transportation and food, and then we have scholarships available."

Organizations like SCO that are led by students of all grade levels and backgrounds offer a wide range of activities that can strengthen one's bond with the natural world.



SC Outfitters

SC Outfitters is an all-student run outdoors club at USC, their members are pictured together overlooking the ocean while embarking on one of their trips. The group aims to get people out in nature and how that can benefit you.

According to Robin Mitchell Stroud, director of student engagement programs for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, paying attention to nature is one of the first steps to making these connections.

"We actually are nature; we have to pay attention to that," Mitchell Stroud said. "One of the easiest things you can do on campus is literally just to pay attention to what's outside the window and what you pass every day. ... If we connect with nature, it gives us another form of belonging."

Peaks and Professors, a student organization and registered 501(c)(3), similarly offers students opportunities to get outdoors and focus on nature through hikes organized by student guides and a professor. This unique model does more than foster connections to the physical world; it builds human connections, too.

"You get to see the humanity side [of] the professors and realize [that] they're humans too," said Hailey Pulis, a sophomore majoring in economics and data science who is a member of both SCO and Peaks and Professors.

Despite these benefits, Pulis emphasized the struggle many students still face when it comes to accessing nature in Los Angeles.

"It takes a lot more time that students don't really have," Pulis said. "Being a college student, a lot of people don't have cars, ... so it definitely takes a lot of initiative."

Cat Moore, founder of The Belonging Studio and former director of belonging at USC, said it's difficult for people to turn their attention toward nature amid the many issues and responsibilities of day-to-day life.

"There's so many problems, and we're aware of them 24/7," Moore said. "It's a tornado, but also one of the things [you] can do is step outside of that and start small."

Agsten suggested that students expand their idea of what nature means and practice finding beauty everywhere, which Agsten employs through a personal rule to not have headphones in when she's outside.

"When we may find ourselves in nature or when we're alone, we might listen to music, ... but we could probably all use a little more [quiet time]," Agsten said. "If you have those headphones in, you're not going to hear that gentle thrum of the hummingbird's wings. You're not even going to know it's there."

Consciously seeking nature has been proven to lower stress, leaving people more motivated and energetic than before, according to Allyson Pimentel, director of Mindful USC. Our relationship with nature is both ever-changing and reciprocal.

"Nature has its own sort of medicine, its own healing qualities, its own relaxing properties," Pimentel said. "It's really an exchange right? We breathe out what the trees need, and they in return give us what we need."

Mindful USC is another on-campus organization that offers nature programs, from beach retreats in Santa Monica to mindful tree tours, earth tours and chances to tend to the gardens on campus.

Getting back in touch with one's inner child can help students connect with nature, Mitchell Stroud said.

"As children, we all loved to play in nature," Mitchell Stroud said. "We loved to climb trees. We loved to splash in the puddles. ... Let's do something that makes us feel joyful."

STUDENT

| continued from page 2 |

One way the organization and its partnered pantries address this is by keeping their resources accessible to all. For Allison Curd, a lead pantry assistant at Cal State Long Beach who collaborates with the Student LunchBox, looking at food insecurity as a spectrum of need is key.

"You might have one student that [is] like, 'Oh, I just forgot my wallet today, I'm gonna hit the pantry and pick up a snack,' ... and then you might have a student that's trying to feed their family, and they're really going through it," Curd said.

Curd said having support integrated into college campuses, even if they are supplemented by off-campus organizations such as Student LunchBox, has directly helped students get through their days hunger-free.

"I've talked to students before, where they've told me firsthand that, 'The pantry has made it so that I can go to class not hungry and not thinking about ... how I can get a free meal,'" Curd said. "That's honestly the most special part to me, is seeing students be successful and not having to worry about an essential need, because no one should be worrying about having their basic needs met."

Eligible USC students can visit the Trojan Food Pantry for supplemental resources to address their food needs. Located in King Hall, suite 103, students must complete an intake form to show they are currently enrolled in the University, do not have an active meal plan and are experiencing food insecurity, in order to access support.

Nurijanyan said the Student LunchBox does not do outreach itself, but he hopes to be able to help more universities like USC going forward.

"When I was a college student, I tried to find help, but there was nothing available. We didn't have food pantries," Nurijanyan said. "[Students] need to go into their basic needs resource center and obtain information, because all these basic needs resource centers that I work with, they have resources available to college students — all of them."

The Weekly Frame

Plaques

By SANDIP MAHARAJ
Photo Staff

On many days, I go about my day, not stopping to appreciate what I have while racing to get what I want, my next accomplishment or adventure, whatever it may be. I cannot speak for everyone, but if that resonates with you, then you know exactly what I am saying.

In this week's "Weekly Frame," I want to bring attention to our fellow Trojans and show appreciation for their contribution to USC's beautiful campus. We have benches that we can sit on, trees that provide shade and buildings that we study in.

Many of these facilities have been made possible by contributions from such generous alumni. Let us take a moment, if you dare to spare it, to notice the plaques when walking about the campus next time.



Sandip Maharaj / Daily Trojan

Grass surrounds the plaque remembering a former Trojan, bearing a reminder to enjoy the journey while at USC; stop and smell the roses look around the campus and find the little joys on campus.



Sandip Maharaj / Daily Trojan

Trees grow around reminders from former Trojans to follow the path USC paves for students and become a force for change in the World.



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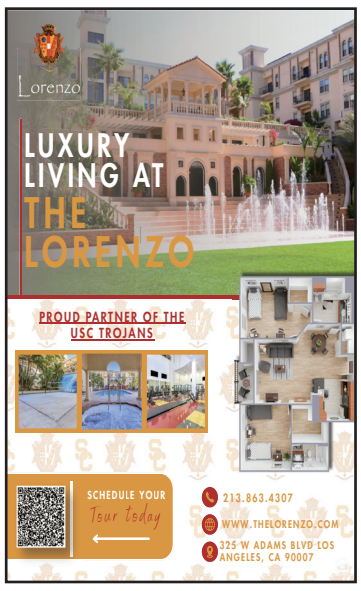
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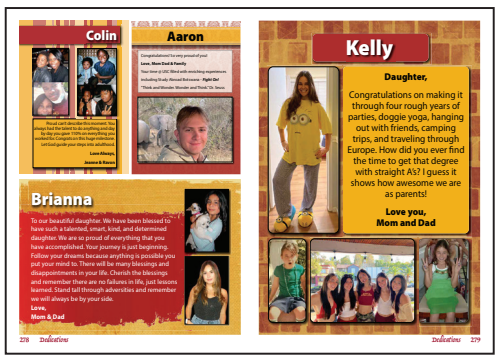
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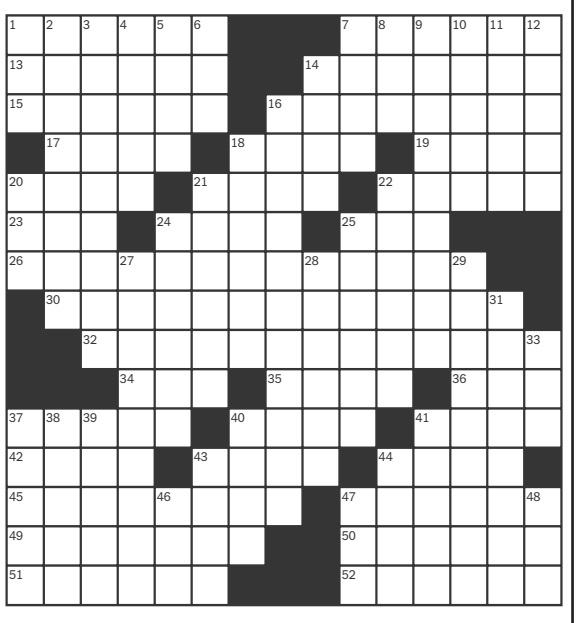
The New York Times Crossword

Edited by Will Shortz

No. 0918

ACROSS
1 Server's warning at a restaurant
7 Moved along (to)
13 Modern tech aid whose design was inspired by a Go board
14 Figuratively speaking
15 Begin to boil
16 Insects named for when they emerge
17 Breaks off
18 Water containers
19 Dinosaur in Pixar's "The Good Dinosaur"
20 Four-time N.B.A. All-Star Young
21 Line at an Apple Store
22 Permanent, perhaps
23 Contents of some pockets
24 Yell sharply
25 Org. whose events are typically held at clubs
26 Country club?
30 Defensive effort in the red zone
32 Not everyone agrees on this
34 Ball girl
35 "Big Brother" host Julie
36 Org. concerned with traffic
37 Ones catching rays, perhaps?
40 Two in a row?
41 Places to buy buckets, familiarly
42 Common plant for a "plant mom"
43 Long-bodied fish
44 Cookie contents
45 Not together, in a way
47 "Is that a challenge?!"
49 Some features of backyard landscaping
50 "I'll be right with you"
51 Gave the once-over
52 "Don't believe me? Just watch!"

DOWN
1 Brightness measures, in brief
2 Element of a dating profile?
3 Potential outcomes
4 Mass
5 ___ of Solomon, literary collection written in the first or second century
6 Sci-fi writer Chiang
7 "&" follower, in some business names
8 When much rainy weather occurs in Côte d'Ivoire
9 Flip
10 Seize
11 High-ranking scout
12 Company whose products suck
14 Additional schoolwork?
16 Simple cocktail named for two brands
18 "Phooey!"
20 Torque symbol, in physics
21 Bit of nonsense writing that typically gets a laugh
22 Delighted cry upon receiving an acceptance
24 Ball girls
25 Leap day baby, e.g.
27 Clicked with a partner?
28 Snicker
29 Simple check for freshness
31 Act like yourself, perhaps?
33 Nasty ___ (noted rap moniker)
37 Not in the minority?
38 It often has four legs
39 Fidget spinners or Angry Birds, once
40 Give ___ (cause consternation in)
41 Character played by Rashida Jones on "The Office"
43 Set piece
44 Longtime U.F.C. C.E.O. ___ White
46 Aladdin's sidekick
47 Many a nonfiction Oscar nominee, informally
48 Lead-in to "lab" in the name of an S&P 500 company



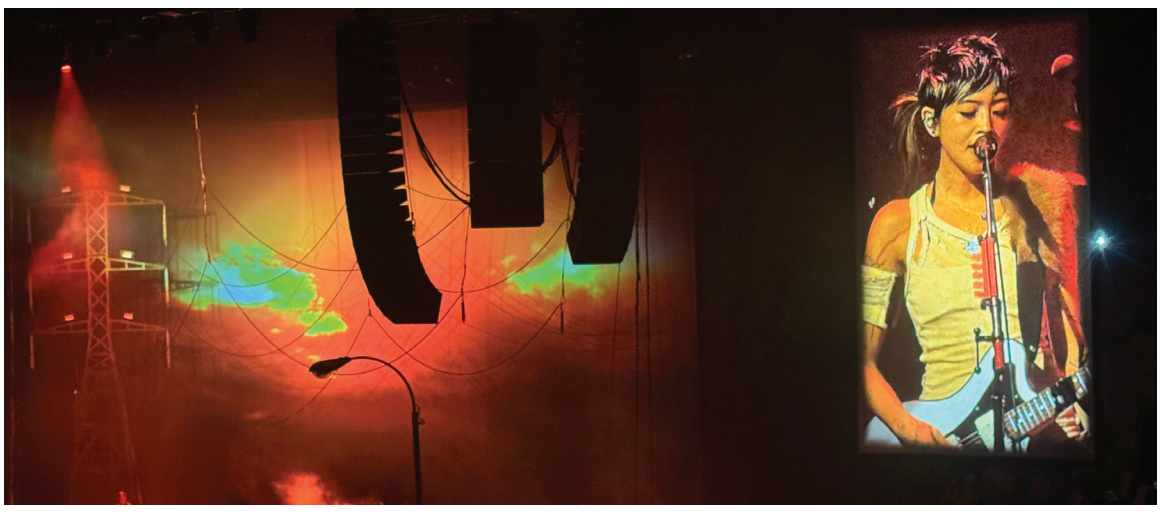
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ENERGY | beabadoobee is at her best when the production is stripped-down



Sophie Landry / Daily Trojan

beabadoobee's performance at the Kia Forum on Wednesday consisted of fan-favorite songs, such as "Beaches," unreleased songs like "The Road" and new music from her album "Pylon."

| continued from page 4 |

beginnings as an artist and subsequent launch into stardom.

She also played two unreleased songs: "The Road," a musical sister to "Everyday is a Winding Road" by Sheryl Crow, and "Lemon to my Lime," which had an almost country feeling. The unreleased songs offered a reminder of how the concert was not just an exhibition of her existing music, but a preview of what is to come.

"Satellite" was another highlight, with beabadoobee singing into a payphone onstage before the song erupted into a guitar-heavy performance. Lights flickered around the stage, and the band fed off of each other's energy as the crowd danced along.

There was a great balance between their theatricality and musical skills. While the elaborate set and lighting added to the performance, the chemistry between the band members was what made the song come alive.

At the end of the concert, beabadoobee surprised the crowd by bringing a magician, Skylar Jade, onstage. She had each band member type a random number into a calculator and multiply them by each other. A number was randomly chosen to be subtracted from the band's product, and the final answer was revealed: 10,211,040. This number corresponded to Oct. 21 at 10:40 p.m., the exact date and time the answer was revealed.

While this moment was out of the blue and a bit random, it goes to show that beabadoobee has figured out how to make an enormous arena into a more intimate, communal experience. Despite the venue's expansive scale, she's managed to keep the same energy as her past, smaller tours.

Nevertheless, at times, the "Powerlines Tour" occasionally overwhelmed itself with its own production, making the quieter moments feel more effective by comparison. The lights were strobing for a large chunk of the night, and while the set design was impressive, beabadoobee was at her most compelling under a single spotlight, showing off her musical talents.

For this reason, "the way things go" was a standout moment. Contrasted against her heavier indie-rock songs, the production was stripped back, and the lights dimmed. The audience sang along with her almost as loud as she was singing, bringing back the intimacy and camaraderie that she's known for in her sets. She proved she doesn't need elaborate props or overdone showmanship to hold the attention of a crowd of thousands.

By the end of the night, under golden light while playing "Beaches," beabadoobee proved that she could fill a venue without sacrificing the qualities that make her music popular. Powerlines, flashing lights and a fake road made the concert level up to arena status, but the quiet moments were the most engaging. Spectacle has never been beabadoobee's main draw — it's the connection with her audience.

FEINGOLD | In defense of fleeing from heartbreak

| continued from page 4 |

traveling the world for a year: four months in Italy, eating; four months in an Indian ashram, praying; and four months in Indonesia, where she ultimately finds love again.

I have no problem watching people richer than me live far more glamorous lives — I love trashy reality TV like Keeping Up with the Kardashians. "Eat Pray Love," though, is a difficult read and watch as a result of its holier-than-thou pedagogical undertones. Readers, and to a lesser extent, viewers, are supposed to take inspiration from Gilbert's journey of self-discovery.

But the film ignores the fact that very few people are able to put their lives on hold for a vacation, seemingly without consequence. I'm sure most of us would have no issue reconnecting with our deepest, truest selves if we could take a year off to eat pasta and meditate.

This is where "Love of Your Life" deviates from other travel rom-com films. For starters, Maya continues working remotely in order to finance her global galavants — a seed of realism in an otherwise fantastical genre. And, unlike "Eat Pray Love," her actions aren't intended as a roadmap for the viewer to follow in order to achieve self-actualization.

"Love of Your Life" starkly chronicles Maya's self-destructiveness, with her avoidance serving as a warning of what happens when you try to escape your own life. In this regard, Maya's selfishness makes the film more interesting: After Charlie's death, she throws out her phone, cuts off all contact with her loved ones and books a one-way ticket to Europe. She doesn't stick around to plan the funeral, nor does she grieve with Charlie's parents.

Maya's actions aren't excused, but they are well-explained. Viewers can empathize with her penchant for self-sabotage, even while they take issue with her self-indulgence. "Love of Your Life," for all of its faults, nails Maya's multi-dimensional characterization, ending with Maya falling in love with her own path, not another person. In one of the movie's final scenes, she is told, "You really have to stay in love with your own life."

At the end of the day, "Love of Your Life" isn't about Charlie or Felix (Aaron Pierre), Maya's passionate, short-lived European fling — it's about Maya and her grieving process. While her romantic escapades are central to the plot, they're not the entire movie — that's precisely what made the film so enjoyable to watch.

I love a rom-com, but it's a breath of fresh air to watch women on screen fall in love with themselves rather than an A-list actor. In a world in which women are constantly expected to pursue romance above all else, how many narratives do we see featuring women characters who prioritize self-love — or better yet, act downright selfish in its pursuit? That is what makes her character arc just as riveting as a slow-burn romance.

"Love of Your Life" also underscores the importance of women being granted seats at the head of the creative table: The film is directed by Rachel Morrison and written by Julia Cox, emphasizing the value of women telling our own stories.

If "Eat Pray Love" was a well-intentioned yet tone-deaf championing of women taking time to look inward, "Love of Your Life" is a more realistic take on why women may feel the need to literally run away from heartbreak.

Fiona Feingold is a senior writing about women in the entertainment industry in her column, "Femininomenon," which runs every other Friday.

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Football returns from bye week for road clash at Wisconsin

The Badgers' quarterback and elite defense will prove to be a tough battle for USC.

By ZACHARY NEWMAN
Assistant Sports Editor

Coming off a vivacious victory over Penn State in Happy Valley and an ensuing bye week, No. 16 USC enters the second half of its season with renewed optimism and palpable momentum.

The Trojans' (6-1, 3-1 Big Ten) challenging Big Ten slate rolls on, and their next adversary is a physical, gritty and hard-nosed Wisconsin (4-2, 2-1) squad that doesn't appear as daunting on paper but undoubtedly has the chops to spoil USC's visit to Madison.

While the Trojans' seismic Halloween showdown next week with No. 3 Ohio State (6-1, 4-0) looms, USC can ill afford to look past the Badgers, who are supremely built to hang around in games. Outlasting Wisconsin in front of another electric crowd at a place the Trojans have not visited in over 60 years will by no means be a cakewalk.

Behind their dual-threat quarterback and staunch defense, the Badgers are off to their best start in years, righting the ship after a season-opening blowout loss to Notre Dame (6-1).

Wisconsin, still licking its wounds from a bleak 17-7 defeat to No. 9 UCLA (6-0, 4-0) on Saturday, picked up back-to-back conference wins before its disappointing trip to Pasadena.

"[Wisconsin's] a good football team," Head Coach Lincoln Riley said Monday on "Trojans Live." "It'll be a challenging environment, another challenge to go win on the road, and we'll have to be at our best."

Trojans hope to feed off pre-bye momentum

USC headed into its bye week surging after two consecutive wins in the Big Ten, including a massive road win against Penn State (3-4, 0-4) in the annual "White Out" game Oct. 10.

Aggressive from the get-go, Riley relentlessly pushed the envelope — and his team responded with clean, complementary football from start to finish to outlast the Nittany Lions and quiet the Penn State faithful.

The Nittany Lions' defense was no match for the Trojans' offensive firepower: Freshman wide receiver Trent Mosley returned from a month-long knee injury and made up for lost time, eluding defenders and making contested catches to help carry USC's offense to 31 points. The emerging star reeled in over 100 receiving yards and a touchdown.

For the second consecutive game, USC's defense progressed, especially during the second half. According to Riley, the defensive improvements and the unit's ability to close out games are giving them confidence heading into the most challenging portion of its season.

"Our ability to adapt in game to how [opponents] are attacking us, our awareness of how we're being attacked and how we want to attack back is really starting to show up," Riley said at a Tuesday news conference. "Our guys are starting to really gain some confidence. We're making less mistakes because of that. ... We're tighter in coverage. We're making things tougher on offenses."

After seven straight weeks of games to start the season, the extra practice time gave the Trojans a chance to rest and fine-tune their defensive approach to translate their recent late-game execution into 60 minutes of shutdown football.

"We've got a lot of belief in our defense," redshirt senior safety Prophet Brown said at a Wednesday news conference. "We've proven that we can catapult this team to wins. ... This bye week was very beneficial for us to tighten up techniques, so I'm excited for us to display it this weekend."

Mobile quarterback is focal point of Wisconsin offense

Week in and week out, Badgers senior quarterback Colton Joseph inflicts most of his damage on the ground. Against the Bruins, Joseph ran the ball more than he threw it. He had 18 carries to just six completions on 16 attempts, and gained more yards rushing than through the air at 83 and 66, respectively.

Ranked 16th in rushing yards among all Big Ten players, keeping Joseph at bay in the pocket will be crucial for the USC defense.

In addition to four touchdowns on the ground, Joseph leads his team in rushing with 333 yards, more than 100 ahead of senior running back Abu Sama III. Gaining 6.6 yards per carry, Sama III has been effective in limited action and is worth zeroing in on defensively.

The Badgers' passing game, however, has not seen as much success. No wideouts have contributed substantially thus far, with only graduate wide receiver Tyrell Henry averaging more than 2.5 catches per game. Senior wide receiver Malachi Coleman is the Badgers' home run threat on the outside, but has been shut out in three of his five games.

Linebackers headline stout Wisconsin defense

The Trojans' elite offense will battle a tenacious Badger defense in a true best-on-best test. The unit, which has averaged fewer than 14 points per game in conference play, is a significant step up in competition for USC's offense.

Wisconsin is particularly stingy against the pass, allowing 162 yards per game through the air in Big Ten play. Nevertheless, they are also no slouch versus the run, allowing 3.1 yards per carry to conference opponents.



Matthew Diederich / Daily Trojan
Redshirt senior cornerback Jontez Williams has helped lead a resurgent USC defense. He is pictured here in a game on Sept. 12.

The one-two punch of sophomore linebackers Cooper Catalano and Mason Posa blow up plays and wreak havoc off the edge, combining for nearly 100 tackles this season. With Catalano and Posa manning the middle, do-it-all graduate outside linebacker Sebastian Cheeks rushes the passer and makes splash plays behind the line of scrimmage.

"Knowing that we have to get to our routes a little faster [is key against the linebackers]," freshman wide receiver Kayden Dixon-Wyatt said at a Tuesday news conference. "The O-line doesn't have all day; [Wisconsin has] pretty good players coming off the edge. Just being on the same page as everyone ... is going to be important this week."

Red zone production is always a primary focus, but stealing seven points is especially important against a Wisconsin defense that limits opponents to field goals in the red area. The Badgers have allowed just three touchdowns on eight red zone visits in conference games as well as one of nine fourth-down conversions.

With Mosley in tow, redshirt senior quarterback Jayden Maiava aims to build on a near-flawless performance two weeks ago.

"The atmosphere and home-field advantage that [Wisconsin has] is something that you're very aware of in this sport," Riley said. "So far, this team's been up for the challenge. ... We're going to build on that, and hopefully have our best performance Saturday."

USC's clash with the Badgers kicks off at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin.

It's Miller time

The standout running back has cemented his presence in a packed Trojan offense.

By VANYA ARAKELIAN
Assistant Sports Editor

Now-redshirt sophomore running back King Miller arrived at USC in August 2024 as a three-star walk-on from Calabasas High School. He didn't have a football scholarship, but he did have a dream to be a Trojan and play at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum under the brightest lights with his brothers.

Fast forward to 2025, when the then-unranked Trojans needed him most; he rose to the occasion and hasn't left it since. The running back's breakout performance against Michigan last October became his career-defining performance with a career-high in rushing yards with 158.

Miller finished last season with 972 on-the-ground yards on 156 carries in addition to appearing in all 13 games USC played.

After a breakout season, the biggest question was whether he could sustain his success going into the 2026 season, when he would be splitting running duties with redshirt senior running back Waymond Jordan.

Just like last year, his momentum is up: Despite the return of Jordan, Miller simply outran him — literally.

This season, Miller has accumulated 595 yards, racking up four touchdowns and three games with 100 or more rushing yards for the No. 16 Trojans (6-1, 3-1 Big Ten). Even though he was initially viewed as part of the 1a and 1b punch in the backfield, he quickly solidified himself as RB1 on USC's loaded squad.



Matthew Diederich / Daily Trojan
Redshirt sophomore running back King Miller has over 590 rushing yards in seven games. He is pictured against San Jose State University.

His accolades continue, pocketing Big Ten Freshman Player of the Week honors last year and finishing the first season on the Big Ten Honorable Mention team. Starting as a three-star prospect in high school to excelling on a top-ranked college football team is a dream come true for most athletes, including Miller.

While Miller had a decent start to the season, everything changed when he exploded against Louisiana (5-2, 2-1 Sun Belt Conference). He ran for a season high in rushing yards with 128 against the Ragin' Cajuns. He hasn't been able to put up a number of rushing yards as significant as the Louisiana game since, but his past performance at Penn State (3-4, 0-4 Big Ten) has certainly set him up for a similar trajectory.

The Trojans met the Nittany Lions on the road during their annual "White Out" game. In a back-and-forth battle, the Trojans fought to break away and take the lead in the tight matchup.

All the momentum shifted, however, in the third quarter, when redshirt senior quarterback Jayden Maiava handed the ball to Miller: He took off, scoring a 13-yard touchdown to completely change the game for the Trojans and hand his team the win.

"For this team, feeling like they have confidence in you to go out there, especially in that environment; for them to call my number to get in that end zone was just thanks to the team," Miller said in an Oct. 13 press conference.

Miller's third-quarter touchdown against the Nittany Lions was the final push that the Trojans needed to break away from the hostile Penn State environment as USC continues to bolster its conference record.

Leading up to the Wisconsin (4-2, 2-1 Big Ten) game, Miller's mindset has not changed this season: striving to be the best player he can be with each passing game.

"Every moment I get to play another game in this cardinal and gold is a special one to me," Miller said in the press conference.

What makes every game even more special is who he gets to share the field with: His twin brother, redshirt sophomore offensive lineman Kaylon Miller, has been a crucial part of the offense, starting in four of the seven games this season. Furthermore, their younger brother, freshman running back Kayne Miller, is finding his footing on the squad and sitting behind King on the depth chart. King Miller's's cousin, Olaijah Griffin, was a cornerback for the Trojans from 2018 to 2020.

While football clearly runs in the Miller family, off the field, the Millers have other distinct connections to the Trojan family.

Perhaps the most famous members of the family are King Miller's uncles, Dr. Dre and Warren G. Young. The famous rappers came together to create the Iovine and Young Academy at USC, which teaches students at the intersection of business, technology and design.

King Miller is no stranger to the Trojan tradition. He has established himself as a key member of USC's offense, where he was once overlooked.

From a three-star recruit with immense talent to leading the Trojans to six wins this season, college football teams should beware — because it's Miller time.