

ZUMBA CLASSES: GIRLS DROP OUT DUE TO DISCOMFORT

by M. Basit Khan

This October, many female students dropped out of Zumba classes, taking place in Main Hall, Sports Complex, due to the discomfort felt with its open venue. Zumba, conventionally, is practiced in closed, private settings. Notably, other unenrolled students are allowed access to the Main Hall and partake in their individual activities, during campus class hours. “It was majorly uncomfortable because there were too many people in the sports complex – mostly boys playing basketball or some randomly standing watching,” Huda Ahsan Khan ’23 said.

Saman Khan ’22 was a regular at the Zumba sessions held in LUMS last year, yet this year she hasn’t returned after attending the first few sessions. “We used to be just nine to ten girls. It was a very relaxed environment last year,” she said. “I just felt very uncomfortable this time around.”

LUMS Shredded took notice of the concerns as they were raised. Azka Pervez ’20, Vice President of LUMS Shredded, said that complaints received and acknowledged by the society have also brought the issue onto the administration’s radar.

“The Campus Climate Manager, (Ms.) Hiba Zakai, truly understands the issue. She comes to the classes regularly,” Pervez said in a written statement to *The Post*. “We’re working with her to find a permanent solution. Ms. Hiba Zakai says that everything will be worked out before the next semester starts.”

“We want to prioritise the comfort of everyone who comes and regret that the current facilities at LUMS didn’t give us an option to do justice to that. We’re hoping to make it better with time!” she said. “This is only the first time we’ve done an all-girls aerobics class at a large scale. It’s a learning process.”

When asked about the managing team’s efforts in addressing existing concerns for the current semester, she said, “We weren’t/aren’t allowed to empty the main hall (so far) but we arrive 15 minutes before and make sure the only people in the hall are those playing badminton in the two remaining badminton courts (while one court is occupied for the class).”

Another immediate solution employed by the society to ensure prevention of video recordings and uninvited audiences in spirit of combating harassment concerns is the appointment of society members patrolling the hallways.

“We also station a few members from our team inside and outside the hall to keep a lookout for any unwarranted stares or anyone staring idly or directing their phones in our direction,” Pervez added. “If we do catch people idly staring, we make it a point to go up to them and tell them to leave.”

With the current semester close to an end, LUMS Shredded plans to address the student body’s concerns through a comprehensive solution with the relaunch of the Fitness Aerobics programme in Spring 2020.



illustration by
Emil Hasnain

CAMPUS OVERCROWDED?

PDC FIGURES CONTEST CLAIMS

by Amina Omar

“These freshies are taking up all the space” was perhaps the most frequently heard and uttered phrase in the first few weeks of the semester. Discussions at the start of the Fall Semester 2019 revolved largely around one thing – overcrowding, with complaints about the lack of space in popular campus facilities like the Pepsi Dining Center (PDC), although new figures from the staff paint a different picture of the issue. “I’ve never seen the campus this packed before,” claimed Muhammad Fateh, ’20.

Numerous posts surfaced on the LUMS Discussion Forum, ranging from claims that the incoming first-years were too large a batch, to critique directed at the administration for the pressure on infrastructure facilities. In a comment on the forum, Umair Saleem ’20, said: “they are increasing batch size exponentially...without even batting an eye towards the capacity of facilities they provide.” The estimated batch size of the combined

classes of 2021-23 is more than three thousand students. This was provided in the official statements by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) on the orientation week for all three batch years respectively.

The computer labs become a prime source of student frustration. The burden on the IST labs has been felt across the student body. “The labs are almost always unavailable this semester,” shared Fahad Syed ’21. He suggested that the lack of space is due to the increase in the student body this year, as well as more classes being scheduled there. The IST lab supervisor, Rameez Qureshi, corroborated one of these claims, stating that there are typically 100-200 more students using the labs than the previous year. “I’ve experienced an increase in traffic here as well,” he shared. However, he also cited the closure of the e-lab as a contributing factor to the added pressure. “That’s a loss of 50+ seats,” said Mr. Qureshi. The four IST labs currently host 214 computers between them.

The issue extends to different parts of the campus, specifically the PDC. “It gets difficult to deal with so many students. We are busy throughout breakfast, lunch and dinner these days,” stated a PDC staff member. Entering PDC during mealtimes, one is confronted with a large number of students and staff members alike forming several lines in front of the serving counters. “This is my first time in two years seeing lines this long at PDC,” claimed Minahil Fatima ’22. “I just get my food packed and go to my dorm to eat it now,” she told The Post, asserting that it was nearly impossible to find a seat during rush hour. However, the PDC office supervisor, Mr. Shahzad, shared that there was only an influx of 30-40 students coming in to PDC, although the dining hall is equipped to deal with an increase of 100 students.

“We’ve added 50 chairs and 15 tables to cope with it right now,” he added, with the assurance that the class of 2023 was not especially greater than that of the previous years. “The

overall increase in students [at PDC] over the past 4-5 years isn’t more than 5%,” he claimed. Mr. Shahzad also shared that the PDC staff has increased from 72 to 80 members – with most of the new employees relegated to cooking. The staff behind the counters concurred that food production had increased this year. “It always seems more crowded at the start of the semester but eventually everyone settles in,” was his final word on the matter.

The evidence provided thus questions claims by students about the extent of the overcrowding. Regardless of the true nature of the issue, it is not the first time the institution has been met with these concerns. In the 2015-2016 annual report published by LUMS, it was shared that similar issues were addressed through the inauguration of SAHSOL, hiring additional faculty members and building another hostel each for male and female students.

HOUSING OFFICER AND MBM EMPLOYEE FIRED FOR THEFT

by Staff Reporter

On October 29, Tuesday morning, an MBM staff worker was caught siphoning petrol from a motorbike in the student parking.

The owner of the bike, a student who wishes to remain anonymous, reported the incident to the authorities. Once the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) received a complaint about the issue, an investigation was carried out. It later came to light that, in fact, a warden from one of the male hostels had asked the MBM worker to steal the fuel for him. A representative from the OSA said that:

“From what we came to know, the warden and the MBM worker had some sort of agreement prior to the theft. It wasn’t a case where the employee was coerced into doing this, but something he was willing to do and then later, reap the benefits.” The OSA claimed that the consequences for such actions were immediate, with both the hostel warden and the MBM staff member being removed from their positions of employment with the university. The punishment was swift in order to set a precedent.

With regard to the consequences, the Student Council said: “If the warden had been given leeway in this situation, then it would have encouraged others to follow a similar practice.”

When asked if there was a history of such cases on campus, The Post was assured by the OSA that this was not a common occurrence.

STUDENTS GATHER FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

by Staff Reporter

On October 29, 2019, Student Council’s (SC) Student Action Committee (SAC), chaired by member Mahnoor Saeed ’20, along with a group of students, arranged a gathering titled “Academic Freedom”. This event was arranged in light of recent impositions of censorship on art and academic debates.

On Sunday, October 27, 2019, men in plain shirts forcibly shut down an art exhibition at Frere Hall. Incidents like this, some of them directly concerning LUMS, represent a national trend of growing suppression of free speech deeming necessary for the SC to hold this discussion. According to the SAC, this gathering is the first of a series of talks to be arranged by SC to discuss the nationwide attacks on freedom of speech.

The floor was open to everyone, encouraging participation from both faculty members and students alike. The objection raised against the talk was primarily centered around its content, how the fifth-generation warfare propaganda is used as a pretext to target voices critical of those in power.

The student council also took this opportunity to clarify their restrictions in organisation of this event.

INSIDE DR’S: A GAME OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

by Muhammad Faaiz Aman & Maira Asaad

On weekends, a handful of undergraduates (and graduates) in LUMS gather together to become warlocks, wizards, paladins, druids, monks — amidst a range of twelve other ‘classes’¹.

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), a role-playing game that was most recently popularised by Netflix’s *Stranger Things*², has found its way to LUMS. Momin Shahab ‘20 and Raja Nadir Habib ‘19 are two of the “Dungeon Masters”³ who operate D&D circles on campus. The sessions take place among five to six players and usually last between two to three hours. Behind the closed doors of Discussion Rooms, players enter into curated, fantastical realms.

The Post was privy to one such session. Shahab ‘19, an experienced DM, offered to host a beginner’s session for reporters of *The Post* to have an immersive experience of the game.

Before our session, Shahab discussed his prior experience as DM. He explained that his entrypoint into the world of D&D was *Adventure Zone*, a biweekly adventure podcast based loosely on the role-playing game. Shahab also revealed his collection of D&D dice, which he carries around in a small, black velvet pouch, along with the notebook in which he writes all his storylines for regular circles.

Shahab ‘19 explained that within a D&D circle, the role that requires the most “creative muscle” is usually that of the DM, who has to construct storylines, rely on improvisation skills, and fill the role and voices of characters that the players interact with in the game. While there is a standard player’s handbook for anyone looking to get involved in the game, he prefers teaching first-time players the rules himself, through the actual experience of the game.

He also discussed some expectations for a session with beginners, and referred to what are popularly known as “murderhobos” in the D&D world – first time players who usually test the limits of the game by indulging



in violence rather than strategic game-making.

For our session, he began with the first quest (“Goblin’s Arrows”) from *Lost Mine of Phandelver*, a classic beginner’s adventure campaign.

Imagination is the backbone of the game, dictating every step and decision, and makes D&D the immersive, interactive experience that it is.

“The four of you are mercenaries, hired to transport supplies to the town of Phandalin. You are making your way through a thick forest, when you see something blocking the road ahead. What do you do?” Shahab ‘19 said to the assembled players.

The game from then on is dictated by the roll of a twenty-sided dice, called a D-20. In battles, especially, the player with the highest number on the dice can choose which monster to attack first.

“The game becomes very personal really quickly. It’s the banter that keeps one hooked. You have the opportunity to be a completely different person in the game,

without the fear of being judged. The game is dictated by the roll of a dice and then one works to convince other players of certain decisions.”

While D&D has only been in effect at LUMS for a year and a half, it has become the binding force for a small group of people at LUMS. Habib ‘19 tells *The Post* why he has continued playing the game even after graduating. It’s a way “to be able to take time out time to engage in some healthy banter with friends. Enjoying an imaginary game is great rehab on its own.”

The circles are formed among friends, so usually no screening processes are involved. The accessibility of the game is what both Shahab ‘20 and Habib ‘19 emphasise on.

“You could incorporate Greek mythology into any futuristic situation and the game would pan out because the only integral skill to play the game is your imagination,” says Shahab.

Shahab also pointed out that D&D doesn’t have to be played by its Eurocentric conventions. He illustrates this by revealing

that a player in one of his regular circles goes by the name of ‘Yaadgaar’.

Shahab added, “The game is reflective of whatever culture you want it to be. You get to build the world and make up the names.”

Habib attributed the freedom of expression and roleplay as “the two main factors that push the relevancy, which keeps the player hooked to the game”.

They were both open to the idea of teaching the game to interested individuals, so that they could start their circle with their preferences and enjoy the interactive and engaging nature of the game.

When asked about how he perceives the viability of popularising the game on campus, Shahab admitted: “I do want to leave D&D on campus once I graduate.”



1
Classes define an adventurer’s skillset in the game. The twelve classes in D&D are: barbarian, bard, cleric, druid, fighter, monk, paladin, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, warlock and wizard.



2
The version of *Dungeons & Dragons* played on *Stranger Things* is the 2nd Edition. The D&D circles in LUMS play the 5th edition for its ease and accessibility.



3
The Dungeon Master (DM) is the creative force behind a D&D game. The DM creates a world for the other players to explore, and also creates and runs adventures that drive the story game sessions to resolve. When strung together, these adventures form an ongoing campaign. A D&D campaign can include dozens of adventures and last for months or years.

DR. FARAH ALI: AROUND THE GLOBE IN THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

by Maira Asaad



Dr. Farah Ali is the most recent academic to enter the folds of the English faculty. Born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq, this is her first time in Pakistan. She will be offering ‘Words are all we have: Identity Predicament in the Theatre of the Absurd’ in Spring Semester ‘20. With a PhD in English Literature and Drama, and a focus on Women’s Studies in her postdoctoral research at the University of Leeds, Dr. Farah’s research on the theatre and women often intertwines.

She views the theatre as “an arena for free speech” and a place where you can see “how people wish for women to be represented, even more so than in reality”.

During our interview, she wears a ring shaped like an abstract face on her right hand. When asked about it, she says that when she saw it, she felt it

was very theatrical and reminded her of the Comedy and Tragedy masks that are commonly associated with the theatre.

“I like anything that has faces or weird expressions on it. I think the face is a mirror for the person. I’m also very observant of people’s reactions; maybe that’s part of studying theatre, digging deep into people’s emotions, their likings and dislikings.”

It is this combination, she suggests, that has brought her to LUMS.

I ask her how she is settling in, both at the university and in Pakistan.

“I see more commonalities between Iraq and Pakistan than differences. We are both Muslim countries. Iraq is not a stranger in that sense – in terms of language, social norms, religion,

tradition, at least.”

Because she comes from an Arabic speaking country, she is also considering the prospect of offering a course on Arabic literature in Fall ‘20.

“Poetry is a very big deal in the Arab world, especially from Iraq – we have got fantastic poets. There is a specific kind of literature that has emerged after the Iraq War. We cannot detach ourselves from politics. But at the same time it addresses many other social issues, be it in a Romantic or social framework.”

Dr. Farah Ali goes on to elucidate the effects of the Iraq War. As part of her postdoctoral research at the University of Leeds, she interviewed women from the Iraqi diasporic community in the United Kingdom to ascertain the effects of immigration on their

language, settlement, and family.

As she tells me about her work, my attention drifts to a bright, framed painting hanging on the wall behind her desk. An African woman in rural, blue attire smiles back at me. The words ‘Ethiopia’ are painted in white at the bottom of the painting.

When I ask Dr. Farah about the painting, she says she received it from a friend as a gift while she was visiting Ethiopia in 2018, but the conversation quickly leads into another segment of her research, which she conducted in Nigeria as an affiliate of the American University of Nigeria. The University is notably known for launching its rehabilitation program for the Chibok girls who were kidnapped by the Boko Haram in 2014, and had sparked the global #BringBackOurGirls campaign. During her time in Nigeria,

Dr. Farah was able to conduct a series of interviews with the Chibok girls.

Seeing how the conditions of poverty and class had driven some of the choices in these girls’ lives also “opened her eyes to research in Pakistan”, where she is interested in similarly exploring the effects of poverty and the structure of the marriage institution on women in Pakistan, and how these factors shape women’s identities. She also wants to look into the representation of women in Pakistani theatre.

“I was applying for the post of English Professor, but I immediately linked this opportunity in Pakistan to my interest in women’s studies as well.”

COORDINATORS ASSESS OUTCRY OVER OUTGROUPS

by Humza Siddique and Maida Tahir

“We give importance to the individuals instead of the system!” were the words of Mr. Nauman Baig, Enrolment Coordinator at the School of Science and Engineering.

Though Mr. Baig’s opinion was echoed by other enrolment officers on campus, students express concern over constricting choices in course enrolment. “It’s been three semesters and now I’m convinced that I won’t get Game Theory,” lamented Muhammad Haris’ 20.

Students exploring different disciplines aim to enrol in outgroups and free electives of their choice. This, however, proves to be a tough bargain for Suleman Dawood School of Business and School of Humanities and Social Sciences students.

“Our first priority is to ensure students of our school get all their courses. After the reserved seats for repeating students are filled, Phase 2 and Add-Drop is the only viable option for non-SDSB students,” said Ms. Fatima Khalid, from the Office of Undergraduate Student Advising, at the Business school. For an outgroup course enrolment, a student’s respective department has to forward a request to the other school for the course specified. However, it continues to be a problem. “Do not approach the instructor or coordinator directly. You will not be entertained!” said Ms. Khalid. Otherwise, “Add-drop *mein ghabray hotay hain aur course nahi milta*,” laughed Ms. Khalid.

However, Ms. Eliya Mohsin, Officer at the MGHSS, had a different point of view on the matter of outgroups. “The Management Science Major’s elective courses are cross-listed with economics courses. HSS department’s consent was not taken for this,” said Mohsin. “Economics courses are loaded, so if you get them, good for you, otherwise there isn’t much we can do!”

According to Ms. Khalid, students with genuine cases are always catered to. “I will try my best to help you get the course, provided you have a genuine case.” In contrast, Ms. Mohsin’s focus is to simply “guide students toward the options available”.

This difference in views occurs again in the talk of level restrictions on juniors of other schools. They are not able to enrol in basic humanities courses. Ms. Mohsin reasons that high-level courses indicate rigour, even without the “minor” label.

“Take higher level courses with no prerequisites. In-depth knowledge is looked at in job application.” said

Ms. Mohsin. She also mentioned low aggregate performance in 100 level courses due to enrolment of non-serious students. “Instructors just do not want uncommitted juniors and seniors who cause disruptions in class.”

Ms. Khalid, when asked about this enrolment restriction, gave a different response to *The Post*:

“I don’t know why students can’t take 100 level courses. SDSB does not follow any such policy.”

SSE coordinator, Mr. Baig, also shared his thoughts regarding inter-school enrolment. His observation was that students from SSE found it easier to enrol in SDSB courses due to the absence of level restrictions unlike HSS. In SSE, students looking to pursue an econ math major, a degree offered by both schools, have found it difficult to enrol in principle level economics courses. According to Mr. Baig, the coordinator of SSE, they aim to accommodate students from all schools to the best of their ability, unless the course demand exceeds the physical capacities of the laboratories and classrooms. On the other hand, when asked about how often SSE students themselves face issues with courses, he stated:

“Our students barely have any free electives outside the SSE cores as it is, and if the ones they do have do not fulfil their requirements, it’s just very unfair to them.”

Perhaps, the common theme among every coordinator’s view is their preference for students of their own school. On this, Ms. Mohsin and Ms. Khalid hold that students from another school are often last priority, if a priority at all. “We are not required to assist students with the completion of their minors. Majors are our only priority,” said Umar Brar of SDSB, when asked about his policy on helping students of varied majors fulfill their outgroup requirements with business school courses.

Ms. Khalid hoped that the situation will improve due to increasing attention on inter-school coordination. A meeting with the Deans was held on Friday, October 11 to discuss and fill in the communication gaps between different departments. An SSE faculty member has been selected for the advisory role regarding inter-school communications.

“In our attempts to please the administration and faculty, we forget who we are here to facilitate; the students,” said Mr. Baig.

THE LUMS POST

EDITORIAL

THE LUMS POST

NOVEMEBER EDITION

THE
LUMS POST

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Send your letters to the editor at
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SMOG – COMBATting THIS MENACE

Lahore, November '19, saw one of the worst cases of smog that the city has ever witnessed. The air, heavily engulfed in smoke particles, impaired visibility. While the gravity of smog extends to every individual and locality being affected, Smog is a topic of utmost concern to universities such as LUMS as they play a critical role in spreading awareness of smog and taking steps to combat the issue.

Dr. Waqar Zaidi, a Professor at LUMS and a member of the advocacy group 'War on Smog', states: "It is important to raise awareness of smog, because even students and faculty in LUMS do not fully understand what smog is."

The ambiguity surrounding the term "smog" has resulted in a concerted effort to define exactly what smog is, as is evidenced by the recent talk: "Toxic Air: A Climate Emergency" held on November 13 in LUMS. The panelists began by debunking myths surrounding smog and clarifying that smog is not simply a mixture of dust or smoke, it constitutes something far worse: PM2.5 or particulate matter. Furthermore, Lahore is one of the highest ranked cities in the World AQI chart, but most regions in Pakistan fail to meet the standards of the World Health Organisation.

University campuses are intensely affected by smog, but they also offer much in the way of combating it. The LUMS Student Council, for example, took action on campus. The representatives tried to get classes canceled for the day, conversed with the administration about the possibility of installing air purifiers, and acquired smog masks to be sold on campus at a price substantially less than the market price. They also obtained masks for the guards on campus. Furthermore, the environmental society on campus also contributed towards helping students cope with the crisis; they sold smog masks and hosted the aforementioned panel discussion.

There has been a ripple effect across campus; one comes across an increasing number of students wearing masks day by day, and the discourse around the issue of smog is growing. This discourse not only pertains to dealing with smog within the bounds of the campus, but also beyond it. For instance, investigation into the causes and nature of smog is emerging as a popular area of study.

However, there are limitations on what a university campus can do to combat the smog crisis. According to the Dean of the Office of Student Affairs, Dr. Adnan Khan, "we can put some solutions internally as to how to reduce the impact", but "it has to be an industrial scale solution which requires a lag time." After all, smog itself cannot be reduced by a university alone.

The magnitude of the crisis is massive and lies outside the control of just one university, however, students and administration should implement measures that can reduce the impact of smog. These campuses also play a crucial role in the broader discourse around smog and in establishing steps to combat it. In this way, LUMS and other universities are at the frontier of this fight.

MENTAL HEALTH

University is a jumping-off point for many: a sudden, sometimes unwelcome, crossover to an age where protective veils are lifted and responsibilities are attached. The campus, hence, boasts a counselling system put in place for struggling students. But, is it a relief in this stress-induced environment or an added factor?

Student grievances right now revolve around the lack of quick availability of counsellors. We realise the difficulty in entertaining requests from large batches of students, larger still during exam season, but it is important to remember that taking the decision to involve a stranger in one's personal life is taxing in itself. From there on, the road should be an easier one. We therefore urge the counselling office to make greater availability its top priority and follow through on their systemic remedies urgently.

Moreover, counselling spaces should be and feel like safe spaces. This may be made difficult with the existence of a contract allowing counsellors to involve parents if they feel that the student is a "threat" to themselves or others. We understand that this is done with the best intentions, but the ambiguity surrounding the definition of threat has pushed some away from seeking counselling at LUMS.

We do, however, commend the new head of counsellor, Tahira Haider, for creating a sense of urgency and constantly collaborating with the student council since her arrival earlier this semester on the following: the addition of two counsellors to the office, the development of an online forum emulating the model of the Facebook support group Help@LUMS, and a project on taking in Psychology majors as interns to provide a fresher counselling experience. While it's certainly ambitious, the latter raises concerns due to the lack of qualifications and experience needed to offer help. We, thus, urge the office to lend legitimacy to this practice by closely supervising these internees at all times.

Furthermore, we understand that often counsellors are forced to put aside some emails for later dates due to the vagueness of subject matters shared on them. We appreciate that the counselling office acknowledges these inadequacies and has recently begun circulating questionnaires during preliminary stages to help it identify the cases in need of immediate attention.

The wellbeing of students in all regards should be the administration's top priority. With health comes productivity, strength, dedication, determination, and happiness. The qualities we instill in our students here are what will shape and guide us in the future. Therefore, after assessing the challenges that the counselling system and students are facing, we suggest one thing: communication between the two parties that goes beyond the involvement of a select few student council members; we urge counsellors to stay in touch with the students who reach out to them and in turn, seek their help and their feedback in improving the system.

OPINION

PCOS BODIES ARE FEMININE BODIES

by Heer Cheema

"Kya aap ko hormone problem hai?" [Do you have a hormone problem?] probed the hair laser technician. This wasn't the first time someone had reacted to the coarse black hair that covered my jaw and neck, but the irony of this particular situation wasn't lost on me. Here I was in a hair laser clinic attempting to rid my person of any signs associated with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), which indeed could be described as a hormone problem, only to be caught out. Perhaps, even more ironically, my efforts to hide my condition from the world had cemented PCOS as central to my identity. Indeed, far from being able to distance myself from the label of PCOS, I had become inextricably tied to it.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome outside of being a mouthful is also, interestingly, a misnomer. The name suggests that the primary symptom of this condition is ovarian cysts – I have learnt this isn't true. I understand that being hairy is just one of the cards I've been dealt as a young South Asian woman, but being hairy is distinct from being hirsute. As I turned sixteen and saw areas of my body that had never been hairy before turn so, it was distressing; the peach fuzz on my thighs, chest, and upper arms began to darken

and turn thicker. It was surreal. I felt I had been thrust into the pages of an age-old fairytale where I, a young woman, was cursed to roam the earth as a beast.

However, my tale was far from over, for as the hair on my body grew coarser, the hairs on my head began to wither and fall. I would run a brush through my hair only to pull out strands upon strands of it – a graveyard of brown curls. The effects of PCOS on my body were undeniable; this wasn't just a question of cysts on ovaries, but visible changes in how my body looked, and hence, how I felt in my body. The NHS website reports that PCOS is associated with "high levels of male hormones" in women. The hair loss and hirsutism I was experiencing as a result of excess androgens, struck at the heart of what formed my femininity. In other words, the conventionally feminine lines that had delineated my body were dissolving, and I was left a strange hybrid between the 'masculine' and the 'feminine'.

PCOS can cause abrupt changes in how one's body functions. Reconciling these changes is no easy task. The sterile, medical jargon that details the symptoms of PCOS cannot speak to the emotional

turmoil that one experiences as a result of it. Though its symptoms vary across women, from hirsutism, weight gain, acne and hair loss to irregular periods and infertility, the fall-out from PCOS on women's mental health can be found across the board. This is true even for my peers in the microcosm that is LUMS. Ameena Naweed '22, a sophomore, reveals her personal struggle of grappling with symptoms often associated with PCOS: "I have dark spots around my neck and an unusual amount of stretch marks on my body". She stresses that she is "conscious" of herself and has become aware of her body in ways that she wasn't before. Marha Fathma '23, another LUMS student who has been diagnosed with PCOS, highlights the "perpetual anxiety and fear" that accompanies her unpredictable period cycles.

These feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem are far from trivial. They stem from the discomfort that arises from not being able to recognise your own body. Against this backdrop, my need to visit the clinic in a bid to return to 'normal' is not surprising. I wanted to combat the alienation I felt from myself. However, such solutions have their limits – what we actually need to do is expand the word 'normal'. PCOS bodies with

their hirsutism and hair loss should be recognized as feminine bodies. Marginalising them is not only detrimental to the mental health of women with PCOS, but perpetuates a superficial understanding of femininity. By viewing these bodies as aberrations we are determining women's identities around them having PCOS; narrowing who they are to just one aspect of their identity.

The U.S National Library of Medicine reports that the prevalence of PCOS in women worldwide is as "high as 21 percent". The sheer number of women affected by PCOS speaks to the diversity in female bodies; exposing the popular archetype of a woman as a falsehood. Indeed, realising there is a community of 'PCOSers' helps to mitigate much of the distress associated with having PCOS, because you no longer feel you are on the periphery. It is, perhaps, equally crucial to recognise that while these women are bound to each other by the label PCOS, they are not defined by it. So, though I still find myself in the waiting room of the clinic, I have stopped viewing myself primarily as a woman with PCOS – instead I form part of the crowd.



FOOD, HYGIENE & LUMS

by Zoha Ahmed

It had been a tiring and gruesome day that slowly transitioned into night as Mahnoor Akhtar'23 and her friends considered food options for dinner. Having spent enough money in the morning, they quietly and unanimously settled on PDC. As Akhtar dug into the only thing on the menu that seemed appetising that night – vegetable pulao – she was met with an unflattering sight. A hair, the size of a thumbnail, slowly slithered its way onto her next forkful. She and her friends stared in disgust as they examined the rest of their plates for any other unwanted items. With this, the four hostilities begged to question – what is the extent of hygiene at the food options available at LUMS?

The food options at LUMS, although seemingly vast, are rather limited. You have one dining hall – PDC. One desi restaurant — Zaakir Tikka. Five non-desi restaurants/cafes — Chop Chop, Subway, Flavours, Juice Zone and Jammin Java and for a quick bite, you can always grab something from the Khoka or the superstore. With only seven total food options, maintaining hygiene levels shouldn't be something a student should have to worry about. Unfortunately, that is not the case. With constant verbal complaints

from students to posts scattered on LDF, the food cleanliness conditions are rather questionable.

Having examined LDF, students have found flies, lizards, ants and other questionable items in their Chop Chop orders. Zobia Akhtar'20 posted a picture of her Chop Chop order on LDF where she found an ant gnawing her egg fried rice. Upon inspection, the refrigeration at Chop Chop seems sketchy with water constantly leaking from the fridges indicating that the cooling might not be efficient. The cooking is done in an open kitchen where vegetables are mostly left in containers without lids.

PDC, although on the outside seems to maintain a good image by the vast majority of hairnets, beard nets and gloves their workers seem to adorning, does not always meet the expected standards. Students constantly complain about hair and other unwanted items being found in their food.

Earlier this month, a student named Swaiba Saeed posted on LDF regarding PDC coffee, "I felt something was up with it and ended up vomiting twice right after".

Another student, Kumar Dev

also posted on LDF regarding a chicken found in his daal: "Am I not allowed to be a vegetarian in PDC? A chicken piece pops up in daal to say hello to my Hindu beliefs. I am not a very religious person but this carelessness should be avoided by the PDC staff. *Matlab kuch bhi khilaya ga sakta hai kia?*"

Additionally, Zaakir Tikka is an eatery that is highly popular. They have maintained a good reputation and seem lighter on complaints. Jammin Java may be the only restaurant that proved to be satisfactory upon inspection. With little to no complaints and a visually pleasing and clean kitchen, this relatively expensive option might be the only real safe place to eat at LUMS.

"We aim to handle all food related issues promptly. The student council is very vigilant and reacts quickly to any complaints posted on LDF. We're a large team and someone always happens to spot posts regarding food issues and forwards them to the general administration. Even if, somehow, we end up missing these posts – our friends are quick to tag us," laughed Huzaifa Rauf, a PhD student and co-chair PDC student council. He detailed how

Colonel Amer and other members of the administration follow up on these complaints immediately after they are reported, typically the next day. Such complains result in meetings with the concerned staff of the restaurant where they are asked about why this incident occurred and a kitchen inspections is also performed. Apart from such emergency meetings, Colonel Amer, other members of the administration and a few members of the Student Council hold 3-4 inspections every semester. These inspections cover all restaurants whereby the kitchen conditions, staff hygiene and health certificates are all inspected. A criteria sheet is filled upon which each restaurant is awarded a score. Recommendations are also provided incase of any hygiene issues.

It's important to question the food we consume on a daily basis on the LUMS campus. With a vast majority of the LUMS's student body residing on campus and only a few eateries, it's rather easy for any one to slip up with regards to hygiene because of the lack of choice students face. It's imperative to launch an inquiry and take action now, and consequently, bring up the food standards at what is one of the best universities in the country.

if it matters to you, it matters to us

THIS IS NOT A PLAY: REVIEWING THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
THE ITALIAN EMBASSY AND DRAMALINE

by Hammad Bilal and Jibran Sharif

“It made little sense to me; what?”

These were Saad Ali's '22 words as we exited the source of his confusion, a performance of ‘Commedia dell’Arte’ presented by Dramaline and the Italian Embassy.

Taking place on Saturday, November 2, in B3 of SDSB, this performance was put together by two Italian artists, Mr. Marco Luly and Mr. Carlo Bosso. In the presence of the Italian ambassador to Pakistan, Stefano Pontecorvo, the two artists, in addition to Vajdaan Shah from NAPA Karachi and amateur artists from Dramaline, performed scenes which introduced the audience to the world of Commedia dell’Arte.

The event began with an introductory scene where Luly, along with a cast that included Dramaline members Ahmed Rathore, Sundus Noor Aslam, Maha Bukhari, Usama Saqib, Abdullah Haroon, Noor Hayat, Ahmed Mehmood, and Chouhan Ali Haider, explained the basics of Commedia dell’Arte via their enthusiastic performances.

As explained by cast member, Maroof Taj '22: “The special aspect of Commedia dell’Arte is the use of masks. As far as I understand, unlike our local theatre, you perform a mask. And masks don't tell backstories, they just are.” This was clear in the performances of the actors. While

not all actors wore masks, the masked ones were treated the same as the others. Taj further explained this by saying: “The audience knows we are performing, and we know that the audience is present”. This was evident in the scenes performed, when the performances oozed off-stage, as the cast interacted with unsuspecting audience members. In this breaking of conventional boundaries between actors and audiences, the characters showed to us that actors are more than effigies. Reimagining the entire auditorium as their stage, these acts liberated a kind of shadow in us whose existence unsettled, mollified, intrigued or even confused members in the audience who perhaps weren't aware of this existence in the first place.

For Ali '22, this epiphany was less profound. From impelling him to fall into a sleep, to letting others like Mubashir Shakeel '20 see with attentive eyes, to awakening me to look about as in a dream with eyes that see masks all around them, Commedia turned all our gazes inward.

Basing itself off the family drama, ‘The Servant of Two Masters’ by Carlo Goldoni, a few scenes were also performed in Italian. Despite the obvious language barrier, the barrier-breaking nature of Commedia meant that the audience were able to see the comedy in the scene regardless. As the

President of Dramaline, Hamza Asad '20 put it: “Theater does not have any boundaries. It doesn't have any single religion, region, or ethnicity. Theater is cultural exchange.” In addition to the scene in Italian, a solo piece was also performed in Urdu by Vajdaan Shah, which further emphasised this exchange through the medium of theatre.

As the audience sat either enthralled or confused by the performance, a new life was being given on stage, interspersed with a speech by the Ambassador on Civilization and Culture. There was a strange correlation between life and death, between convention and innovation which justified to Taj '22 that art is not made to tyrannize but to tally with life: “Italian theater is very different and demands a lot of energy. Two days since the performance and I still feel the pain in my bones.”

The event concluded with the Italian Ambassador being presented with a bouquet, which he immediately gave to the actors, declaring “I think they deserve this more.” and fittingly so. This play, whether one reviled it or adored it, unified the audience in breaking from a fossilised idea of a shadowless theater. Having seen our doubles performing amongst us, wearing masks, we were tempted to see nothing but emptiness where the stage was full, senselessness where the actors were only playing us.

FRESCOES IN THE TIME OF SMOG

by Syeda Aiman Zehra & Hammad Bilal

“Aik nukta, everything starts from it and ends at it,” says curator Madam Noor Jehan Bilgrami as we embark on a journey she started in LUMS. The nukta she speaks of is the same nukta that we see at the center of many of the art pieces she has installed around campus—from the VC's house to his office to the faculty lounge to the walls and domes of the MGHSS building. It is the same *nukta* that she sees in the heart of the university—the Academic Block—where the campus community finds itself at least once every day, passing by, taking shortcuts, rushing to classes.

At the beginning of Fall Semester '19, a series of new paintings were seen to be in the works around the Academic Block. The Post spoke to two of the creative forces behind these installations: Madame Bilgrami, curator and head of the project, as well as Ustad Raffaqaat Ali, the head painter of this project, corrects us. We scribble the new word in our notebook as he relates the journey he took, from learning his craft in Masjid Wazir Khan

to another—each meant to celebrate the craftsmanship of Lahore's heritage, she points out—till we reach the site of the newly-commissioned piece on the inner wall of the Block, opposite PDC.

Here, amidst passing crowds, inching its way towards permanence in hues of red, green, blue, is a Mughal mural. “Fresco, you mean,” Ustad Raffaqaat Ali, the head painter of this project, corrects us. We scribble the new word in our notebook as he relates the journey he took, from learning his craft in Masjid Wazir Khan

of the “Ustad” in all spheres of life. The fresco speaks of multiple journeys, ones that Madam Bilgrami and Ustad Raffaqaat took and ones that we, the public, take now.

For some, it is easy to miss the man in the skullcap painting the frescos in the momentary excitement that the paintings bring. “It's good,” says Mohammad Mohtashim '22, “but why not paint all of it then?”

For others, the art invokes their aesthetic sensibilities and requests them to pause for more than a passing minute. Anum Siddiqui '22 says, “I like the murals they're making. I like how they're Persian in colour and I like the style palette too. I think it's very nice.”

Then there are those who are able to recognise the importance and urgency of the Ustad's work: lending colour to an art form that has grown stunted after reaching its heights. Hence, art acts as “a sentimental education. One learns to see, to look for details, to empathise with a different perspective than our own,” says Ishtiaq Ahmed '21.

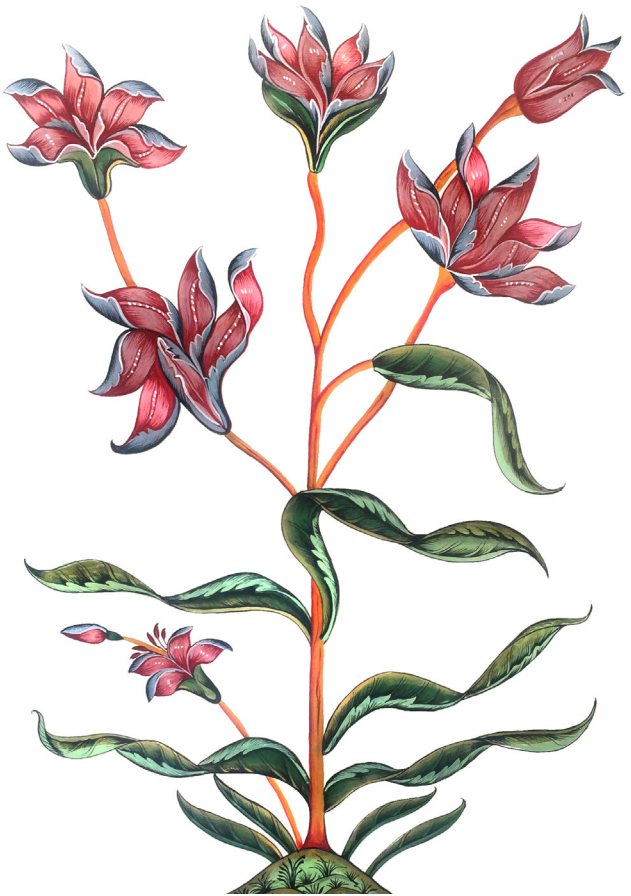
Dr. Tehnyat Majeed, Professor of History at LUMS, celebrates the responses that these art projects have evoked.

She stresses on the need to focus on the “public” in “public art,” more so than the makers behind it. “Art becomes Art in the ways it affects those on the viewing angle [students, faculty, administration, labour, support staff], and in the ways they are able to draw out relationships with it,” she tells *The Post*.

Bringing the art to the public was the first step. Now, she says, “We need mediators that enhance our intellectual horizons and aesthetic sense and help us see beyond the art.”

Behind the fresco and the other recent installations, Ustad's fingers work fervently for months at end with the same intricacy with which he makes his squirrel-hair paint brushes, and Madam Bilgrami speaks of the dying craft with the same rarefied tone with which she speaks of her late friend, Habib. Beauty is not an hour's brief pleasure, their work shows us. It is something which has an unerring place in the present, in the sight we see daily as we cross the Academic Block.

In the words of Madam Bilgrami: “To actually see...”



Two years ago, Madam Bilgrami paid a visit to LUMS to see the building her dear friend, Habib Fida Ali had designed. What she saw at the center was a bare courtyard: “No one wanted to cross it, the courtyard was too hot and a sense of nurturing was lacking.”

The walls, too, spoke little to her of the cultural heritage of the inner city of Lahore that the architect had taken inspiration from. “It's such a phenomenal building... I wanted the space inside to demand the respect of viewing,” she says.

After putting together a presentation for Syed Babar Ali, Pro Chancellor of LUMS, who appreciated her ideas and agreed to fund them, she began filling her late friend's canvas. Madam Bilgrami imagines the fountain first, followed by the four plants at its corners, like cardinal points of a compass. In a few years, the plants will grow enough to provide shade: the center would act as a source of nourishment for the wild growth and space around it.

Madam Bilgrami smiles and looks upward: “I always feel like Habib is watching me. I don't want to disturb his spirit, his sensibilities.” This belief in the ability of art to complement art, not denigrate it, is visible in her avoidance of excess in an otherwise minimalist building.

The steady sound of rushing water follows us from one art installation

to painting the fresco in LUMS. When the design of the fresco was first presented to him by Madam Bilgrami, he shares that he recognised it immediately as a replica of a design from the Masjid. His labour mirrors the same arduousness that is found in the paint-making process: plaster first, hydroxide paste next, followed by a patient wait, and then the colour. As the colour dries, the Ustad's story acts as the solvent between us and the fresco behind us: “It takes six months and a wall to earn the next payroll.”

But, beyond the six months, there lie over 30 years of learning, repeating, perfecting. “You have to start with making circles, again and again, I tell my *shaagirds* always,” he says.

“I draw the same flower differently every time,” he says and passionately draws one in our notebooks from memory.

Behind him, the flowers on the wall multiply, etched into the plaster, chained within their respective panels. But, he isn't. When asked, he says that his reward lies in serving his roots: the fresco art of Masjid Wazir Khan, the customs and spirit of Islamic culture, and the reverence

TETHERED

LITERARY LEGEND KISHWAR NAHEED COMES TO LUMS

by Manahel Ayyaz Khan

Under Zia-ul-Haq, journalism in Pakistan suffered as the press was put under strict regulation.

To talk about this period where media went under severe censorship, the Gurmani Centre at LUMS hosted a talk by the valued Urdu poetess and feminist, Kishwar Naheed, well known for her poem “Hum Gunahgaar Auratain”, on October 25, 2019.

Naheed ran the audience through the “atrocities” against freedom of journalism that were carried out under Zia's regime.

“The censorship under Zia was banning words like ‘zalim’ (tyrant), ‘hukaamraan’ (ruler) and ‘shab’ (night) from newspapers and magazines,” Naheed narrated to the audience.

The censorship of the first two emerged out of a fear of raising rebellion amongst the masses, while the latter connotated “sensuality” and hence, “vulgarity”. According to her, working as the editor of the prestigious literary magazine “Mahe Naw” under such issues was a feat. Moreover, those who tried to defy the orders of the government were jailed

and even exiled.

Mrs. Naheed started publishing works inspired by authors and books that specifically contained the

a key position for a big magazine. Additionally, he reprimanded me for publishing a ‘vulgar’ article.”

Mrs. Naheed's everyday encounters with media censorship and chauvinism did not cripple her. Rather, she continued to work for freedom of expression while adopting a feminist role, through which she established herself as one of the most accomplished Pakistani poetesses who worked for free media.

When asked about her message for the upcoming generation, Mrs. Naheed commented, “You kids are our greatest assets. Understand your worth and value it. I am not saying that you pick a sword and leave for Jihad. What I mean is, start small. Maybe begin a start-up, or just stop littering. Anything that contributes to this country's progress, do it! And remember, always express yourselves.”

While Naheed went onto have cordial conversations with the LUMS instructors, the student body present at the venue was seen immersed in exchanges about how her strong anecdote and message had made them an hour wiser and a lot more resolute in always voicing themselves.



and even exiled. Another problem that, according to her, Mrs. Naheed faced as a young female editor of Mahe Naw was the misogynistic behavior of her work colleagues. “When I published an article from one of Manto's works, a senior ‘sahab’ called me up and told me that I was too young to be on such

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