

# UNOFFICIAL CONCOURSE

Run by students, for students!

Keele's UNOFFICIAL student newspaper

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**Pride flag waves supreme in Thailand** by G. Saji, Current affairs correspondent

Thailand has made history by becoming the first country in Southeast Asia to legalise same-sex marriage and it is only the second country in all of Asia to do so.

**Exposing Colombia's silenced indigenous crisis** by J. Hearsey, Keele & beyond correspondent

On January 17, 2023, Brito de Jesus (17) and Samuel Cristiano de Amor (25) were brutally shot dead by a gunman on a motorcycle while walking back to their farmland. The two young men were devoted leaders of the Pataxó indigenous group of Brazil.

## THE SHALLOT

By W. Drew & A. Gurney Middle pages!

Shag Week success And Tion Wayne plays at the SU! Make sure to Rep YOUR Landlord in all new (and all real) letters sent in by readers! Also, check out your horoscope in our accurate Valentine Edition star map!

Turn to the back for society news and the personal column!



# Editorial

## Unofficial, for now...

By P. Horsefield, Editor-in-Chief

The wheels of *Concourse* have begun to slowly turn once more. The January edition has shown that people want a student-led paper back in Keele. Due to this, our *Concourse* team has been bolstered since our first edition in January, and consequently, we have been able to include more stories about a wider range of topics as well as include more local articles about Keele itself. This, I think, is fulfilling the motto that *Concourse* is “run by students, for students.”

However, at this moment in time, *Concourse* is unofficial in the eyes of the Keele Student Union. This means that from now, up until I apply for society status, we are fully independent and separate to Keele SU.

Of course, we feel that this newspaper can go so much further, even while unofficial. At this moment in time, *Concourse* is only being printed in limited, physical copies, which raises one major drawback: accessibility. It is all well and good to publish just physical copies, but people might miss these inconspicuous sheets of paper. My intention is to create an online version of *Concourse* to be more accessible for those that cannot get hold of the physical copy, for whatever reason.

This newspaper did have an online version prior to COVID-19 but, as most things seemed to have disappeared post-pandemic, the website became effectively defunct. Despite this, most meetings leading up to this edition included the topic of an online version. This would allow more timely articles about the goings-on in Keele and further afield. This is early days for the renewed *Concourse*, but if you feel that this

newspaper can be improved then get in touch via our Instagram or the QR code in the personal ads' column.

Additionally, when discussing article ideas for this edition, the team found that there was a constant sense of negativity throughout the articles suggested. There was a general indication that the world is on a downward trend accompanied by the rise of fascism and the inability to do anything about it. Within these articles however, there was an underlying persistence against this negativity seen in the smaller, more local stories. Despite a strong awareness that something should be done more actively to oppose such regimes, you must take action by engaging with your close community of friends, classmates, and family.

The least that you can do is to enjoy, and partake in, the small and seemingly inconsequential things in life. Look out for your friends, a simple, “How are you?” can go a long way. Take breaks from both academia and the big, bad world; you are not expected to bear the burden of every issue, online or in real life, that crosses your path. Compliment a stranger or friend on their choice of clothing or hair style, a compliment could mean the world of difference to that person. But I’m a second year studying at Keele, why take advice from me?

It may sound almost cliché to say, but don’t give up! Maybe you’ll find hope hidden in the stories presented in this edition of *Concourse*.

# Culture

## Head Dent

By N. Slater, Culture correspondent

‘Dirt’ feels like getting smacked in the face at your first gig and finally feeling alive. Which is the exact energy local punk band Head Dent are bringing to their performances.

I was lucky enough to see Head Dent support Death Lens at The Underground in Hanley and after that gig, I left with a ripped shirt, a new perspective on the local music scene, and an absolute hankering for a kebab. Head Dent received the warmest welcome of the night, with a much more active crowd than the other two acts—full of locals supporting locals. No moment hit harder than when they broke into ‘Dirt’, a song about expression and self-acceptance, but with the energy of an adrenaline shot straight to the heart.

‘Dirt,’ with frantic guitar riffs, pounding drums, as well as a perfectly gravelly vocal performance from the band’s frontman, Luke Mansfield, captures anger and confusion in every strained note encapsulating growing up with mounting pressure to find direction and to fit in. With the chorus driven by a chunky bass tone and distorted power chords it is full of restless momentum that keeps the blood pumping. It’s the sound of being lost in a mosh pit, thrashing and screaming, trying to channel all that pent up rage toward something or someone.

HEAD DENT

THE DENT



Head Dent’s album cover for their latest EP, *The Dent*.

'Dirt' is the lead single of Head Dents EP: *The Dent* - a whirlwind of a listen packed full of equally noisy and conscious tracks, all of which are well worth your time. The band often plays at The Underground in Hanley so keep your eyes open and try and catch them there live, if you want to experience them yourself.

Instagram: @abandcalledheaddent

Bandcamp: @HEAD DENT

YouTube: @HEAD DENT

Spotify: @Head Dent

# Keele & beyond

## Keele in Town

By L. Peiris, Science and Technology editor

Since its founding in 1949, being the first new university of the 20th century, Keele University has been rich in culture, history, and heritage from the start. From Keele Hall being built in 1580, to the US 83rd division American army forces being stationed there in the Second World War in 1940, the site has been of utmost significance. By 1969, Keele University was described as "the most original innovation in British university education in the 20th century."

Now, in January 2025, Keele has continued to build on this rich legacy, welcoming a new chapter with the introduction of "Keele in Town." Located in the heart of Newcastle-under-Lyme in Ironmarket, an empty 19th century building has been transformed into a vibrant mixed-use facility with a cafe opening soon that brings together local Staffordshire businesses, along with Keele students and staff to relax and connect with the community.

Keele in Town also hosts a legal advice clinic, attended to by students who've been trained and supervised by experienced solicitors, which consists of a commercial and small claims clinic, which can assist in a number of matters such as disputes about faulty products, and services carried



Keele in Town, located in Ironmarket, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

out to poor standards. They provide free legal advice, working on a pro bono basis supported by LawWorks.

Keele in Town's current open hours are Monday-Friday, 12pm-4pm.

## Keele University, a sinking ship?

By S. Afzal, Keele & beyond correspondent

*"I think some of the worry around the financial picture is, that if we are not given the full situation and if there isn't a real understanding of what is making the finances unsustainable, then where is the guarantee, that this is not going to continue?"*

You might have seen the posters around the Chancellors Building, seen the level of combined honours at Keele decrease or just felt a drop in morale. These are all only indicators of what is currently happening at Keele. It seems upper management have decided to undertake staff cuts, which the teachers do not understand, the staff's union (UCU) has challenged with thorough analysis of the finances and which the students are not even being told about.

In October the vice chancellor first expressed concerns regarding the financial position of the university, since then there have been meetings and presentations explaining the situation and the proposed course of action. However, after speaking to teachers (or simply looking at the UCU website) one can conclude that the explanations and justifications only seem sensible to the least affected, upper management.

Academics agree that the staff cuts currently happening are targeted to the faculties of humanities and social sciences. Part of the current process is something called a 'consultation' period in which staff can voluntarily provide input through the union or independently, which took place in January. The UCU requested for this period to be extended, which the vice chancellor denied. The vice chancellor claims there was enough financial information shared since October; however, the union argues that significant data was released very late within the process.

Teachers feel *"[...] the management decisions are being made in a way that — they don't seem to reflect what's going on in teaching or they don't seem to have a sensible purpose."* Students upon learning of the issue deem it *"ridiculous."* When discussing the consultation period academics expressed how it felt *"superficial"*, explaining how *"not much flexibility"* had been demonstrated. Further academics report on financial expertise that is present at Keele, we have a business department, however they seem to have not been consulted to find alternative solutions either. *"It was like they didn't really want an alternative way out of this, they just wanted to get rid of staff."*

*"A lot of us [...] would take a pay cut, yes—to be able to not have any compulsory redundancies. [...] Ohh, so it's easy to fire people, but it's not easy to make your high-earning managers take a pay cut."*

There is also a criteria released, determining which teacher will be cut, which academics have identified a few



issues with. *"[...] They're going to decide who should lose their jobs [...] based on research and that's only meant to be 20% of our job output."*

*"[...] For the last two or three years, they've been telling us that we have to concentrate on teaching [...] and so on — at the expense of the research and now they're measuring the research."*

*"[...] it might be that, even the teachers that have more of a human- relationship with the students, might be less likely to stay on."*

Teachers have also been told to cut choice, in the sense that double honours are being deemed as useless, when it is a crucial quality, considered, when deciding to enrol at Keele University. Students report: *"The only reason, I am here, is the opportunity to do combined honours and the wide range of combined honours."* *"I'm so pissed they've taken down most of them."* An academic involved with students, regularly discussing feedback reports: *"Students are feeling really just ignored and undervalued and— just— like they're being used for the money"*

One must question why there has not been an official announcement for students, which academics believe to be *"deliberate"*, *"the students are not being told anything because of course, they are not going to like it, if you're being told, that each year you might lose 20 staff members."*

Teachers report of already feeling short staffed and overburdened, concerned how the staff cut will exaggerate this further, arguing that people who are leaving might be able to get a *"better job"*, finding themselves in a *"better situation"*.

*"People used to be here [...] working late, they'd be kind of doing extra stuff, they'd want to do extra stuff. [...] You feel that if you go the extra mile, nobody's going to care, and it's not going to count for anything. So why do that?"*

*"We were hired because we are specialists in our respective areas—we are already quite short-staffed anyways—and internally we have had to kind of have people cover other people's work that are not in their areas of expertise, which I would think, as an academic, is quite alarming."*

*"If you reduce the number of people available, it is inevitably going to put strain on whoever is left behind"*

Teachers estimate a detrimental effect on the student experience. It will affect the delivery of teaching, academic mentoring, choice, extra volunteering help by teachers and research opportunity. *"When there's less staff, there are fewer opportunities to do research, and when academics don't do research, we're not updating our teaching because we're just teaching. [...] If we don't have time to do research, then we're just basically teaching the same thing over and over again without any kind of improvement."*

*"Students wield a lot of power [...], in [the] way [that these] universities are being run. They're being run as businesses and in this business model, you are the customer. So, in that sense, your voice holds a lot of power. And if you say, 'we pay all of this money, [...]and for us, the most important part of this service [...] is the value that the teachers bring to it. That should be the one aspect of the university infrastructure that should be protected.'"*

# Current affairs

## Doomsday Incoming?

By T. J. Hayward, Current affairs editor

On 28<sup>th</sup> January, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists made an update to the doomsday clock, bringing it from 90 to 89 seconds to midnight—the closest to midnight it's been since its inception.

So, what is the atomic Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, why do they have a doomsday clock, what does midnight mean and why has it gotten closer to midnight?

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists is an organisation that was founded after the end of World War Two, seeing a need to inform both the public and policy makers as to the threat that new emerging technologies could pose. They feared that the atomic bomb was "only the first of many dangerous presents from the Pandora's Box of modern science," which appears to be an alarmingly correct assessment. Currently the main focuses of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists include nuclear risk (nuclear weapons, safety and waste) climate change (need I elaborate further), disruptive technologies (for example, AI being used in destructive manners) and biosecurity (security and threats of pathogens, such as COVID-19). On top of this they have the infamous doomsday clock.

The doomsday clock was established in 1947 and has been ticking ever since. The principle is, it acts as a warning as to how close we are to destroying society with our own creations or technologies (Initially this was essentially the threat of nuclear war). Midnight is the point at which destruction becomes inevitable. So, this leads to the question, why the change and why so close to midnight?

There is a long list of reasons for the change; these include the breakdown of past nuclear treaties, expansion of nuclear arsenals by the major superpowers (USA, Russia and China), proposals to integrate AI into weapon systems, climate change causing droughts, wildfires, etc., and lacklustre efforts to curb emissions—just to name a few reasons.

There is hope though, the clock is unique, we can turn it back. If we put efforts into making the world safer and more secure from all threats, lingering or emerging then we can avoid Armageddon.

## The Far Right and Germany's election

By M. Palm, Current affairs correspondent

Since the emergence of the AfD (see table below for explanation of party names and Identities) as the far right party, democratic parties have avoided cooperation of any kind with them – the so-called Firewall (German: *Brandmauer*) was erected. But like far right parties in so many other

Party name	Political position
CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union / Christlich Soziale Union)	Christian conservatives / Tories
AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)	far right
SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland)	social democrats / Labour
Bündnis 90, die Grünen	Greens
Linke	far left
BSW (Bündnis Sarah Wagenknecht)	weird mix of far right and far left
FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei)	conservative/centre-right liberal democrats

The main German parties and their position on the political spectrum.

countries, the AfD continued to grow.

In November last year, the governing coalition of SPD, Grüne, and FDP broke apart after the FDP made demands in conflict with the coalition agreement. On 29<sup>th</sup> January – 26 days before the early general election – the firewall crumbled. CDU and FDP cooperated with the AfD to pass a non-binding motion for a harsher immigration policy. Criticism came from *Grüne*, SPD, and *Linke*; from within CDU and FDP; and even from former chancellor Angela Merkel (member of the CDU and former chancellor). Both the Protestant and Catholic churches called the immigration policy “not constructive” and “partly illegal”. In the polls the CDU has lost 2% of supporters since the 29<sup>th</sup> while *Grüne*, *Linke*, and BSW gained 1% each.

Based on current polls, the following coalitions could be possible for the next government: CDU/SPD/Grüne, CDU/SPD, CDU/Grüne, and CDU/AfD. The former three have become less likely since the cooperation of the CDU with the AfD. Especially the *Grüne* party, whom Merz (the CDU party leader) has called the “main opponent” amidst the increasing threat of the AfD, may not be the most obliging. While Merz has repeatedly ruled out a coalition with the AfD, there is speculation that it could still happen. In a survey by Forsa for RTL-Deutschland, 41% respondents anticipate developments similar to those in Austria where the centre right party is negotiating with the far right party to form a coalition.

To get a better understanding of the positions of various Parties, there is an independent online tool (the Wahl-o-mat) that asks the user political questions and compares their answers to the manifesto of each party and presents the

percentage of agreement between the user and each party. In an experiment, the questions from that online tool have been fed into five AI-models including ChatGPT and DeepSeek where they were asked to answer the questions as a German citizen. For all AI-models the three parties with most agreement were Linke, Grüne, and SPD (in varying order).

In the same survey, 59% of respondents felt passing the motion together with the AfD was wrong of Merz. For 62% of respondents the most important topic in the election is the conservation of democracy and the fight against right-wing extremism, followed by economic development (55%), and crime and internal security (49%).

Alongside this, the debate about cooperation with the AfD was almost eclipsed by the debate around the far-right party itself: the origin of a donation of about 2.3 million euros received by the AfD is still being investigated. Additionally, the live interview of Alice Weidel (chancellor candidate for the AfD) with Elon Musk, on the social media platform X, has been viewed as a donation from outside the EU and thus highly illegal. The weak policy around party finances was stated as one of the reasons why Germany dropped from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> place in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 by Transparency International.

These views are also reflected on the streets. Peaceful protests against the AfD started in January 2024 after a meeting of members from the AfD, CDU, and other Conservative or far-right organisations to plan the deportation of asylum-seekers, and “non-assimilated” German citizens, had been exposed. The protests continued to take place throughout the year in the anticipation of many regional elections. With the upcoming general election, protesting has been on the increase again. Since 29<sup>th</sup> January, protests have taken place across the country with at least 250,000 participants in Munich; 160,000 in Berlin; and 65,000 in Hamburg, with many more happening in just about every city or town.

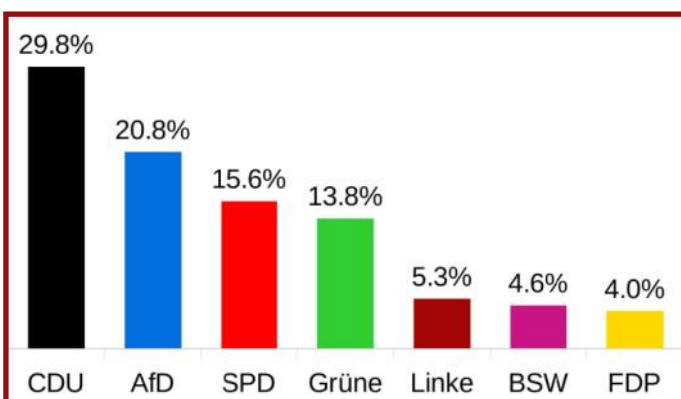
However, on the hustings, the protests have been barely noticed or simply played down. Merz said he does not “take [the protests] seriously.” The television debate between Merz and SPD chancellor candidate, Olaf Scholz, focused on migration and economy, while the protests were barely mentioned.

## The First 25 days of Trump

By D. Ward, Current affairs correspondent

Donald Trump will likely go down in history as the most socially divisive president since Abraham Lincoln. Trump has returned with a vengeance to the most influential office on the planet, and that political comeback has come at a time when the right and left appear to see eye to eye less and less. His return heralds the golden age of anti-establishment populism, and for better or for worse, his movement has started on a path to tear down whatever they believe wrong with their country.

We got our first look at this on Inauguration Day, when 26 executive orders were signed. This included



Current election polls (adapted from zeit.de)

*Continued reading on page 9*

# THE SHALLOT

Jordan LaFlure, Executive Editor of *The Onion*: "you are free to use that name as far as *The Onion* is concerned"

## SU Security Armed with Batons and Crowbars in Preparation for Performing Black Artist



Fans of the acclaimed rapper Tion Wayne were met on Saturday by a well-armed checkpoint, manned by a committed host of security officers before entering the venue. Representatives from the Union have signed off on an increase in the budget of the security department by 410%, ensuring that every time a Black artist performs at Keele, students are sure to be beset on all sides by professional goons armed with batons, crowbars, scythes, pitchforks, knuckle-dusters and short tempers.

"Safety is our number one concern," Said the head of campus security, "That's why we've ramped up our efforts in recent years. It is vitally important that we arm our valiant security forces with the blunt instruments they need to deliver a calm, jovial, and inclusive atmosphere in the Student Union."

Students have criticised the Union claiming that the measures are racist, pointing out that a disproportionate number of security officers were hired either straight from the Millwall FC Ultras or the local Eric Clapton fan association. "We had a Coldplay cover band perform last month and the place was sold out," Said first year medical student Femi Oladele, "Security were handing out dreamcatchers and singing 'the Scientist' in joyous harmony. Where was that energy for Tion Wayne?"

In the interest of dispelling student's concerns, Union representatives have since announced that they will hire a madman with a crossbow to oversee the Taylor Swift nights.

## Union Officers state: "no condom for 24 hours after shag week"

In an effort to raise awareness for the Union's educational 'Shag Week', Officers have promised that we don't have to wear protection this weekend if we engage with their posts on Instagram. "You don't have to wear a condom if you liked our posts about Shag Week."

As part of Shag Week at Keele University on Monday, Officers shared important information for students on the subject of sexual health and safety. We have learned that consent is forever relevant in conversations about sex on campus and is described as "An emphatic and very clear yes, freely given with no ambiguity, revocable during any stage... and [based upon] Strong verbal and physical communication." The Officers go on to talk about anatomy, sharing some 'Sexy Science Facts' - Did you know that women are capable of three kinds of orgasm, and can achieve up to 20 orgasms in a row?

Shag Week included exciting workshops, a quiz by our LGBTQ+ Society, as well as various carnival games and even a scavenger hunt. Every day this week at 1PM, students were also encouraged to 'find the clit' hidden somewhere on campus for a prize, proving once and for all that it's real.

Officers announced that anyone who likes and comments on Shag Week posts will be allowed to forsake their prophylactic sheaths on Saturday and Sunday, so long as we're all really careful.

"Students have paid diligent attention to our efforts this week to strike up meaningful conversations about sexual health, with many burning questions asked, though many of those questions were about burning feelings down there," Said the Union Officer.

"We believe that students should be rewarded for their participation and seriousness in discussions about sex, so we're going to let them go raw for a bit, as a treat."

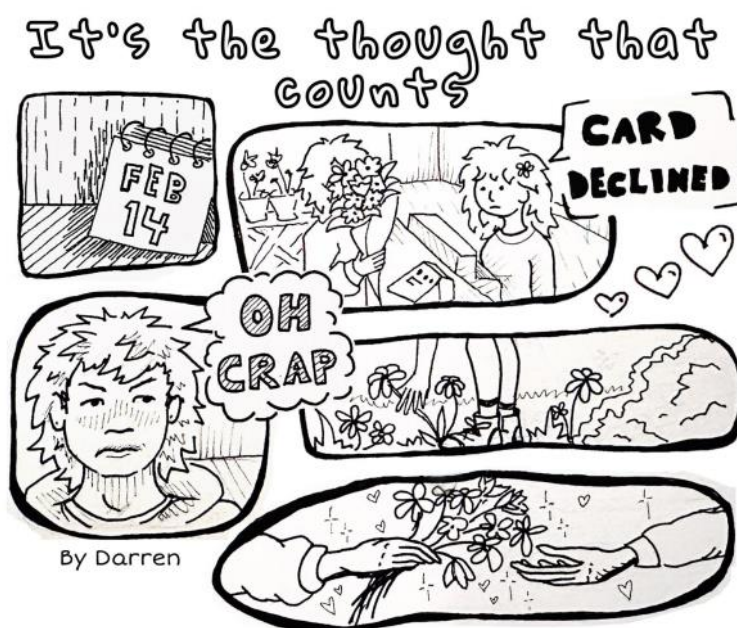
The moratorium on contraceptives ends at midnight on Sunday, however it has been claimed that those who share information about Shag Week with their friends via social media will receive an extra 24 hours.

*The Editor would like to note that the Shallot is not legally responsible for any unwanted pregnancies caused by this article. For more on Shag Week at Keele, follow @keele\_su\_officers on Instagram.*



# The Near Side

By Alder Woods & Co.



The Japanese Tree frog in all of its glory.

## Frog Fact Corner!

The human body produces a hormone called oxytocin, which is associated with trust, empathy, lust and relationship building. but frogs don't have that. Instead, they have their own hormone called mesotocin. This does the same thing as oxytocin, and drives frogs to look for a mate, or for some, look for their young. Just like oxytocin in us humans, mesotocin helps frogs to feel content and not be stressed!

# Repping my landlord

A safe space to express you most sincere concerns about your most beloved landlords! These opinions have been collected recently and reflect the honesty and sincerity of the Shallot news section.

**Dear landlord,** we have been informed by peers that it is NOT normal to build your own tenancy building. Due to this, we will not be returning at the end of the year. Please advise on what to do with the spare bricks.

Yours, Tenants

**Kära Hyresvärd** (Dear Landlord), thank you for the reasonable price on our studentbostad (Student accommodation). One slight issue is that kunder (people) keep trying to buy our household items, such as our Kallax shelving unit and Billy (bookcase). Also, we have noticed that our crate full of blåhaj and djunkelskog periodically empties and refills. Please advise.

Yours, Tenants

Dear Landlord, your advert is quite misleading as it said, and I quote, "this house sleeps five people." Upon turning up we found that it was a single bedroom with one large bed inside.

Yours, Tenants

*Our The Shallot team received this Message in a Bottle:*  
**Dear Landlord,** send a plumber immediately. Our stop-cock has broken and consequently the ground floor has flooded. This has resulted in a pirate haven been set up downstairs in the kitchen. They have taken to plundering our tea reserves. Please forward this to The Police.

Yours, Tenants

**Dear Landlord,** we had a rather stressful examination period last semester but not directly due to the exams. No one was in the house, but upon returning from a particularly hard English Literature paper, the house had undergone a huge transformation. There was now a purple river flowing through the middle of the hallway with a cat wearing a very silly hat, floating on a bat. Can you call pest control?

Yours, Tenants

Thank you to our readers that submitted letters for repping their landlords!

Write in using the QR code to represent your landlord!

You might be featured in the next edition!

# YOUR star sign: Valentines edition

by Moss

<div>CAPRICORN</div> <div>Your romantic prospects are limited (because you go to keele)</div> <div>♑</div>	<div>AQUARIUS</div> <div>You will find your soulmate skipping the same lecture you are, and trauma bond</div> <div>♒</div>	<div>PISCES</div> <div>Cry about it</div> <div>♓</div>	<div>ARIES</div> <div>The answers to your current relationship issues lie within a large quantity of alcohol</div> <div>♈</div>
<div>TAURUS</div> <div>That person from SHAG week was the one, you know who</div> <div>♉</div>	<div>GEMINI</div> <div>Stay toxic, someone will match your freak</div> <div>♊</div>	<div>CANCER</div> <div>You're better than a man who won't buy you Maccies (including friends)</div> <div>♋</div>	<div>LEO</div> <div>Turn up the heat, go on a candle-lit dinner</div> <div>♌</div>
<div>VIRGO</div> <div>It's ok to be emotional, we all know you're single</div> <div>♍</div>	<div>LIBRA</div> <div>Absolutely step out of your comfort zone for valentines, go on a date in Stoke</div> <div>♎</div>	<div>SCORPIO</div> <div>You're as nonchalant and mysterious as you think, but you will be haunted with what happens today</div> <div>♏</div>	<div>SAGITTARIUS</div> <div>BEWARE</div> <div>♐</div>



## The first 25 days of Trump, (cont'd)

pardoning convicts of the January 6th insurrection, declaring an end to “diversity, equity, and inclusion” policies, attempting to pause all foreign aid, and declaring a national emergency at the US-Mexico border. Most of these orders have been populist in nature, attempting to fulfil promises made on the campaign trail; however, there are other patterns to note. At the time of publication, 9 rulings have blocked presidential initiatives and whilst it is not uncommon for executive orders to be challenged by the courts or Congress, it is not impossible to see Trump as testing the theoretical limits of executive power. The United States government functions as a balance between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches but when united by one party, Congress tends to grant more and more powers to the president. This time around, that tendency has manifested in the form of a complacent Republican Congress, letting Trump go to war with the judiciary over the correct constitutional interpretation of presidential power.

Elon Musk is one of the many tools being used to reshape America’s government. He is unafraid to make radical decisions, he is very ambitious, and when given power by the president he becomes incredibly dangerous to the establishment. He was placed in charge of the “Department of Government Efficiency” or DOGE, which will make most people on the internet die a bit inside. DOGE was front and centre when calls came to “wind down” the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and their involvement serves as an indication that Donald Trump is not only testing the powers of the presidency, but also the subservience of his Congress. DOGE staff have gained unauthorised access to classified USAID information, and senior security officials that attempted to block this access were put on leave. After he claimed that President Trump approved of his stance of “We’re shutting it down”, hundreds of USAID employees and their families lost access to computer networks, ‘panic buttons’, and embassy systems.

The Treasury has also been in the department’s crosshairs, with a top Treasury civil servant being pushed to retirement after refusing to grant DOGE access to a software responsible for annual payments totalling over \$5 trillion. They have since gained access. Judges have since been undoing the access granted to the department, and legal proceedings are occurring on, and continuing beyond, the day of this article’s publication. With almost every sweeping action that Trump or his team takes, lawsuits are filed in opposition. The end of birthright citizenship, granting immigration officers access to churches and schools, attempting to freeze trillions in federal funding, and attempting to move transgender inmates into federal prisons of their biological sex are just some of the issues being brought before the courts. The democrats in Congress have been helped by a few rebellious republicans during confirmation hearings but due to the republican majority, Congress has been rather hesitant in its response to this upheaval. For now, it seems that Donald Trump will go to war with the judiciary to decide the true powers of the



President Donald Trump signing executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House.

president, and we will have to wait to see how the Supreme Court rules when push inevitably comes to shove.

The President has also turned his sights beyond the borders of the USA. His rhetoric can be described as nothing short of imperialistic. He has threatened to use military or economic intervention to annex Greenland and occupy the Panama Canal and has repeatedly expressed his desire for Canada to become the 51st state. Canada and Mexico are currently in talks with the Trump administration to avoid massive tariffs, a strong-arm tactic to force cooperation that he used against Columbia just 7 days into his second term. Countries had begun preparing themselves for a diplomatic upheaval even before the election, but the economic and foreign policy changes are still an earthquake rocking America’s allies and adversaries alike. There has been a doubling-down on the US-Israeli relationship, where Trump has threatened to “let hell break out” against Hamas if the hostages aren’t all released by Saturday 15th February.

He has suggested that the US take permanent ownership over the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians should be relocated Egypt, Jordan, or elsewhere without the right to return. Reversely, a significant souring has been occurring between Trump and Europe. Tariffs have been promised against the European Union, and Trump reportedly came across “aggressive and confrontational” to the Danish Prime Minister on a call regarding Greenland. Trump is also employing strong-arm tactics in Ukraine. His stance is that military aid will be dependent on both Ukraine’s and Russia’s willingness to enter negotiations to end the war, which Ukraine expressed interest in. Trump reported recently that Putin has agreed to enter these negotiations “immediately”. Kyiv appears to be gambling on Trump clashing with the Kremlin on their resistance (or political inability) to make good-faith concessions, thus causing an influx of military aid.

It is too soon to tell how Trump will handle a strong-headed Kremlin or a reluctant Kyiv but if his first 25 days are any indication, it could escalate very quickly.

## Pride flag waves supreme

By G. Saji, Keele & beyond correspondent

While colours seem to be fading in many parts of the world, a bright rainbow was cast over Thailand this past month. Thailand has made history by becoming the first



country in Southeast Asia to legalise same-sex marriage and it is only the second country in all of Asia to do so. Activists have been fighting courts to pass the marriage equality law for over two decades. Thailand has already been a surprising beacon in all of Asia for its societal friendliness towards LGBTQ people. Many couples in Asia have already moved to Thailand because of their welcoming atmosphere compared to back home.

The landmark law, which came into effect on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, grants LGBTQ couples the same legal rights as heterosexual married couples. Helping match Thailand's legislation with the country's already positive global reputation on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. Under the new law, any LGBTQ couple over the age of 18, regardless of nationality, can marry in Thailand. Thai nationals who enter same-sex marriages will receive legal recognition and benefits such as tax breaks, inheritance rights, social security, healthcare access, and the ability to adopt children.

However, there are still many mountains yet to be climbed regarding LGBTQ rights in Thailand. The legal definition of parenthood in Thailand still refers to a "mother and father," leading to potential complications for same-sex couples seeking to adopt. Efforts to introduce gender-neutral language in family law were unsuccessful, and activists continue to push for further legal reforms, including gender recognition rights for transgender individuals.

Despite this, the law's passage was met with celebration, with nearly 2,000 couples registering their marriages on the first day. In Bangkok, a mass wedding event saw 200 couples formalising their unions. The change is expected to boost Thailand's reputation as an LGBTQ-friendly destination and strengthen its tourism sector.

Thailand, already the dream honeymoon destination for gay couples, can now also boast being the go-to gay wedding venue as well.

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## Exposing Colombia's silenced indigenous crisis

By J. Hearsey, Keele & beyond correspondent

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On January 17, 2023, Brito de Jesus (17) and Samuel Cristiano de Amor (25) were brutally shot dead by a gunman on a motorcycle while walking back to their farmland. The two young men were devoted leaders of the Pataxó indigenous group of Brazil.

On the night of May 22, 2023, Libia Quiguanás (45) and Telésforo Ipia, went missing from their home in the Jambaló region of Colombia. Two days later, the Paez couple were found dead on the banks of the Jambaló river.

These stories are not unique. Across every corner of the globe, lethal silencing tactics are inflicted on peaceful innocent indigenous people and land activists by government security forces and armed groups. The figures currently stand at over 2,000 murders worldwide since 2012 according to Global Witness, even excluding those who escape capture.

Indigenous communities have historically inhabited land since the earliest times, surviving the most brutal conditions imposed by colonisers. Before the world became interconnected through technology development, most indigenous communities lived in isolated, remote regions like deep jungles and mountains – surviving sustainably through cultivating exotic plants, spearing fish and hunting mammals. These ancestral roots are continued today in many parts of the world, as communities like Libia and Telésforo's Paez group still reside in the Andes mountains of Colombia. And 70 different indigenous ethnic groups share the Amazon basin as a home.

However, today the deadliest threat to indigenous survival is not a lack of food security, but the physical threat to their homelands. Corporations around the world are increasingly turning to extractive industries and illegal coca production to reap their lucrative exporting benefits. However, they're destroying biodiverse indigenous land and ecosystems in the process. According to linguistic researcher, Jonathan Bonilla, rivers, once a source of food and water for indigenous communities in Colombia, are being "poisoned by mercury, a by-product of gold extraction, and diverted away from villages." Social leaders who resist the abuse of their land and people are met with violence from armed groups, like the unlawful shooting of the boys, Brito and Samuel, in Brazil.

In 2023, Colombia witnessed the world's largest mass murder of land protectors ever recorded. 40% of international cases that year came from the country alone, 85% occurred in Latin America – making it the deadliest continent on earth for land defenders. Yet, this crisis remains in the shadows of mainstream media. Nearly half of Colombians killed that year were ethnically indigenous or afro-Colombian, despite only making up a small fraction of the country's population. An overwhelming majority of assassinations have been linked to mining and extractive industries, followed by fishing, logging and hydropower. So, where do these systematic killings leave us in the fight for climate justice?

If indigenous lives continue to be in danger at this accelerated rate, estimations predict that half of the world's 7,000 existing languages could become extinct by the next century. Not only would generations of culture and history be erased, but knowledge about living sustainably without the need for carbon pumping machinery would disappear. Some famous modern medical practices have stemmed from the translation of indigenous healing methods including the development of aspirin for pain relief, which was based on the active ingredient, salicin, found in willow bark chewed by Native Americans to soothe pains.

In a future where unclean water and air, biodiversity disappearance, species extinction and food insecurity seem more and more inevitable, it's clearer than ever that protecting indigenous lives is invaluable in the fight for climate justice.

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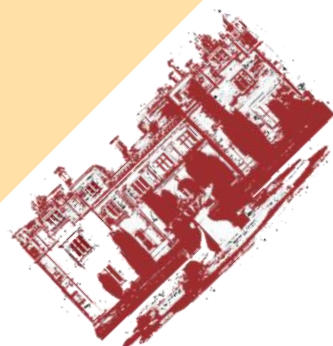
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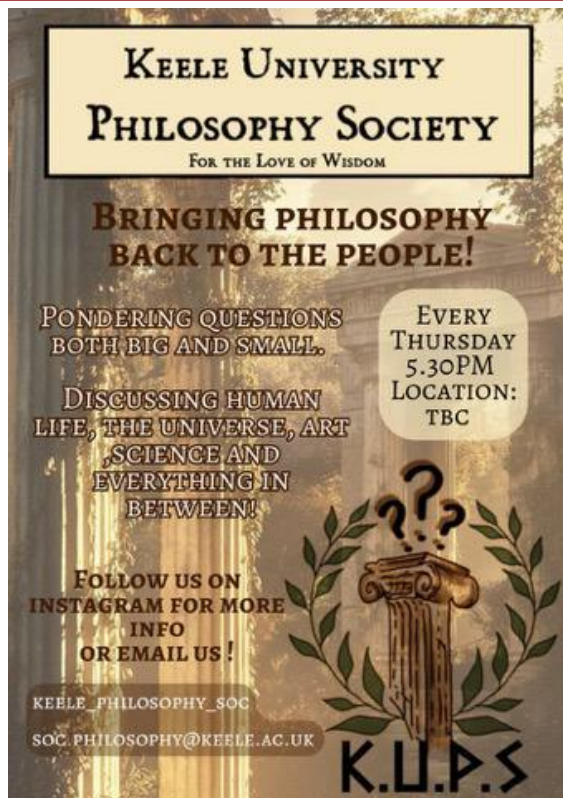


# Society news

## SPARK is BACK!

The Society for Physics, Astrophysics, and Rocketry has returned to Keele. We are competing in the National rocketry championship this year, and we are organising trips to introduce people to model rocketry and the growing space industry.

Follow SPARK on Instagram @keele.spark and scan the QR code for the link to SPARK's SU Website!



## KLAW!



We are Keele Literature and Writing Society and we meet on Mondays in Chancellor's building to write and share creative ideas based on different weekly themes. People from all academic backgrounds are welcome! It's an inclusive and chill environment

free to join.

You can reach us via the SU webpage or on Instagram at @keelelitandwriting\_soc!



# Personal ads

Here are some personal ads from the previous edition:

**Query:** I accidentally made the library think I was part of Concourse (I'm researching old Concourse stuff). HOWEVER, the Archives would appreciate a copy of each issue for the archives :)). (also I have Concourse membership through the SU, is there anything I'm meant to do with it?) Last thing is that your website currently doesn't work and I don't know if you want that changed or not (or if you even know about it).

Yours, Anon

**Response:** It is great to hear that people are interested in *Concourse*! If you're researching old *Concourse*, why not join our team? We meet every Wednesday to discuss ideas for articles as well as a social time for people with a common interest in media and journalism. Referring to archives wanting new copies of *Concourse*, I fully plan to save these and hand them over to them by the end of the year. Lastly, we are aware that the website is down; we are looking to start it up again to promote quicker stories and provide more accessibility to our monthly editions.

Send in your problems, responses to articles, or general questions to us via the QR code, and our *Concourse* team will respond to them the best we can!

