

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE
Vol 21 Issue 25 2013-07-05

Convocation

Photo introspective

Deen Dilemma

The teller or the tale

Nothing to Lose

Boxing girls in Kabul

*Plus:
In Conversation
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



CONVOCATION: A PHOTO INTROSPECTIVE



“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.”
Henry David Thoreau

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

Confucius



“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



“The good news is that the moment you decide that what you know is more important than what you have been taught to believe, you will have shifted gears in your quest for abundance. Success comes from within, not from without.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

All photos taken by Bethany Tynes at AU’s Convocation ceremonies, June 2013.

IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman

Christine Tassan

***Christine Tassan** is an amazing singer and composer and an acoustic guitar maestro in the gypsy jazz and French chanson traditions. She's also an electrical engineer and a film director. Her band, *Les Imposteures*, is composed entirely of women, all formidable musicians in their own right. They'll be performing together at the Montreal International Jazz Festival June 29 and 30 on the *Bateau-mouche*.*



Recently Christine took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about her life, her career, and what it's like to surprise new audiences with hot club jazz.

Turning Dazzling Virtuosity into Big Fun

Jazz is sometimes an acquired taste, and gypsy jazz can border on elitist. How do average audiences react to the dynamic sound of Les Imposteures?

"Last weekend we went to play at Sudbury for the third time," says Christine. "This time we were playing at a small pub for the second half of the show. It was midnight. We looked around and said, 'What are we doing here?' There were a lot of young people and we just assumed they wouldn't listen to us and might even make fun of us.

"But I just said to the girls, 'Okay, let's rock!' And we started to play with a lot of energy. The young people really listened and even got up and started dancing! Our bassist, who had been the most reluctant to start playing, was the first one to admit she'd had the crowd all wrong. The outcome was really different from what we'd expected."

Christine had a happy childhood in France. Her mother played the piano, and Christine was given some elementary lessons in piano music theory, but what she really wanted to play was guitar. When she was seven or eight she finally got one, but it was a toy. Nonetheless she played it, fantasizing about being a singer and guitarist like Georges Brassens and the other French singers she idolized.

When her parents realized she was serious, she got a classical guitar and started taking lessons. "I really loved my first teacher," says Christine. "She gave me a passion for the guitar. After that I had another teacher, a man, and I really loved him, too." She would go to her guitar lesson an hour early to listen to

the other students and would also stay a little longer after her lesson. One day she sang her teacher a song she'd written.

"That's good!" he said. "Bring me another one next week!"

The rest is gypsy jazz history.

"I remember one show I did with Les Imposteures in Quebec City at Le Festival de Jazz in 2007. It was a huge audience, and we really gave a good show. When I got off the stage I said, 'Wow, that was wonderful. That's what I want to do with my life!'"

Knowing the Score

Tassan is an electrical engineer, a seemingly incongruous parallel career for an acoustic guitarist, but even more surprising is that someone could have two such demanding callings. Engineering training alone is grueling enough to plough under even the best minds and leave them for dead, but adding to that the training required for jazz guitar is hard to imagine.

Five years of classical training were a great foundation, but Christine really wanted to sing and play improvisatory jazz.

"The switch was difficult because when you learn a classical instrument, you just play the score—you really don't know how the score works. For jazz you really need to know the chords for the harmonies and to improvise. Another difference is rhythm; in classical music you increase and decrease the tempo in prescribed ways. But in jazz you have to really feel the inside rhythm of a piece and do that while working with other people in a group. How you phrase it is totally different from classical music."

Every member of Les Imposteures is female. Was this intentional? "Not really," says Christine. "I really like working with male musicians, too. It just happened because we were three friends, but then we actively sought a fourth female member so it could be a women's band. Then it became a little bit political because there are very few women instrumentalists playing jazz, and even fewer playing gypsy jazz."

Where are Les Imposteures headed after the Montreal Jazz Fest? Two more shows for the summer and then a performance in Tacoma, Washington, then Newfoundland. Christine is also doing a teaching gig at a tango music camp in the United States.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

"[When] you learn a classical instrument, you just play the score—you really don't know how the score works. For jazz you really need to know the chords for the harmonies and to improvise. Another difference is rhythm; in classical music you increase and decrease the tempo in prescribed ways. But in jazz you have to really feel the inside rhythm of a piece and do that while working with other people in a group. How you phrase it is totally different from classical music."

Christine Tassan

~ Dysfunctional Love Languages in American Politics ~

THE "MOMMIE-DEAREST-KNOWS-BEST" LOVE LANGUAGE



I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO DO WHAT WAS BEST FOR THE NATION.

THE LOVE LANGUAGE OF DEFLECTION

I DID NOT HAVE SEX WITH THAT WOMAN. HEY! LET'S GO DROP SOME BOMBS!



MACHIAVELLIAN LOVE LANGUAGE



THESE ARE ENEMY COMBATANTS. THEY DON'T QUALIFY FOR PRISONER-OF-WAR STATUS.

TWO-FACED LOVE LANGUAGE

WE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN EGYPT.





Too Soon

There's just no pleasing some people. In Alberta we were despairing of ever seeing the sun again or having the mercury climb higher than the mid-teens. Now, as we sizzle through the first few days of a forecasted prolonged heat wave, many of us are moaning about that.

Without air conditioning, the activities of daily living become more difficult. Yet again we dream about a retrofit system for next year.

In the meantime there are challenges, whether you're indoors or out. Cooking becomes a bigger chore. Reaching for ice cream treats, tropical drinks, and beer adds pounds without nutrients. Using the oven is lunacy. Sleep is disturbed and fitful. Heat and humidity sap energy and wreck havoc with hairdos. Careless application of sunscreen is revealed through painful lobster-red designs across bodies. Warnings about melanoma multiply.

Staying hydrated is a challenge. Heatstroke is a possibility. Abrupt changes from sweltering outside temps to icy air-conditioned stores or cars can adversely affect the body as well.

Why are we so perverse? Why do we want the opposite of what we have? Beats me, but it's true in more than just matters of weather. We want curly hair when God made ours poker-straight. We want to be shorter or taller than we are. Maybe our self-loathing extends to skin colour and ethnicity. We hate our freckles, wide hips, legs, boobs. We want to be more or less than we are.

A compelling [video](#) showing a forensic artist sketching women's faces based on self-description is the latest attempt by Dove to get us to realign our thinking and redefine beauty. It's just one more reminder that joy is in acceptance.

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude à la Oprah Winfrey is another. Seeking and cherishing moments of happiness—big and small—is the message of books like Gretchen Rubin's *The Happiness Project* or Neil Pasricha's *The Book of Awesome*.

Together these small acts of awareness and attitude adjustment can make the difference between a life of mini-moments of peace and joy and an existence of petty irritation and discontented yearning.

So the next time we're tempted to complain about our lopsided ledger sheet (either at the bank or the big life one), we need to stop a moment and reassess. Is there truly anyone in the world we'd want to trade places with? Is there a life worth living that doesn't include some heat waves and ice storms, some losses and wins, some setbacks and lucky breaks?

Will complaining about the temperature or our wrinkles change either one? Or should we count our blessings that we haven't succumbed to the tornadoes, floods, tsunamis, and killer heat waves devastating some places? Is a long life of wrinkles preferable to a life cut short by disease or tragedy?

Today I choose happiness and acceptance of what is—hot, cold, imperfect, cellulite, fleeting. Because too soon it'll all be gone, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is [Lucky Dog](#). Visit her [website](#) or follow her on Twitter [@anakawrites](#).

CALGARY FLOOD UPDATE

AUSU and *The Voice Magazine* are deeply concerned about the flooding situation in Calgary and surrounding areas. Calgary has the single highest population of AU students anywhere, and AUSU estimates that close to 20 per cent of our total membership lives in areas affected by flood conditions (including students in Canmore, High River, and other ravaged areas).

Assistance: We want to hear from everyone affected by the floods so we can assess needs and make sure we're helping where we can. There will be computer bursaries for those who have lost all, and we're currently planning other relief measures to help ensure students from flooded areas can stay on track with their studies. Email ausu@ausu.org and give us your contact info and status when you are able!

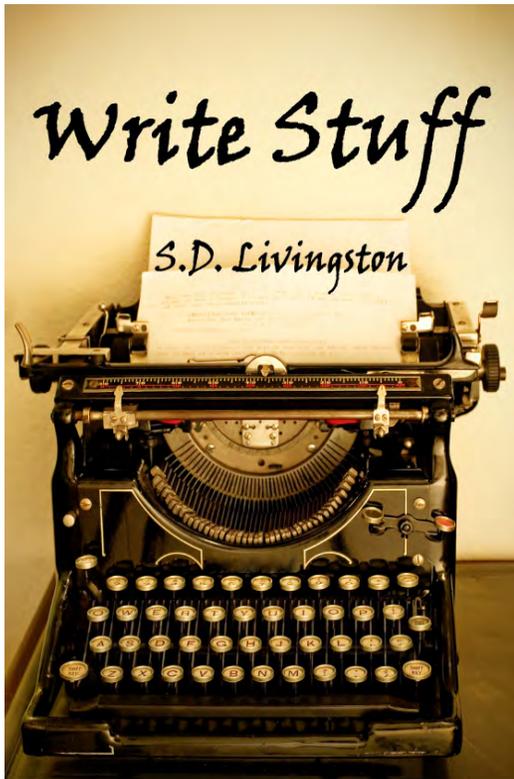
Additionally, assistance may be available to AU students who have lost their course materials. Contact AU at 1.800.788.9041 ext. 6366 for further information.

AU Calgary: AU Calgary remains closed because of the flooding emergency. City officials have restricted access to parts of the downtown core, including the south campus of Bow Valley College, where AU's exam centres are located.

Due to the ongoing power outage at the BVC south campus building, phone service is unavailable for AU's Calgary location.

While we remain unable to return to regular AU Calgary facilities, AU has secured temporary space at the University of Calgary's downtown campus at 906 - 8 Avenue, SW. Students who had exams scheduled at our AU Calgary location from June 21 - June 28 can expect to be contacted by phone and email (starting June 28) regarding an alternate write date/time.





The Teller or the Tale?

Ever since Paula Deen's first cookbook hit the shelves, the Southern celeb's recipes have been raising blood sugar and cholesterol. Now, her very public problems are raising something else: an interesting question about where to draw the line between an author and her work. Should we judge a book's merit by its author's morality?

Deen's downfall began with a lawsuit by a former employee, Lisa T. Jackson, who was a manager at one of her restaurants. In March 2012, Jackson filed a workplace-discrimination suit that charged Deen with, among other things, having used racist language.

In her deposition, Deen "admitted to using racist language, and tolerating racist jokes in one of her restaurants," as *The New York Times* [reports](#). Several major brands, including Sears, The Food Network, Walmart, and Caesars Entertainment, have since

cancelled their contracts with the celebrity chef.

And on June 28, Random House announced that it was cancelling publication of Deen's latest cookbook--a book that had already become an Amazon number one bestseller thanks to pre-orders. At the same time, the publisher also announced the cancellation of its five-book deal with Deen.

Obviously, racist, sexist, and other offensive language should not be tolerated. It's understandable that Random House (and the other brands involved) would want to distance themselves from Deen. But would this story play out differently if Deen had written a brilliant piece of literature instead of a cookbook?

Suppose, for instance, that her renown was based on thought-provoking novels that had made their way on to high school curricula instead of kitchen counters. Should an author's personal views or language affect the value of—and our respect for—their positive artistic contributions?

The question isn't about how our collective disapproval affects the author. After all, countless public figures, from politicians to sports stars, have been caught with their moral pants down, in everything from sex scandals to thievery in the billions. We shake our collective heads, and the miscreant makes a tearful apology and falls off the radar long enough to get a new PR team, then launches a successful comeback career.

The question is, do an author's moral failings dilute any virtue that might exist for us in his work? And if so, is there an expiration date of sorts—a period that must elapse before we can extol a book's virtues while ignoring the real-life failings of its author?

One example that springs to mind is Kingsley Amis. As the *New York Review of Books* [notes](#), Amis was "widely regarded as one of the greatest satirical writers of the twentieth century." He received the Booker

Prize in 1986 and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1990. He was also known as an alcoholic, the author of misogynist books, and a man who spouted openly racist language, both at dinner parties and in interviews.

Plenty of other examples can be found among the authors of revered classics. The Betty Ford Center site notes that, according to one professor of psychiatry, “over 70 percent of the American writers who have won the Nobel Prize in Literature were alcoholics, including Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O’Neill, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was addicted to opium. Ayn Rand took amphetamines “at least once a day for 30-odd years.” William S. Burroughs was a heroin addict.

It would be easy to pass these addictions off as harmless in a modern context, since we’re talking about writers who, in several cases, lived centuries ago. But drugs still do massive harm to society today, from making the lone addict’s life hell to creating violent drug cartels that destroy thousands of innocent lives in their paths. Knowing the addictions these authors had, should we draw a moral line and forbid teaching their now-classic works in high school or university?

None of this earns Paula Deen a pass for her racist comments. Not even close. But her current trials serve to highlight the exceptions we make, and the faults we’ll happily overlook, when there’s something in it for us besides a butter-filled recipe.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her website for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

DID YOU KNOW?

Convocation



Here at *The Voice Magazine* we’d like to extend our heartiest congratulations to all new graduates! We wish you all the best as you take the next step in your educational or professional journey.

If you were unable to attend Convocation or your graduation is still far off and you want a preview of your own big day, Athabasca University’s Convocation page is a good source of information about Convocation weekend.

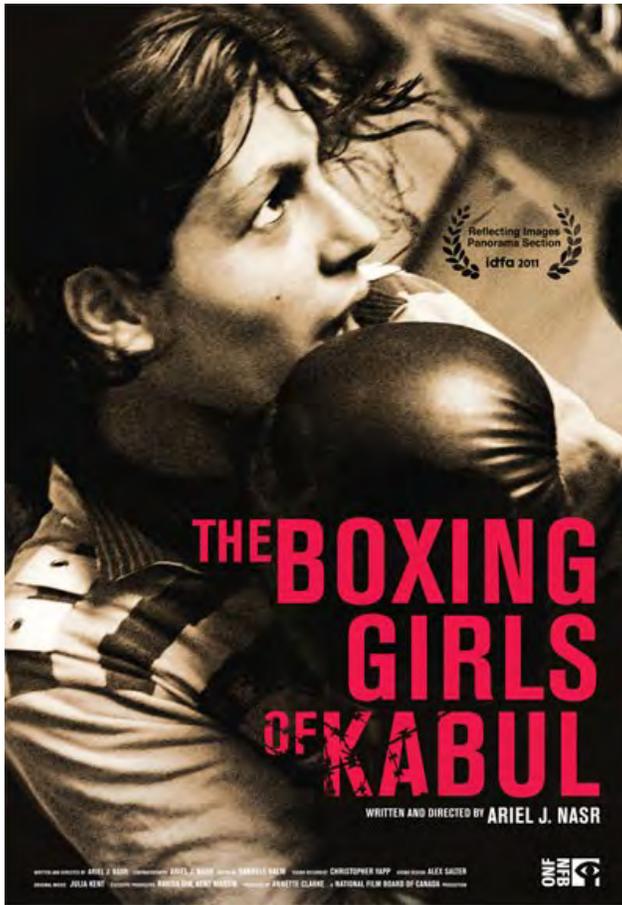
Although videos from the 2013 ceremonies are not yet available, you can access photo galleries and video coverage from past years.

If you attended Convocation this year, whether in person or virtually, we want to hear from you! Contact us at voice@voicemagazine.org for further details.

And look for our continuing *Voice* coverage of Convocation this month. We’ll have photos, addresses from graduates, and more!

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Film: *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*

Director: Ariel Nasr

Producer: Annette Clarke for the National Film Board of Canada

Genre: Documentary

"Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights, and nothing less."

Susan B. Anthony

The Female Dilemma, Writ Large

The Afghan girls train in a compound where women were once publicly flogged, stoned, and hung; now, their fancy footwork and left hooks have become a means of redeeming the travesty of injustice that haunts the space.

Spectator sports have a political and cultural significance riding on their status as simple amusements, and boxing is one sport whose cultural significance may be the most salient of all and at the same time the most variable, its meanings shifting from nation to nation and up and down the social ladder.

Champions tend to come from whichever group happens to be the most oppressed at the moment; and from social classes who can't afford the luxury of snubbing fistfights as a way to cope with an absence of justice in their environment. As one climbs the social ladder and self-defense becomes less necessary, boxing seems less glamorous and more low-class, nasty, and brutish. As one continues to climb, somehow the point is lost that it's all about the struggle against chaos.

The Boxing Girls of Kabul is a careful study of the conditions necessary for success and empowerment in a grossly unfair world. Despite the appeal of hero stories, in our gut we know that pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps can be physically impossible, and that those who overcome great obstacles have generally met with either extraordinary luck or with someone in a superior position willing to help them up. Yes, positive thinking has power, but this power is contingent on a minimum of adequate conditions.

White-knuckled determination seems to be an important component for succeeding at something difficult, and this is one thing these girls don't lack. Not only do they wish to box as a sport, they want to go to the top and they want to win every fight. They devote their entire lives to this goal and avail

themselves of every meagre resource available. They're bitterly disappointed if they don't win.

So which conditions were lacking in the case of this extraordinary group of girls and their highly commendable coach?

Material Support

Without the right logistics, the troops perish before they reach the battlefield. In this case, the coach, an amazing former Olympic boxer with the patience of Job and a formidable commitment to women's rights, nonetheless lacks the material resources essential for giving these athletes a world-class preparation for the Olympics.

“One factor that can make or break you is fear for your own survival. Having nothing to lose and being in danger of dying if you don't succeed can be a powerful impetus. But knowing that pursuing a goal can have you killed gives you just enough hesitancy to jeopardize your momentum.”

Safety

One factor that can make or break you is fear for your own survival. Having nothing to lose and being in danger of dying if you don't succeed can be a powerful impetus. But knowing that pursuing a goal can have you killed gives you just enough hesitancy to jeopardize your momentum.

As the girls on the Kabul boxing team walk to school or to the gym, members of the Taliban threaten them with kidnapping and death. In their communities, Islamists who believe that women and girls should not leave their homes, get educated, or participate in sports scold them every day. The girls' brothers hide the fact that their sisters are Olympic contenders—if their buddies knew, they would tease them mercilessly.

The Encouragement of a Supportive Social Network

If you know that someone in your circle is rooting for you, it's easy to ignore the naysayers. But aside from a few beams of light (one father, for example, who tells his daughter she can do whatever a boy can do), the boxers are surrounded by family members telling them they're doing the wrong thing. When they shop for clothes for their trip, they tell a shopkeeper they're going to the Olympics; to which he replies, “You won't win.” One girl retorts with a brave smile, “We will win! And when we tell them we bought these blouses at your shop, you'll get more business!” But the damage is done.

Even the girls themselves never waste an opportunity to scold each other for mistakes. Given their context, we shouldn't be surprised; how can they be supportive of each other within a society that doesn't support them, that actively threatens and oppresses them?

This last condition may actually be the most vital. Female solidarity is a central factor in female empowerment, as was learned in the slow shift from early to postmodern feminism, which recognizes multiple oppressions for women who are also members of marginalized groups.

The mother of one of the girls remarks that sometimes girls go into sports because they don't want to

marry, and thus boxing becomes a kind of surrogate husband. “Some men beat their wives,” she jokes, “so why not make a career of it?” It’s a grim reminder that what Afghan women and girls face on the streets of Kabul is endemic to the North American home. We really are all in this together.

The Boxing Girls of Kabul manifests six of the Mindful Bard’s criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it’s about attainment of the true self; 3) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 5) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Civil War

This week marks the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, a key point in the US Civil War. But what kind of meaning does it hold for Canadians? Plenty; though it’s not common knowledge, a number of Canadians fought and distinguished themselves in both the Union and Confederate armies, and the Civil War itself may have been one of the factors pushing Canada toward nationhood. Read through these links for a glimpse of history you may have never learned:

Wrapping It Up

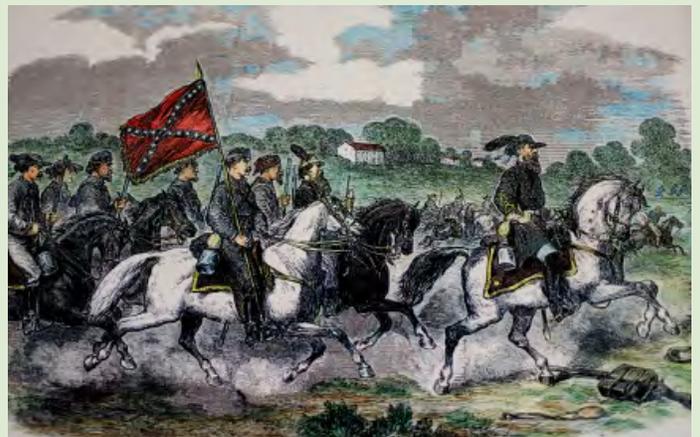
For a crash course in Canada’s role in the Civil War (and vice versa), this *Toronto Star* article, which also interviews Canadian historian and author John Boyko, is a good first bet.

Spy Girl

Sarah Emma Edmonds has quite a tale to tell—and she wrote a book about it. The Canadian woman, born in the Maritimes, joined the Union Army in 1861, disguised as a man. Though her identity wasn’t revealed for two decades, her skills in disguise and deception served her well as a Union spy behind Confederate lines. Her autobiography, *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army*, is a fascinating historical document and is accessible online through the University of Michigan.

Digging Deeper

Are you keen to dig a little deeper? The Canada Civil War Association is an online “Roundtable . . . dedicated to the study of the American Civil War and Canada’s role in the great conflict.” With 700 contributors so far, and everything ranging from historical documents to theories to research to links, there’s a wealth of information for the casual or serious historian.



AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. *The Voice* does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

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www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

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