

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear reader,

Gray is many things.

In both color and idea, it's a mix of black and white. It's that undefined in-between not fully wrong or right. It's the mark of experience when woven into hair and the finality of ashes that just lingers there. It's clouds warning us of a storm on its way and dense fog blocking us from seeing the day. It's the rocks on the ground and pebbles under streams. It's the shadow of something that's not what it seems.

It's armor, it's chains, it's concrete and stone. It's our sentiment when we're feeling alone. It's silver, it's platinum and even white gold. It's the coat on our dog when he's gotten old. It's part of our spine and all of our brain. It's the fogged-up windows when we look out at rain. It's metal and medals and trophies and tin. It's the line we walk on between good and sin. It's the fur on some mammals and scales on some fish. It's the bricks on the well that swallows our wish.

Whether billows of smoke or classic TV, the moon's bumpy surface or dull cutlery, a rich man's rings or a poor man's tatters, gray is all around us and it matters.

CMWahl

Table of Contents

The Silver Lining 2

Angusta Esports: 4

Dominating the Game

Third Spaces 8

The sole of personality 12

Wingspan 16

Tongue-tied 18

Connecting dots 18

Lines 19

The Silver Liming

By Denaisha M. Cain

The National Library of

The National Library of Scotland defines gray as "a [color] intermediate between black and white, as of ashes or lead... without interest or character; dull and nondescript."

One of the many signs of aging is gray hair. Transitioning to gray is a journey and everyone's is different. Some may see it as an evolution or a symbol of a new confidant. For many others, it becomes

as an evolution or a symbol of a new confidant. For many others, it becomes a newfound insecurity. Many people experience a range of emotions as they see their first gray hairs.

"[1] don't think about it too much," said David Bulla, the silver-haired chair of the AU communication department.

Many societies place a high value on youth and associate youthfulness with beauty, energy and opportunity. Individuals, who notice gray hair as they age are often taken by surprise.
"I thought that it was lint or something that had gotten in my head from my shirt," said mother and daycare teacher Malika Holder.

The scientific terms for "going gray" are canities or achromotrichia. It is a naturally occurring process. As we get older, melanocytes, or skin cells that produce pigment, decrease in number and produce less melanin, causing silver-like gray hair.

Some embrace gray hair

hair.

Some embrace gray hair as a sign of maturity or confidence, or as a shift into a new stage of life. Others find it challenging and distressing as they navigate their relationship with aging.

Studies show that most

Studies show that most women see going gray as unattractive and many try to hide or cover it. For men, however, going gray is usually seen as attractive and shows signs of wisdom and success.

Though going gray comes with age, there are rare occasions when people go gray early. This can cause low self-esteem among younger-aged individuals who often cover up their graying hair. Deciding what to do with gray hair is a battle that most people will face. ple will face.



The decision to embrace it, color it or cut it is considered by many. Some find themselves scurrying to the salon to get the first gray strand covered, experimenting styles or plucking them out. Some also say stress causes a great deal of gray hairs. hairs.

hairs.
"When I want to feel good about it," Bulla said,
"I think, 'hey, you look like you might know a few things. Yeah, maybe having gray makes you [look] dignified."
The transparance of gray.

In transparency of gray hair gives it a glass-like appearance and makes it extremely sensitive to sunrays, which can give it a yellow look. Coarseness and dryness are common when it comes to gray hair, so it is important to use good products.

"You definitely want to find a good purple sham-poo," said master cosme-tologist Bethany Simpson. tologist Bethany Simpson.
"Using purple shampoo
neutralizes those yellow
brassy tones and gives it
that silver cool tone."
Gray hair is sensitive
because it lacks density,
shine and the pigment it
once had.

once had.

"I always use 20-volume developer when doing low lights and highlights

low lights and highinghts because the [gray] cuticle is tight," said Simpson. Gray hair is more than just a physical change. In an article posted on

Healthday.com, Dr. Rob-ert Priedt stated research suggests race plays a role in when and how your hair goes gray.

"The average ages are the mid-thirties for whites," he said, "late thirties for Asian people, and mid-forties for Black people.

all over the media. The process and journey take patience, but once fully gray, it becomes a symbol of wisdom and long life. Celebrities like Morgan Freeman, Sarah Jessica Parker, Anderson Cooper, Whoopi Goldberg, and many more gracefully flaunt their grays.



Gray is not just a representation of hair. It can also make a statement on whether one will follow society's expectations by covering it or let the gray flourish and embrace the hyperder measure of life.

broader meaning of life.
Embracing the gray is
Holder's new motto. She
sees her gray strands as
not just hair but as part

not just hair but as part of her, and she's content with the process. Today, many individuals embrace the gray. Some-thing that was once not heavily represented is now

From red carpets to magazine covers to movie screens, there has been a cultural shift toward celebrating natural beauty, including gray hair. It's a visible reminder of life's journey and a testament to the experiences, challenges and joys that have shaped each person.

> "Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life." -Proverbs 16:31

2 · Phoenix

024 • :

Augusta Esports: Dominating the Game Story and photos by Jaxon Garner

As collegiate athletics evolve to incorporate emerging trends, Augusta University is at the forefront of embracing the rise of esports, offering students innovative avenues to excel in digital competition. Founded in 2019, AU's esports team has quickly gained recognition, both on campus and nationally, as it transforms the way students engage with competitive gaming.

A New Era of Competition



Esports at AU is more than just a Esports at AU is more than just a pastime; it's a fully-fledged program that emphasizes teamwork, strategy and skill development. Led by General Manager Noah Bowers, the team has built a reputation for excellence, competing across a variety of propuler games, including variety of popular games, including "Rocket League," "Valorant," "Overwatch," and "League of

The program has recently strengthened its competitive edge with the addition of Zack Pye, head coach of the Rocket League team and one of its standout players. Known in the gaming world as "realpyeguy," Pye brings a unique perspective to the AU esports program, having previously played college football at Berry College.

"I've been able to bring the discipline and teamwork from the field into my approach to coaching 'Rocket League. -Zack Pye, Rocket League HC



The Growth of Esports at Augusta University

In the past year, Augusta University's esports program has seen remarkable growth and engagement among students. Since its resurgence in 2023, the team's Discord server, a primary communication hub, has expanded dramatically from 20 to over 300 members. This surge reflects the increasing interest in esports as well as the community spirit cultivated within the program. Additionally, the program has significantly increased its varsity rosters from two to seven, demonstrating its commitment to providing opportunities for more students to participate.

> from all walks of life to come together and inspiring to see how gaming can unite people -Noah Bowers, AU Esports GM

Bowers attributes the rise in esports popularity to the accessibility of gaming, both in Augusta and globally, and to the strong community it fosters

"Anyone who wants to play video games can do it in today's world," he said. "The communities that are really passionate about certain games are accepting of almost everyone, which makes it easier for new players to jump in and feel welcomed."

Unlike traditional sports, esports has fewer barriers to entry. Conventional sports often require costly equipment, access to practice facilities and extensive coaching, which can be challenging for students and aspiring players to secure. In contrast, gaming has grown largely because almost everyone has access to a device for mobile games, which are increasingly played professionally, and platforms like YouTube and Twitch, which allow fans to watch their favorite gamers in

"With video games, all you need is one device," Bowers explained. "Once you have that, you have access to an entire community in the palm of your hands. This level of accessibility is a game changer.'



4 • Phoenix

Fall 2024 • 5

What Separates Esports from Traditional Sports?

Recruiting

When it comes to traditional NCAA sports like football and basketball, programs are built on recruitment, with coaches scouting high schools and investing heavily in finding and developing talent. This recruitment process involves evaluating athletes' physical skills, statistics and commitment to demanding training schedules.

In contrast, esports often sees players from diverse backgrounds join teams based solely on skill, without the structured recruitment pipelines found in traditional sports. The accessibility of esports allows talent to emerge naturally from within the community, cultivating a different kind of competitive atmosphere that prioritizes merit over conventional pathways.

"Augusta University esports isn't at the same level as the AU men's basketball team," said Bowers, "where they can reach out to almost any player in the world."

"We aren't skimming through the top leaderboards and asking the highest-ranked players to come play at AU. Eventually, that will hopefully be the case, but right now we are dependent on word of mouth and students showing up.' -Noah Bowers, AU Esports GM

Funding

While athletics at AU are primarily funded by student athletic fees, esports operates under a different structure. The esports program is funded mainly through university support under Campus Recreation and Cyber Innovation.

Unlike traditional sports, the esports program serves multiple purposes beyond gaming. It provides students with hands-on opportunities in broadcasting, graphic design, animation and event operations, allowing them to gain valuable practical experience in these fields while pursuing their passion for

In a significant investment, AU recently unveiled a new esports arena in the Hull McKnight Building at the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center. This state-of-the-art arena is equipped with 12 high-spec Alienware desktop computers, designed to meet the demands of competitive gaming. Additionally, last spring, the program added three racing simulators to the JSAC game room, enhancing the resources available to AU's racing sim teams and broadening the range of esports experiences offered.

Although the esports program may not yet rival traditional athletics in scale, its funding and university support continue to grow rapidly, reflecting the increasing importance of esports within the academic and athletic landscape.



Spectating



Most AU athletic events are live-streamed by the Most AU athletic events are live-streamed by the Peach Belt Conference with a full production team, providing a polished viewing experience similar to what you might see during college football on a Saturday afternoon. However, the esports program utilizes its own Twitch account, "AugustaUniversity_Esports," for live-streaming, run by students and staff. The account currently has 118 followers with a significant prottion of currently has 118 followers, with a significant portion of its viewers being casual participants who do not formally follow the channel.

Twitch is a live-streaming platform where users can watch others play video games, chat in real-time and broadcast their gameplay. It functions like a live TV channel for gaming, also featuring streams of music, art and other activities. Viewers can interact with streamers through a chat window, creating a dynamic and engaging social experience focused on gaming and community.

Looking Forward

With a busy season of tournaments and championships ahead, AU esports is focused on solidifying its reputation as one of the premier

esports programs in the region.
"We want to become the headquarters for all things esports in the Southeast," Bowers said. "Our prime location and the resources available to us position us to be the biggest program around, and we are committed to making that a reality."

committed to making that a reality."

From securing titles to fostering an inclusive campus community, Augusta University esports exemplifies the evolution of competitive gaming at the collegiate level. As more students find inspiration in esports, AU remains at the cutting edge of this exciting field, led by passionate talents like Bowers and Pye, whose journeys continue to redefine what it means to be a collegiate athlete in the digital era. the digital era.



6 • Phoenix

THIRD SPACES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY HOLLY ALISA PORTERFIELD

College life is often described as a whirlwind of academic opportunities, late-night assignments and endless coffee

Augusta University students Augusta University students have access to a wide range of resources and spaces designed to transform the college experience into something truly meaningful.

truly meaningful.

Academic advisor Stephanie
Nicholson emphasized the
broader impact of students
getting involved on campus.

"Not only does it enhance
your academics," she said, "it
also enhances other aspects
of your life, like social and...
overall self-care and mental
health."

Quiet corners designated for

Quiet corners designated for Quiet corners designated for studying or student organi-zations are examples of third spaces that help bridge the gap between campus life and home. They offer students a much-needed respite to fos-ter social connection, facilitate personal development and provide them a platform for creative expression. Such en-vironments are an important vironments are an important and often overlooked part of college life that enhances the experience by encouraging collaboration and innovation

among peers.

But what is the real day-to-day experience like on the Summerville campus? Only students can reveal the true essence of student life.

Robert George began study-ing music education at AU in

2018. Referring to the Fine Arts Center as "the music building," George became more familiar with its walls

more familiar with its walls over time and came to consid-er it a personal sanctuary. Nestled within the Summer-ville campus, the Fine Arts Center cultivates a lifestyle and community for music ma-jors that many other students overlook. overlook. George's connection to the

George's connection to the Fine Arts Center began long before he became a student. Even in middle school, he knew where his passion for music would take him. "T've known that I was going

"I've known that I was going to be a music education major since I was in like, sixth grade," he said.

George described himself as "really, really young" when he discovered theater. He was going through his mother's old CDs and found one from "Phantom of the Opera," a musical which spurred his love for music.

Little did he know, the Fine Arts Center would become more than just a place to study and practice, it would also be where George met someone very special: his future wife. Tied together by their mutual love for this iconic musical, for George and his fiancée, mu-George and his fiancée, mu-sic isn't just a shared passion, it's a key part of their love sto-

ry.
One of George's most memorable moments was his senior recital, where he

performed the song "All I Ask of You" from "Phantom of the Opera" with his fiancée. The performance held personal significance for both of them. "The musical... is the reason that both of us got into singing in the first place," he said. "It's a love song, so we decided to sing it on my recital." Beyond performances, the Fine Arts Center serves as a hub for students in the music department to connect and

department to connect and support one another. Between classes, George and his peers fill the common areas with a sense of community by shar-ing laughs, helping each other with homeople and doing

ing laughs, helping each other with homework and doing what he calls "college student shenanigans."

"You could be studying on your own," he said, "and then five other people could be like, 'Oh, well, I have to lead the property of the company of the college of help each other, especially if somebody doesn't understand something."

something."

For music majors, the road to graduation can be particularly challenging due to the program's demands, and students in the department often face disbelief about the hardships and challenges of the program. Scheduling conflicts or missing or failing conflicts or missing or failing conflicts, or missing or failing core classes, can sometimes delay graduation by a year because of the limited because of the limi availability of some classes.



Yet despite these challenges, George sees the Fine Arts Center as a place where musicians and artists at AU can create lasting friendships, share futures and create memories. Whether through recitals, study sessions or shared laughter over a few "shenanigans," the Fine Arts Center encompasses the core of George's college experience; one note, one performance and one conversation at a time.

Augusta University also helps cultivate club engagement and success across campus through social media posts, informative websites and promotional events that encourage student

vents that encourage student

participation. By highlight-ing various clubs and their activities, the university helps to create a supportive community and valuable con-nections among students where they can feel a true sense of belonging. The club called "She Blossoms On Campus" encourages col-

The club called "She Blossoms On Campus" encourages college women to discover and pursue their passions through various meetings and events. Dedicated to empowering, connecting and supporting female students, She Blossoms has become a sanctuary for female students who seek friendship, inspiration, belonging and self-discovery.

Cerise Pollard, a nursing major at Augusta University who also works part-time, takes part in various student organizations and is the current president of She Blossoms. Pollard has held the position for almost a year, having joined She Blossoms as a member in 2022 after transferring to AU from Albany State.

hain State.

"Albany State was definitely just different for me," said Pollard. "I was in my dorm for the most part. I went to class, I went to the [cafeteria] and I went to my dorm. I guess the environment there wasn't as welcoming for me.



She Blossoms members strive to promote sisterhood, self-identity and volunteerism among female students through event planning, guest speakers and interactive meetings focused on self-care and building connections.

"We try to have... speakers come to [teach] about self-care; we talk about hair as well, just loving yourself and just finding your identity," said Pollard.

For many members, these events have been a reminder that connecting with others is an important step to managing the demands of college life.

Some students might hesitate to commit to a club because

Some students might hesitate to commit to a club because of the potential to stretch out their schedule too thin between classes, social life and club duties, or they may not know where to start. However, others feel that student organizations are not about taking on another obligation but are instead about finding a place to connect with like-minded individuals. Friends who can offer advice, stress relief and a

individuals. Friends who can offer advice, stress relief and a sense of balance.

Pollard said, "As president of an organization, it gets a little overwhelming sometimes."

She explained that having a team that can be relied on helps to take away the stress. Pollard said that she never forgets that she has an entire club full of members who are there with her every step of the way when planning and organizing events.

She Blossoms also invites guest speakers, conducts fundraisers and holds interactive meetings that focus on embodying the club's mission of creating sisterhood.

Continuing to bring its mission to life by providing a safe and welcoming environment to AU students, clubs such as She Blossoms help to provide the steppingstone needed for students to find their place.

For students struggling to start getting involved in campus activities, Nicholson recommended beginning with something that you like to do, and if it's not here on campus, create it."

To Pollard, She Blossoms is more than just a club on campus; it's a second home for many female students navigating the challenges of college life, and its members continue to make a lasting impact on the community.

While Augusta University offers a wide range of opportunities to its students during their time on campus, there is always room for

opportunities to its students during their time on campus, there is always room for improvement. Improving student engagement can start with understanding the challenges students face and implementing creative outreach situations to speak directly to them.

For some, attending college means that they are away from home for the first time and according to Nicholson, "it [can] be a lonely thing." It is important to provide students with small, achievable steps they can take to explore their interests.

"Propose a challenge," said Nicholson, "like attending at

least two activities a semes-

She stated this will help stu-dents further connect to their campuses.

dents further connect to their campuses.

Reaching out to the student body is becoming more important with the rise in online classes and the decrease of personal interaction among students on campus. While Pollard believes the university's current method of communication on bulletin boards and bathroom stall doors is adequate, she also feels there is a need for further outreach to the student body, especially in Allgood Hall.

Ultimately, she reminded people that "we're all students at the end of the day" and fostering a sense of a shared community means utilizing all potential third spaces on campus.

community means utilizing all potential third spaces on campus.

These areas are more than just spaces; they are vital bridges that connect student interest to their degree pathway. These environments provide a place for students from all walks of life to settle into a place where they can feel as if they belong.

By embracing third spaces and the opportunities they provide, AU students can transform their college experience into one that leads to success after graduation through social connection, mental well-being and skills learned along the way. Students like Robert George and Cerise Pollard prove that finding and creating a place to call a second home is key to making the most out of the college journey.

"Whatever it is you need"

college journey.
"Whatever it is you need," said Nicholson, "you've paid for it. Use it!"

10 • Phoenix Fall 2024 • 11

The Sole of Personality

STORY AND PHOTOS ByAbby Applemen



Freshman Fatima Soto is a current kinesiology major hoping to one day become a pediatrician, because of her love of working with kids.

Thinking several steps ahead, she stated, "I plan on going into premed so I'm doing a concentration in medical professions in hopes to get the requirements done."

Soto often wears lavender custom-made Converse Chuck Taylor All-Star shoes and stated her favorite color is

"Most people associate feelings with colors," said Soto, "and I feel







While many people select their shoes based on their outfit, Soto likes to base her outfits off her shoes because "it makes them stand out more." She also owns another pair of Converse in pink with silver hearts.

Soto stated her friends would describe her as fun, kind and friendly, tending to put others before herself. Due to her quiet and introverted personality, she feels that her shoes are a way for people to get to know her.

She said, "I feel like when people get to know me, I become less shy and quiet."

Outside of academics, Soto enjoys going out with friends. She is an avid nature-lover who enjoys being outside and going hiking. Her personal goals include attending or finding out more about medical clubs on campus.

Soto is currently participating in the Treehouse Book Club, where they are focused on the book "Atomic Habits," written by author James





According to David Batts, his friends would describe him as "a good guy to be around" who is laid back and always has a smile on his face. Batts is a sophomore communication major at Augusta University with an interest in pursuing sports broadcasting in the future.

When asked why he wanted to be a communication major, he said, "A lot of people told me that I should do something with my

Batt's interest in sports broadcasting stems from his love for several sports. The sport that started it all was football. He began playing football around the age of two.

"Football was my first love," he said.

整心

Now, he likes to play basketball in his free time and competes in Silver (II)

哪的

Batts is regularly seen wearing Nike Air Jordan sneakers. While he stated he did not look up to Michael Jordan as a role model, he said if given the chance to ever meet LeBron James, he would take that opportunity in a

Batts described himself as "a LeBron type of guy." He said, "You can't wear LeBrons with [an outfit]; you got to hoop in them. Jordans you can't hoop in."



Batts tries to get pairs that many people do not have because he likes to stand out from the crowd. He makes decisions based on fashion, trends and social media, while also utilizing online shopping websites such as GOAT and StockX to browse through shoes that might interest him.





FATIMA SOTO





Ogden's formal cowboy boots are an everyday staple. With a love for country style, she feels comfortable and able to work in them. She sometimes visits her cousins' farm in Virginia and helps with the horses, sheep and cows.

Aiming to earn a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Secondary Teacher Certification, Laura Ogden dreams of becoming a role model for younger students. Inspired by her teachers in elementary and middle school, she hopes to "help the younger generation and be a guide for them." These role models helped Ogden when she was struggling.

"If it weren't for those teachers," she said, "I probably wouldn't be here today."

Ogden said her unwavering loyalty is a vital characteristic of who she is.

She said, "When you have my trust, I will literally do anything for you within reason. However, the second you lose that trust, I [will] never look at you the same again."



Ogden said that although she almost always wears cowboy boots, she does like to dress up and occasionally wears heels, "even though they kill me."



Emily Harris is a current nursing major with aspirations of becoming a labor and delivery nurse. She said she has "always wanted to work with babies," but is also considering becoming a NICU, or neonatal, nurse, ultrasound tech, or radiology tech in the future.



Harris described herself as "a fun person to be around" who loves to laugh while cracking jokes with her friends. She stated that since she is "a quiet, easy-going introvert," fashion is a way of expressing herself.

In a comfortable blue jumpsuit, she strutted around campus in fur boots. Like Batts, Harris utilizes the online website GOAT to shop for shoes.

Outside of college, Harris spends her time as a hair stylist.

She started out in high school and explained, "I started doing my hair in ninth grade."

She went on to help a friend by doing their hair too.

After posting her work, Harris stated, "Other people wanted me to do their hair. I got better at it over time."





14 • Phoenix

Fall 2024 • 1

EMILY HARRIS



TONGUE-TIED

BY FRANCESS PUJEH (Excerpt from "Wine Glass")

These days are silent.

The kind of silence that betrays our unwillingness to express to each other how grieving has consumed us whole. The kind that, more so, realfirms how far apart we've grown each day. We walk past each other silently, almost afraid a gaze into the other's eyes would expose the secret of how neither of us expected such a decorum to become of us.

I know you no longer look forward to Friday nights, when I wouldn't hesitate to share the couch with you. When I would lean into your arm, outstretched the split in the couch, and fall asleep in that position, head resting on your chest. Neither of us would have anticipated such coldness. Not in the years we had shared. Not in the year we became hysband and wife and Sia came into our lives. Not in the few years she shared with us. Not ever.

But remember when the days weren't tongue-tied and the 'nights echoed laughter that soon faded fint kisses as we barely made it from her room to ours? I let the question roant free in my head now, these nights when I walk through the door to our bedroom without my arms around your neck. You had insisted we tuck her in together ever since she was born, starting her first night at the

hospital. When she wasn't asleep before her bedtime, she would insist that you carry her on your back up the staircase... doing your best to keep a promise you had made even without her being awake enough to scold you if you hadn't?

You see, those days had gone by so fast, I don't remember taking a moment to catch my breath. I couldn't even if I wanted to. Because then each time, I would be compelled to remember how in those days, yet still before she was born, she was all you could dream of. Those days in high school. The many Saturday evenings we spent at James' house.

A best friend of yours, your close-knittedness gave you a kind of ownership of his home... I would have to bring my friend Lafi along. First he'd let us stay over for only a few hours after school and then all Saturday evenings. Him with Lafi in his room and you and I in the guest room. Your parents utrued a blind eye to your delayed home trips from school and overly frequent visits to your friend's house. And my mother, she was barely home enough to question my with reabours.

It was there in that guest room that I let your lips trace past my neck for the first

Fall 2024 • 17

CONNECTING DOTS

BY CHRIS FUSSELL

I have come a long way and have a lot to say, so listen closely to understand

Here I stand tall and proud, speaking of my truth

This version of me is more complete than yesterday, yet the picture is partially drawn

Come journey as I journal, detailing the path to becoming this man

Life was simple and happy in the days of my youth

Family and communal love was strong no matter in which house I'd gone

Even such strong support couldn't stop my youthful insecurities from making me feel less than

My rural upbringing was truly a blessing, and of that I am proof

Young me couldn't be convinced of that because it's all I had known

Urban kids' teasing was often, but it was something I did withstand

After graduation, friends parted ways, disappearing like a magician's poof
I didn't see a bright hometown future, so I went off to forge my own
I wanted more for myself than dirt roads and country sand
That led me to the Air Force, complete with training and a uniform to boot
Confidence grew as my urban experiences dispelled the previously unknown
When I left the service, it was time for me alone to stand

When I left the service, it was time for me alone to stand
I worked hard to live under my own, and not my mother's roof

Years later, that roof protected my newborn son, and under it many lessons he was shown

As a father and husband, it's important to provide for them and do what I can

I eventually came to appreciate the slowness of country living, right down to the pine tree root

Now, I marvel at the ripening fruits that my once dreaded country life has grown

That life guided my values, made me strong and made me proud to be pecan tan

The dots have been laid, and no point on this page is moot

The path to the next dot connects me to AU, where more seeds will be sewn











