

# Margarita Roldán's Impact

Read more on p. 11



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# BIRDING CLUB WORKS TO END BIRD COLLISIONS ON CAMPUS

The “Birding Club,” a new student organization, conducts research on campus to find the buildings causing the most bird collisions

by Kathryn Caudill  
Staff Writer

Photo of cardinal on campus  
by Jade Suszek

UNC Charlotte’s Birding Club is conducting research on which building on campus is the most dangerous in bird collisions. As defined by the club, bird collisions are when a bird collides with a building leading to serious injury or death.

The birding club is a relatively new organization to UNC Charlotte and became an official university organization in February 2022.

Chandler Horton, vice president of the birding club, and Hannah Partridge, treasurer, spoke with the Niner Times about their project.

“This project will help us gather robust data on bird collisions on campus that could be used in research later on,” said Partridge.

The club has been collecting data from 22 different “sites” on campus. A “site” is the equivalent of one side of a building.

Club members and urban-ecology students in the geology and earth science departments monitor these sites.

These students collect this information by walking around campus, looking along the sides of buildings for birds who have been injured or died. These walks are being conducted three times per week for 10 weeks. The club is nearing four weeks of data collection, and the entire data collection will last until mid-April.

“We hope to gather a large data set to be used in future research,” said Horton.

The data collected is in partnership with the American Bird Conservancy, an organization dedicated to conserving bird habitats in the Americas.

The data will indicate what caused the collision and what type of buildings are causing collisions on campus.

According to the American Bird Conservancy, bird collisions kill up to 1 billion birds each year in the United States. They also explain that birds cannot understand the concept of glass or windows as they do not learn the same visual cues as humans.

Birds hit glass as they find reflections of nature to be real, or they can see into the window and wish to pass through the building.

The American Bird Conservancy also states that most collisions happen during the day, and most occur on home windows or lower-level windows.

Once the building found to be the most dangerous is located, the birding club hopes to implement bird-friendly window techniques.

Horton and Partridge discussed many options in which the University could implement bird-friendly window techniques, including using ultraviolet LED light strips along the edges of the windows. These strips allow light to shine on the window and cast a reflection for the bird to see that glass is present.

Another option includes placing stickers on windows to indicate a flat surface ahead.

Future projects hosted by the birding club include providing additional birdhouses around campus. The club also wishes to host student interest-identification workshops to understand what other students might like to include in the club to “explore interests, whatever they may be,” said Horton.

Current interests being explored include bringing in birding professionals, participating in environmental advocacy and attending conservation events.

The birding club will be attending the Audubon Summit from April 21-24. The Summit is being hosted in Charlotte and will consist of workshops and field trips.

Field trips will vary from uptown, NoDa and UNC Charlotte’s Botanical Gardens at which birding, or bird watching and identifying, will take place.

Workshops will focus on advocacy, identification and conservation of birds.

There are scholarships available through the birding club for members to help pay for this three-day weekend excursion.

The birding club meets on the first Thursday of every month in the afternoon via Zoom, but they are hoping to have more monthly events.

As birders, the club also takes “bird walks” along Clarks Creek Nature Reserve. Birders work to notice birds from sight and sound. Typically, an expert from the Mecklenburg Audubon Society will walk slowly around the nature reserve with club members to build these skills. These walks usually last a few hours.

The club is open to new members, and the only requirement is “an interest in birds,” according to Partridge.

Horton added that there are many different components to birding ranging from research to conservation and advocacy, that can be explored through the club.

The club is currently creating a Niner Engage, but those interested should reach out via Instagram at @uncbirdingclub or email at chorto28@unc.edu or hpartrid@unc.edu to join or learn more about the club and their research.

“Hopefully, our research will make a difference,” said Horton.



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# WILLIAMS-WARREN CAMPAIGN RUNS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Jeremiah Williams and Abigail Warren are running together to encourage diversity, equity and inclusion on campus

*SGA is currently holding Spring 2022 elections. Voting will occur March 15-16, with results*

by Lorenza Medley  
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy  
of Abigail Warren

Jeremiah Williams, a third-year student, transferred to UNC Charlotte in spring 2020 and is majoring in political science and history. He joined SGA soon after and is currently the secretary for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In addition, he is on the Executive Leadership mock trial team and was a peer mentor in fall 2021.

Abigail Warren, a third-year, has different roles in SGA as a U-Cross senator, vice-chair for Internal Affairs and her role as attorney general last year. She also volunteers and mentors in the Teen Court program, where she helps with the rehabilitation process for juveniles in Charlotte and Gaston County.

*The following transcript has been edited and condensed.*

## Will you tell me a bit about yourselves?

**Williams:** I try to stay busy, and I'm super passionate about people. I think that's the center of everything I do. I walk into a room and think to myself, 'What's the most good I can do before I leave?' So that's been Student Government and trying to advocate for students and make student life better because it's hard being a college student.

**Warren:** When I started at Charlotte, I knew I wanted to advocate for the student body. Student Government gave me an outlet to do that. Within the community, I serve as a guardian ad litem [advocating] on behalf of foster care children in the Charlotte area. I'm passionate about making students at Charlotte feel like they're getting to experience campus life.

## Why are diversity, equity, and inclusion important to your platform?

**Williams:** I think DE&I is key to everything globally but specifically on campus. I think it's important that the student body president candidate—because they're on the board of trustees—are representing students when it comes to policy. At this high level, I think it's crucial for them to have some background, experience or proven interest in DE&I.

## How do you plan to reach out to students?

**Warren:** We've reached out to all [organizations], not just the top 10 you hear about, and we want to hear from them. We want them to know, as a small organization on campus, they still have a voice. We still want to find a way, next year, to allocate a certain amount of money through our funds to help them get funded because it is harder for small organizations on campus to get their name out there to have events. There [are] a lot of beneficial organizations that deserve to be heard on campus that not many people know about. We want to give them that outlet as well. So we've been reaching out to a lot of people, a lot of organizations and speaking to students as they walk by.

## How will you increase voter turnout this election?

**Warren:** As attorney general, I was head of elections. I saw the lack in voter turnout in the past years. Our biggest thing is spreading our outreach, letting students know that this is going on, like, 'This is your chance to put good leaders in leadership. [In] leadership that follows through.' I want the Charlotte community to know they have a chance to let their voice be heard, and they do have a say-so in who shares their voice with Charlotte.

## Any final thoughts you want to share with students?

**Williams:** I want people to leave this seeing our passion for students. I want people to see how genuine it is. I feel like a lot of times, people, unfortunately, have this perception that they only hear from the student government when it comes to elections. I can say I have aid invested in student organizations like Black Student Union, Asian Student Association, and other organizations and try to go to meetings as much as possible throughout this year because I care about the people in those organizations. I care about the people on the eBoard. But also from the student government side of

things, I want people to feel that Student Government isn't just there when we need something, when we need elections or when we need to pursue something.

**Warren:** I feel like students forget that we're students too. When we say 'We want to be your voice,' we're also our own voices because we're speaking

out for what we want as students too. That's a really big thing to us. We most definitely care, and we pour love and compassion into every single thing that we do. That's the biggest takeaway I want students to get: we're here for you. We're also here for ourselves. We're here for students, and we're here for the community.



# LARSON-OLUSESI CAMPAIGN RUNS ON PROGRESS, UNITY AND TRUST

Tatiyana Larson and Tife Olusesi hope to encourage more transparency and trust between administration and the student body announced on March 17. Below are features of the student body president/vice president campaigns.

by Lorenza Medley  
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy  
of Tife Olusesi

Tatiyana Larson, a fourth-year student at UNC Charlotte, is majoring in political science. Her dream of attending law school at Georgetown led her to join SGA. She served as sophomore class president in 2021, which led her to serve on the executive board as secretary for Student Affairs in spring 2022. She is

currently planning a Safety and Security Walk that focuses on finding hazards and working with Facilities Management to fix them.

Tife Olusesi, a third-year, is majoring in political science with a triple minor in criminal justice, legal studies and American studies. He started in SGA on the Organizational Ways and

Means Committee, where he approved clubs that wanted to become organizations. He later joined the Student Affairs Committee and became vice-chair, and is now chair of the committee.

*The following transcript has been edited and condensed.*

## Will you tell me a little bit about yourselves?

**Larson:** I interned for a political campaign my senior year of high school. It was the Dan McCready campaign for Congress that sparked my interest in politics and helping out in the community. I've [worked] with off-campus housing to ensure that our off-campus students feel included when they come to campus and that they're not isolated because they don't live on campus.

**Olusesi:** Student Government has been the thing I've been thinking about since I first got on campus. There was more to do with Black Lives Matter and the movement for empowering minorities. I founded the Cultural Unity Board, which aims to unite these voices on campus and create a platform for them to feel heard. Being a part of the community means something to me—to be able to hear what people of various ethnicities and backgrounds feel about things that are going on campus.

## What is your platform, and why did you choose it?

**Larson:** Our platform is progress, unity and trust. [For] progress, we want tangible, action-based plans. We know you can't just talk and not do anything. If we have action plans in place, whether that be for academics, Greek Life [or] student life, we can make progress. For unity, April 30 was the beginning of that. Then we ran into the pandemic, which has not gone away and has been difficult on students' mental health. [And] the Black Lives Matter movement, which has impacted our community in Charlotte. We want to bring students together and focus on mental health aspects. [For] trust, we want to increase our transparency and

communication with the University. Something we've seen [in] the past couple of years with the University making decisions is they're not always transparent with us and [not] taking our input until it's too late and decisions have already been made. We want to work with administrators and make sure that you're getting active input from the student body to represent each student in making important decisions.

## How do you plan to reach out to students and increase voter turnout?

**Olusesi:** By talking to students that we see around in our classes [and] in our social circles. [The goal of outreach] is to gauge student concerns. Constantly looking around and being aware of what's going on in our community is the biggest way we're going to raise engagement as opposed to people who are uninvolved with their community. When election time comes, they jump in looking for ways to reach out.

## What have you done that helps you during your campaign?

**Larson:** I was a special needs gymnastics and cheer coach for five years. That helped me understand a different part of the community I [wouldn't] have known otherwise. I grew to love all of those kids and helping them. I was a member of Alpha Delta Pi and served as the director of the New Member Experience. That role [allowed] me to get to know the new members of our sorority and teach them everything that we are about. That gave me the perspective of "I could do this elsewhere and in an even bigger capacity."

**Olusesi:** I'm the community chair and co-political action chair of the NAACP on our campus. Being able to go around and help the community when it comes to homeless shelters and maternity homes for women without facilities to live in taught me what it means to provide leadership outside of myself. My mom runs a care home facility which has shown me the difficulties of someone [who finds it] difficult to help themselves. She's one of the main reasons I'm dedicated to helping and uplifting people when I can.



# TWO SPORT WONDER

## Charlotte's Shyhiem Scotland is thriving juggling two sports

by Mathis Gaglione  
Staff Writer

Photo of Charlotte's Shyhiem Scotland  
courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

Being a D1 college athlete is an accomplishment not many can achieve in their lifetime. Out of the 19.2 million people who attend college in the United States, only 176,000 are given the opportunity to compete at the highest collegiate level.

That number gets even smaller when you ask the question, "How many dual-sport athletes are there in college?" This rare phenomenon is something you don't see every day, but an achievement so large you wonder how it's even possible.

For Shyhiem Scotland, he represents the 49ers as a dual-sport athlete in track & field and football. The reality of playing both sports in college set in during his high school career.

"I just grinded my tail off and worked really hard at each sport during high school and became pretty successful at both of them," said Scotland. "When it came to recruiting time, I talked to the Charlotte coaches, and everyone was really supportive about it."

Athletes who play two sports year-round have to be ready for a huge time commitment that can sometimes feel like an endless grind. Every sport at the

college level doesn't have much of an "off-season." Even though the season might end, training doesn't stop in the off months, which eliminates any break a dual-sport athlete might obtain. In Scotland's case, he's very fortunate with how flexible the Charlotte coaches have been at understanding his unique situation.

"The coaches have been super supportive, I mean I got home late Sunday night after the C-USA title for track and was supposed to have an early weight lifting session for football in the morning, but my conditioning coach knew about my meet and just told me to make it in by 11," said Scotland.

At the peak of his season, having breaks, even if they're just a few hours, has helped Scotland stay fresh and feel supported by his coaches.

An advantage dual-sport athletes

have over the playing field is developing cross-sport skills. These athletes often work various muscles that may not be commonly used in a particular sport. For example, as a high jumper, Scotland has rare balance and explosiveness he can bring to the football field that he developed through his training for the high jump.

"The sports are completely different, but at the same time, it works out. I definitely think they have helped each other. Track has made my legs stronger, and that's helped my explosiveness on the field."

Last weekend, Scotland contributed to the 49ers bringing home their second indoor track & field C-USA title in consecutive years. Shyhiem placed fifth in the high jump at 2.04m and sixth in the men's triple jump with a 14.78m jump. As indoor track comes to a close, outdoor

track begins, but that won't be Scotland's only focus as spring arrives.

Spring practices for football are now beginning, and Scotland, a linebacker, will again have to work his magic and balance the rigorous grind of both. In last year's football season, Scotland took on a red-shirt but still participated in four games. With a few new defensive coaches joining the 49ers coaching staff, Scotland is ready to prove that he can take on a larger role on a defense that struggled.

"I've met with the new coaches, and I'm just really excited to get out there, put in the work, and compete for a starting job this season."

Scotland's passion and determination are rare, and Scotland's love for both sports push him to keep going even when his busy schedule may seem discouraging. Moving forward, Scotland will continue to shine for the 49ers with the help of his teammates and coaches in not one but two sports.

"Sometimes it gets a little hard to balance both, but with the great training staff and coaches for both football and track, along with great teammates from both sports, they're helping me make it happen," Scotland said.



## SCOREBOARD

MEN'S BASKETBALL	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL	BASEBALL	SOFTBALL	WOMEN'S TENNIS
Feb. 24: FIU 55, Charlotte 64	Feb. 21: FIU 41, Charlotte 53	Feb. 25: West Virginia 5, Charlotte 4	Feb. 23: Clemson 5, Charlotte 2	Feb. 25: Coastal Carolina 1, Charlotte 6
Feb. 26: FAU 74, Charlotte 69	Feb. 24: Charlotte 65, FIU 55	Feb. 26 (DH): West Virginia 9, Charlotte 2	Feb. 25: Wichita State 7, Charlotte 10	Feb. 27: Liberty 0, Charlotte 4
	Feb. 26: Charlotte 76, FAU 47	Feb. 26 (DH): West Virginia 4, Charlotte 5	Feb. 25: Minnesota 3, Charlotte 4	
			Feb. 26: Northern Iowa 3, Charlotte 4	
			Feb. 26: Wichita State 10, Charlotte 2	

# A SHINING LIGHT

## Charlotte softball's Cori Henderson continues to mature as a leader

by Gabie Stanfield  
Staff Writer

It's not often that you come across a genuine person who lights up any room they walk into, but when you do, those people change your life forever. Junior infielder Cori Henderson is just that to her softball teammates and coaches.

Henderson, a junior from Harrisburg, N.C., has been critical to the Charlotte softball team's success during her time here. When watching the team interact, it is apparent how tight-knit the group is, and Henderson expanded on the team's close bond.

"We love each other a lot," said Henderson. "Every single person on this team is my sister, and we're family; that's a big part of who we are. Whenever we come on the field, we are all best friends, which clearly shows. The joy that we have for each other and how we celebrate each other is the way that that [bond] shows the most."

The Harrisburg native has matured into a leader for the team. She stepped foot on the team with the expectation to lead, which has been trial and error for Henderson. Henderson has grown into her role by watching her fellow teammates and has found her voice as a leader.

"It's been exciting to get into that this year and have that place, but I'm still growing in it for sure," said Henderson. "I'm not perfect at it. I don't think I ever will be. But, learning that leadership, for the most part, is just about serving, [rather] than it is telling people what to do, was the biggest thing that I've learned over the past three years."

Henderson has grown throughout her tenure with the team as an athlete and person. She noted that learning more about her identity this past year was her main focus. While she was recovering from shoulder surgery, she discovered she rooted her identity not in softball but in

something greater, which for her is God.

Pressure comes with producing statistically on the team, especially for Henderson, who was named to the Conference USA Preseason All-Conference team. Henderson and her teammates rely on each other to block out the noise that might emerge throughout the season. The bond that the team encapsulates has created a safe environment for error and meets it with forgiveness.

"We talk about the fact that no matter what we do, that doesn't affect the respect or how people see me, and so if I mess up, I know my teammates are still gonna love me and still respect me as their teammate no matter what I do on the field or how I perform," said Henderson.

Henderson is loved not only by her teammates but also by the coaching staff. The collective bond they have as a team can be attributed much to the nurture provided by their coaches. Head Coach Ashley Chastain described what it means to have Henderson on the team.

"A player like Cori Henderson is a coach's dream," said Chastain. "You look at your players as holistic: academics, how they are in the community, in their family, in the locker room, on the field, and I think Cori embodies everything that you want...People show up [to our games] to see people like Cori play."

Chastain feels that Henderson's emergence as a leader is because of the respect garnered from her teammates over the last three seasons. The level of maturity Henderson encompasses hasn't gone unnoticed by her coach, and her work ethic and skills shine through because of that newfound maturity.

Advice and encouragement have been passed down to Henderson over her three years playing for Charlotte. Without these

lessons, Henderson wouldn't be the player she is today, but she delves more into the most important lesson she has learned throughout her collegiate career so far.

"Going back to my freshman year, it was definitely about me in my head," said Henderson. "Even still, I struggle with that sometimes, but the biggest thing definitely that I've learned is that it's more about the people around me and winning than it is about my performance... It's to the point now where if we win,

Photo of Charlotte's Cori Henderson in the field  
courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

then it doesn't matter what I did, it's a good game, and it's a good day."

With her performance as a dynamic player on the field and an even better teammate and person, Henderson has a bright future ahead and a significant role in the Charlotte softball team's development. Henderson and the 49ers will be back in action on Wednesday, March 2, as they welcome the No. 7 Virginia Tech Hokies to Sue M. Daughtridge Stadium.





# DEMOCRAT

## An analysis of Mayor Vi Lyles reelection

by Isaac Naylor, Asst. Opinion Editor  
contributions from Hiral Patel, Opinion Editor

The city of Charlotte has had a stellar reputation with higher education, professional sports and fine arts. As the second-largest banking center in the nation, Charlotte has a bright future.

However, that progress has an underside: homelessness, gun violence and poverty. The upcoming election will likely revolve around these issues. This year, voters will need to decide whether continuing the status quo will heal this wounded city.

Viola Alexander Lyles has served as mayor of Charlotte since 2017, becoming the first black woman to lead the city in its 253-year history.

As a member of the Democratic party, Lyles supports affordable housing, signing off on a \$50 million bond for new homes in 2018. In addition, she has bolstered the transit network, approving the 19-mile light-rail extension to UNC Charlotte in 2017.

Born in Columbia, S.C., Lyles grew up at the end of the Jim Crow era, understanding the need for regional reconciliation with the past. As a child, Lyles attended all-black institutions until high school, where she was one of 11 other black students. In 1969, Lyles went to Queens College, now Queens University of Charlotte.

At that time, Charlotte was a town of only 125,000 people. The city had just opened its first mall, and Independence Boulevard was peppered with drive-in movie theaters and service stops. Since then, the population of the Charlotte metropolitan area has ballooned to 2.6 million. The issues of the day have shifted from de jure segregation toward de facto segregation.

Lyles announced her reelection

for a third term in a Thanksgiving message posted on social media last year. Although Lyles is running without opposition, the city is holding a primary on May 17, 2022. The general election is scheduled for Nov. 8, 2022.

In a phone interview with the *Niner Times*, Lyles discussed her plan for the city, giving insight into whether her plans offer practical solutions or false hopes veiled in progressivism.

### Homelessness

“We’ve been tackling homelessness for the last 20 years,” Lyles said. “The federal government sends the money for homeless services to the city.” The Department of Housing and Urban Development allocates this funding to cities nationwide through Homeless Assistance Grants, which Charlotte delegates to Mecklenburg County. “Mecklenburg County takes the lead because so much of the work around homelessness is about other issues,” Lyles said.

That decision might seem like passing the buck, but this is standard practice. For those unfamiliar with local politics, there is a distinction between the city and county governments.

The city council, with the mayor at its helm, handles public services like police, fire, sanitation, transportation and infrastructure. Meanwhile, the county commission led by the county chair manages elections, records, health and welfare services—homelessness included.

Lyles believes that the source of the homelessness problem is a lack of job opportunities. “Like any growing

community in this area of sunbelt and prosperity, we see that there is always a connection that people come into our community seeking opportunities and sometimes don’t find them, and as a result often end up homeless,” Lyles said.

However, there are enough jobs, just not enough good jobs. An Oxfam report ranked North Carolina dead last in the country for wages and worker’s rights. According to Harvard economist Raj Chetty, Charlotte children born into the bottom quintile of the income distribution only have a 4.4% chance of moving to the top quintile. Stagnant economic mobility amplifies segregation in education, which hampers home-ownership.

As comedian George Carlin once said, “Change the name of the condition! It’s not homelessness; it’s houselessness. It’s houses these people need.”

Affordable houses for those on the street are nearly impossible to build due to rigid zoning ordinances. According to Ely Portillo, assistant director of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, 84% of available land in Charlotte is zoned for single-family houses.

These residential zones are more welcoming for affluent white families who have historically had time to secure wealth and stability.

Charlotte residents who live by the NIMBY mentality, which stands for not-in-my-back-yard, prevent genuine gains in the fight against urban suffering. However, some blame lies with Lyles and the city council, who dedicate more funding to temporary solutions like policing rather than social programs. According to

Axios, CMPD accounts for over 40% of the city’s operating budget as of 2021.

### Transit Funding

According to the *Charlotte Observer*, Lyles and local activists have called for investments in the form of a 1-cent sales tax to fund the city’s ailing transit network. This bus and rail expansion seeks to broaden access for low-income and minority residents, who are more likely to rely on public transport than their white suburban counterparts. The planned overhaul commemorates Transit Equity Day on Feb. 4 in honor of Rosa Parks’ birthday.

The Charlotte Area Transit System continues to be a source of bitterness for frustrated riders enduring long wait times for filthy buses. However, Lyles’ long-overdue proposal aims to electrify the bus fleet and extend light-rail service to Davidson, Cornelius, Matthews and Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

These wealthy exurban communities would undoubtedly benefit from speedy travel to the airport. However, underserved neighborhoods in Charlotte deserve that privilege more than well-to-do whites living outside the I-485 ring. Charlotte minister and activist Janet Garner-Mullins called public transportation a civil right intended for social uplift, not handouts for the wealthy.

### Racial Equity

The Racial Equity Initiative is the focal point of the mayor’s reelection campaign. Based on a *Forbes* interview with Lyles in Nov. 2021, this initiative is a \$250 million investment targeting racial disparities in

# OR DOLLARCRAT?

Photo of Mayor Viola Lyles  
courtesy of Charlotte Business Journal

Charlotte, which COVID-19 has worsened, such as remote learning. According to Forbes, 16,000 children and 56,000 households in Charlotte lacked reliable access to the internet during the pandemic.

The initiative will fund four specific areas: bridging the digital divide for low-income families, transforming historically-black Johnson C. Smith University into a career-focused institution, promoting more black and brown representation in corporations, and investing in Charlotte's "six corridors" of opportunity.

Charlotte Regional Business Alliance and EY, formerly Ernst & Young, have partnered with the mayor's office to develop this initiative. However, during the vote to approve the initiative, details about how funding would be allocated can best be described as unclear.

Last year, Republican city council member Tariq Bokhari criticized Lyles for "a lack of transparency" in announcing her initiative. Democratic city council member Braxton Winston said, "My concern is that the words of the mayor's racial equity initiative are not as full as they could be, that they ring hollow. It makes empty promises to our citizens who need to benefit from any type of equity work."

WBTB reported about allegations claiming that Mayor Lyles and City Manager Marcus Jones "conspired on a vote for the council to hurriedly approve federal covid dollars in order to move forward with the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative, which was announced just a week later."

## **The Henderson Scandal**

The mayor's initiative is not only a

mystery regarding funding but also leadership. In an interview with WFAE, Lyles denied any blame for the former executive director chosen to oversee her racial equity initiative. According to an Ohio state audit, the ex-hire, Kimberly Henderson, previously led an Ohio agency that mishandled \$3.8 billion by paying out bogus unemployment claims.

However, according to the Charlotte Post, Henderson resigned amid growing skepticism in a letter dated Feb. 13. "The work of the Initiative is too critical to be jeopardized in any way by public misperceptions related to my prior leadership as Cabinet Director in Ohio and appointment as Executive Director," Henderson wrote in her letter to the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance CEO Janet LaBar.

"I, nor the Charlotte city council, or any council member had any role in the hiring of the Alliance staff," Lyles said in a prepared statement. Although Lyles has repeated that "no tax dollars are going into this initiative," Henderson was briefly responsible for \$80 million in public funding.

"I'm not concerned [about] her leadership and the people who hired her, they're not concerned," Lyles told WCNC before Henderson's resignation. "Because what I'm going to look for is the bottom line of work." Now, the bottom line has shifted to a new executive director, preferably one who is not an out-of-state multibillion-dollar criminal.

Lyles is running unopposed in this next election, meaning much of this chaos will continue for four more

years. However, November 2025 will arrive eventually. Maybe the Queen City hive needs a new queen bee.

Although, one thing is undeniable: the imperative need to vote no matter the election—whether federal or state, county or city. Always represent your voice; otherwise, the Dollarcrats will keep winning.



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## NT ARTS & CULTURE

# DEAR NINER TIMES,

# How do I STOP MY PHONE OBSESSION?

by Sylvia Srinivass  
Contributor

Many parents tend to blame everything on “that dang phone.” The thing is, they might be right about needing less screen time. Most college students constantly use their phones for entertainment, school and connecting with friends and family. However, you may have found that you typically feel better on the days you use your phone less.

One big change you can make is disabling notifications for social media. You will be blissfully unaware of every Instagram like and Snapchat you receive. You can check social media on your terms without feeling the need to respond to every notification as soon as it lights up the screen. Text, email and, of course, Canvas notifications can still be enabled, or whatever else you need to stay informed of any important updates.

A second change could be deleting distracting apps like TikTok. Even though it can be challenging, sometimes, quitting these apps cold turkey is needed. However, you may feel like you are missing out on internet jokes and trends. You could always try redownloading and being more conscious about how much time you spend on the app each day.

A way to cut back on screen time is by setting app usage limits. This allows you to set daily time limits for social media and entertainment apps. It’s essential to be realistic; if you typically spend three hours a day on Instagram, don’t set the timer for twenty minutes because you will become frustrated and disable the timer. Instead, take small but progressive steps to decrease your usage, like cutting the time you’d usually spend on the app in half.

A fourth way to decrease phone usage is to charge your phone away from your bed. This discourages you from scrolling on it both before bed and immediately after waking up, allowing for a longer and better night’s rest.

Phones are great tools that can improve our work and social connections. However, mindless usage can distract us from the important things in life. Learning how to limit our use effectively and develop healthy phone habits are valuable skills that will help us control the distraction.



# Margarita Roldán's impact

The baker who has stories to tell and love to spread

by Emily Kottak  
Arts and Culture Editor

Photo of Margarita Roldan  
courtesy of UNC Charlotte YouTube

The gelato machine whirs, the aroma of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies wafts through the air and a small woman bustles around the kitchen of Charlotte's South Village Dining facility (SoVi). The small, smiling woman proudly wears her gray uniform, black apron and hair cap. Her engraved, golden name tag, glinting from the bright light, reads Margarita.

Margarita Roldán is originally from Medellín, Colombia, where she grew up in a family of nine. Roldán was close with her six siblings growing up, especially her sister. She experienced death earlier than she should have, though, losing two siblings and her parents. Losing her sister was one of the hardest things she has experienced.

"You know what? I think the worst for me was my sister," said Roldán. "Yeah, that's... it's like something inside. You cannot describe that pain because it's not your body—it is your soul. I go to Colombia, and it's not the same. It's not the same."

Roldán moved to New York City at 19 and married her first husband.

"The biggest difference [moving from Colombia to the United States] is that we had no family here," Roldán said. "I was most of the time by myself. It was very difficult. I didn't know English. I mean, I had the basics that we had in school. It was hard not having my family, not having friends, you know, and not speaking the language."

She lived in New York for almost 20 years. She was a nanny for two children while raising her own daughters, Janeth and Jessica.

"The culture shock must have been heavy," said Roldán's daughter Janeth Sanchez. "She didn't speak English, and my dad was an alcoholic. She protected me many times from him. He was very abusive to both of us, but that didn't stop her from trying to give me a normal childhood."

Roldán always reminded her daughters to count their blessings, despite the family's struggles. Sanchez recalls her mother reminding them to turn off the water when brushing their teeth because other countries have very limited water. She also told them to be patient when an elderly person was crossing the street because Roldán hoped people would be patient for her when she was a grandmother.

The next step for Roldán was moving to Charlotte, where one of her first jobs was cooking at a jail. She says she has always had a passion for being in the kitchen.

"We would be in the kitchen and have to supervise inmates," she said about teaching the inmates to cook. "I used to do things like make sandwiches with them. They basically did the job, and we would direct them and tell them what to do. I ended up being the lead supervisor. I loved it."

Roldán also worked as a bus driver for elementary school and high school students, including a group of students

with autism, whom she loved driving and making connections with.

However, she wanted to continue working with people and expressing herself through cooking and baking. She discovered work at UNC Charlotte, first working in catering for several years and then moving to the bakery in SoVi. Roldán is adored by those who have gotten to know her in the UNC Charlotte community. The UNC Charlotte's Official YouTube Channel included a video about Roldán, nicknaming her "gelato master." According to the video, Roldán loves making gelato and makes weekly batches. However, her favorite part may be students stopping by to say hello to her.

"What makes me happy is seeing the people and having a relationship with them," said Roldán in the Youtube video, "It makes my day."

The feeling is mutual for students and staff alike. Roldán's boss, Executive Chef Calvin Seabury, thinks highly of her.

"It's a pleasure working with her," Seabury said. "She always helps out. I believe that you never stop learning. Margarita has been in a lot of kitchens, but even as an executive chef, I am able to learn stuff from her. She's one of the best people that I've met. She's very genuine, loving and passionate about her job. In the kitchen and cooking industry, passion is the number one thing. Anyone can learn to cook, but you can't teach passion."

Outside of the kitchen, Roldán is still enjoying life. Twelve years ago, she married her second husband and started a new chapter with him.

"He is just so nice," Roldán said. "He's always checking on me that I'm okay, if I need anything, he does what he can do for me, and he's always making me laugh, and it's funny. He's so good."

With her husband and grown daughters living close by, Roldán is surrounded by a close-knit, loving family. She has a granddaughter, Alexis, who is Janeth's daughter.

"She implanted so many lessons in me that I did not even realize until I moved out and became a mother myself," Sanchez said. "I catch myself now and then telling Alexis the same things my mom told me. I smile, seeing how these things flow through me and are part of raising my own kid."

Roldán has faced many experiences in her life but has never let her smile and positive energy fade. Roldán has positively impacted her community from Medellín to New York to Charlotte.

"Life has knocked her down so many times, but she always finds her way back up," Sanchez said. "She wears her heart on her sleeve. I am who I am, thanks to her and the lessons she imprinted in me so many years ago. I am so proud of her."



# MY THOUGHTS ON PINEGROVE'S "11:11"

## THE BAND RETURNS WITH A NEWLY REFINED SOUND

by Jackson Martin  
Contributor

Photo of "11:11" album cover  
courtesy of the Missing Piece Group

From Montclair, N.J., indie-folk band, Pinegrove returns from their hiatus with a new, refined sound on their fifth studio record, "11:11." While many tracks on "11:11" are a fresh return to their tried and true style of music, some of the songs end up feeling somewhat undercooked in their final forms. Written throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, "11:11" touches upon isolation, climate change, growing older and the personal life of songwriter Evan Stephens Hall. "11:11" was self-produced by Hall alongside the band's guitarist Sam Skinner. Pinegrove also hired retired indie-rock legend and former Death Cab for Cutie member Chris Walla to mix the album. "11:11" was released by Rough Trade Records on Jan. 28, 2022.

Some highlights from "11:11" begin with the first track, "Habitat," which introduces the album promptly with fuzzy, booming guitars surrounding moments of peaceful acoustics and Hall's boyish vocals. "Habitat" works as a great opener, and it sets the tone for what is to come. Following closely behind, "Alaska" is driven by its own energy and attitude—a sound we haven't heard from Pinegrove before. The driving snare and upbeat tempo give "Alaska" a unique pop-punk feel within the greater indie-folk sound they've comfortably fit in. Another highlight is "Orange," the record's thesis statement about government involvement and climate change. This track is a beautiful waltz and arguably the best on the record, both lyrically and musically. "Flora," a melancholic but upbeat country song about dealing with change, is another standout moment from the album and a nice break from the band's established tone. "Respirate"

feels like a classic Pinegrove song. Tackling how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Hall's day-to-day routines, "Respirate" not only tells a moving story but also documents what life was like at this particular point in history. "Let" benefits the album with a truly unique sound that would not fit anywhere else on Pinegrove's discography. Dominated by an electric piano, this track allows the band to experiment and expand upon their sound with new instrumentation while keeping the Pinegrove feel they've established very nicely.

Unfortunately, "11:11" also features some inoffensive songs that will pass by without leaving much of an impression on the listener. The band appears to have tucked their more forgettable songs in the second half of the record. After many separate listenings to the album, I still can't remember the melody to songs such as "So What," "Swimming" and "Cyclone." While I don't particularly think any of these songs are bad (I actually really like "Swimming" once I realize what song it is), I find these tracks simply less interesting compared to the others.

While I can review "11:11" in isolation, it feels inappropriate to avoid mentioning Pinegrove's previous release, "Amerland, NY." This was a fully recorded and reimagined live compilation of their previously released songs. I firmly believe that the reworked "Amerland" version of each of these songs contains everything missing from Pinegrove's original releases. "Amerland, NY" is an engaging listen from beginning to end, and the band sounds natural, loose and, in my opinion, at their best here. Hall sings with more emotion, the songs feel more fleshed out and the

whole experience feels more refined and natural. Coming off of the high that "Amerland, NY" brings to the table, the songs off of "11:11" feel like they need the same treatment. While many of the songs on "11:11" are very good, if they were recorded live like "Amerland, NY" was, the songs would find what they are missing. Certain tracks that feel undercooked such as "Cyclone," would benefit from the live energy and spirit that "Amerland, NY" contains.

Ultimately, if you are a fan of Pinegrove, you will appreciate what "11:11" brings to the table. If you're a new listener, "11:11" isn't a bad place to start listening. Fans of bands such as Death Cab for Cutie, Bright Eyes, Elliot Smith and Phoebe Bridgers should be sure to check them out!

## RATE: 7/10

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