

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

v18 n2 / 1 FEBRUARY 2026

WELCOME

Welcome to *Writers Bloc*! We are celebrating Black History Month by featuring a selection of works by talented Black authors. These novels, which inspire, educate, and entertain, are all available to check out from WVDeli. You'll also find delightful dinosaur drawings from National Draw a Dinosaur Day. The creativity on display is amazing! Plus, we're featuring exceptional writing that showcases the voices and ideas of our student writers. Dive in and discover something fun.

We welcome your words and images. If you'd like to share your ideas, opinions, recommendations, or even pictures in *Writers Bloc*, just email the editor:

melissa.gish@glenville.edu



SEND WRITERS BLOC

SUBMISSIONS TO

melissa.gish@glenville.edu

Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

CONTACT FACULTY AT

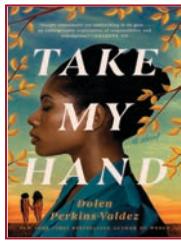
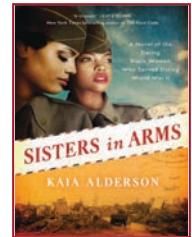
www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In celebration of Black History Month, discover five Black women writers whose voices are reshaping contemporary literature. Kaia Alderson uncovers overlooked figures in African American women's history through *Sisters in Arms*. Dolen Perkins-Valdez, explores American historical life in the novel *Take My Hand*. Jesmyn Ward made history as the first woman and first Black American to win the National Book Award for Fiction twice for *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Angela Flournoy's *The Wilderness* is a tapestry of fascinating relationships. Neena Viel explores social horror through a Black lens in her debut novel *Listen to Your Sister*. These five novels explore themes of family, identity, and resilience. Each of these writers offers a unique perspective that is definitely worth checking out at WVDeli, linked on the RFK Library's website [<https://www.glenville.edu/library>].

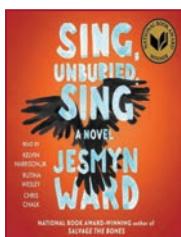
Kaia Alderson's *Sisters in Arms* (2021, HarperCollins) brings to light a remarkable chapter of World War II history. The novel follows Grace Steele and Eliza Jones, two Black women who become pioneering officers in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. As members of the historic 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion—the only all-Black female U.S. battalion deployed overseas during the war—they navigate both military service and the harsh realities of a segregated army. Alderson's work illuminates the extraordinary contributions of women whose stories have long deserved recognition.

Ebook: [<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/5665577>]



In *Take My Hand* (2022, Penguin), Dolen Perkins-Valdez crafts a searing narrative inspired by actual events from 1973 Alabama. Newly graduated nurse Civil Townsend discovers that her patients at a family planning clinic include two young sisters, aged eleven and thirteen, who have been placed on birth control simply because they are poor and Black. The novel spans decades, examining how Civil's experiences shape her life and career, while raising questions about medical ethics, accountability, and the importance of remembering difficult histories. Ebook: [<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/6415600>]

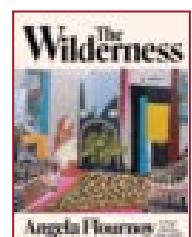
Audiobook: [<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/6414431>]



Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017, Simon & Schuster) centers on thirteen-year-old Jojo, who grapples with masculinity and family legacy in rural Mississippi. When his mother Leonie drives the family to Parchman Farm penitentiary to collect his white father from prison, the journey becomes a haunting exploration of race, addiction, and intergenerational trauma, marked by encounters with the supernatural that illuminate the South's painful history.

Available only as an audiobook on WVDeli.

[<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/3027605>]

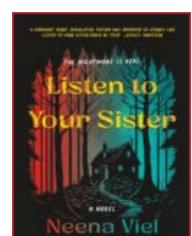


Angela Flournoy's *The Wilderness* (2025, HarperCollins) follows five Black women—Desiree, January, Monique, Nakia, and Danielle—across twenty years of friendship as they navigate from their twenties into middle age. Set against the backdrop of the 2000s through 2020s, the novel examines career ambitions, relationships, and the challenges of maintaining deep connections amid the unpredictable nature of modern American life.

Ebook: [<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/11426094>]

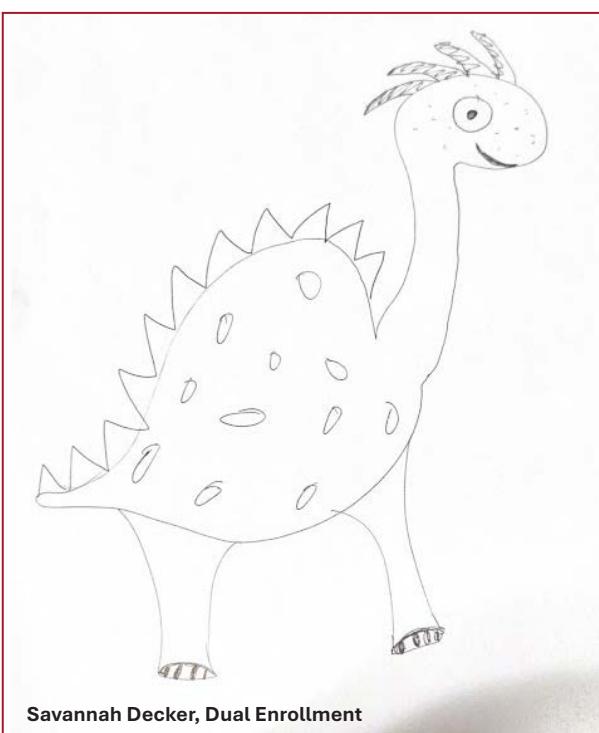
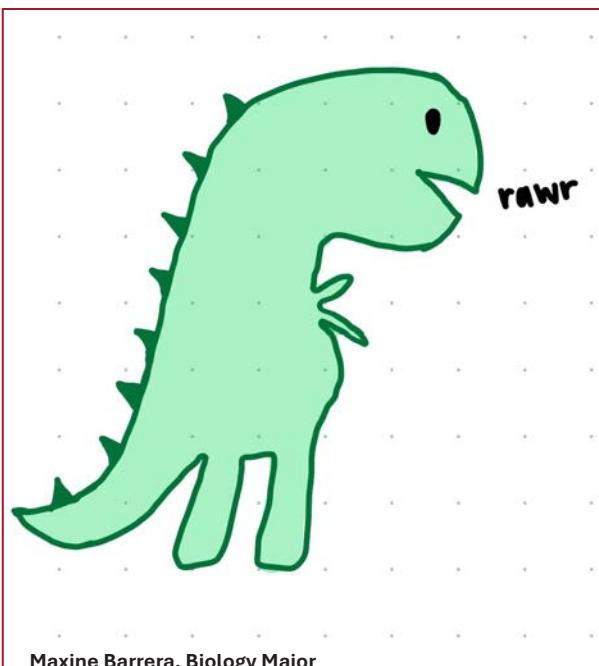
In *Listen to Your Sister* (2025, St. Martin's), Neena Viel blends horror with family drama as twenty-five-year-old Calla struggles to raise her teenage brother Jamie while plagued by nightmares of death. When events force the siblings to hide in a remote cabin, Calla's nightmares take on terrifying new dimensions.

Ebook: [<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/wvdeli-glenville/content/media/10663733>]



JANUARY 30 WAS NATIONAL DRAW A DINOSAUR DAY

January 30, 2026, was **National Draw a Dinosaur Day**, and you might be wondering how this “holiday” emerged. The Alachua County Library District in Florida tells us it’s because January 30 is “the day a young boy named Todd Page got bored in class, drew a dinosaur, thought it was fun, and decided to register it as a national holiday. It’s a straightforward history for a straightforward holiday.” We invited folks to share their dino drawings with us for this issue, and we were delighted with the response. Enjoy!



WEIRD QUESTION of the WEEK

What could be one of the weirdest, most random things you could ask someone? Something that would send an image popping into your mind? How about “What color is your toothbrush?”

Trinity Coltellino - Integrated Marketing Major

“My toothbrush is blue because that is my favorite color.”

Schuylle Chapman - Associate Professor of English

“Red!”

Amanda Jones - Head Cashier

“My toothbrush is pink and white.”

Bree Barnhouse - Dual Enrollment

“My toothbrush is purple and pink!”

Dravin Gibson - Lecturer of Art

“My toothbrush is matte black, electric, and less used than it ought to be. It sits comfortably on my bathroom sink, nestled between a bottle of cologne and a tube of Dr. Bronner’s toothpaste.”

Kaytie Sargent - Elementary Education (K-6) Major

“The color of my toothbrush is pink, and it is electric.”

Amanda Chapman - Associate Professor of English

“Green with red bristles (the Euthymol one).”

Aimee Huddleston - Regent Bachelor of Arts

“My toothbrush is red and has always had some red on it because through the years with kids and sleepovers we each had our own color so there was no confusion.”

Leslie Ward - Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

“I have two toothbrushes. One is battery operated and it’s black. I use it when I’m half asleep and I don’t want to exert energy. The other is blue and white. I use it when I’m half asleep and don’t want to endure the noise of the battery operated one.”

Jennifer Wenner - Senior Lecturer of Communications

“Blue, battery operated cheapo. Note...equate sensodyne is not equal.”

Melissa Gish - Associate Professor of English

“My current one is blue, and my dog’s toothbrush is yellow (no, we don’t keep them in the same cup!).”

ACTUAL RESEARCH ON CUTENESS

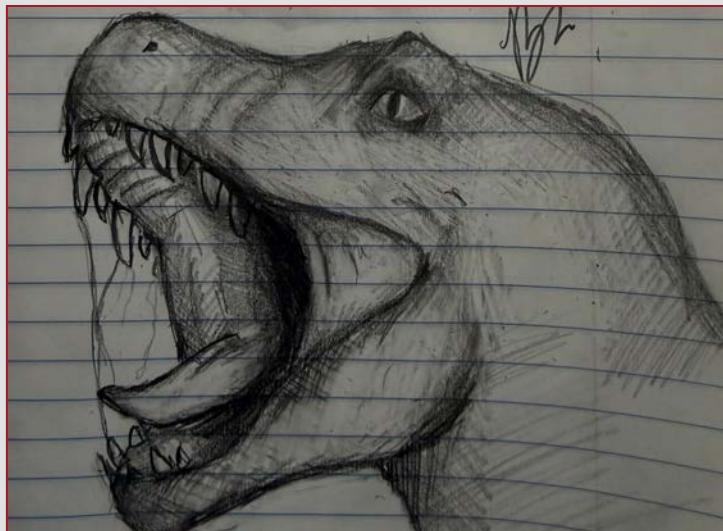
Contributed by Alex Rogerson, Biology Major

The title might seem a little odd, but that's why I really needed to read "Cuteness I: How Feeling Fuzzy Helps Your Mind" by Valeria Li, and I think you guys do too. This article simply warmed my heart for so many reasons. The author set up her article so well, with a bunch of adorable pictures of cute animals, but one thing I didn't know was that there's actual research on this! I went my whole life completely unaware that people literally study cuteness, look at cute pictures, and rate how cute they are.

Another thing that totally blew my mind was how the author explained that "Kama muta," Sanskrit for 'moved by love,' has also been studied in relation to cuteness" (Li). That means this super old civilization actually had a word for the feeling of cuteness, which is so freaking cool. While reading this article, I couldn't stop smiling. It was hilarious and interesting because, one, we all love seeing cute things; two, it must have been such a fun topic to write about; and three, let's be honest, we all love cute animals.

Even with all the fun parts, the author tied in real facts and made the piece educational instead of just something nice to read, and that gives it a 110 percent in my book. I seriously think you all need to check it out because it's not only enjoyable but also surprisingly educational. There's actually stuff to learn here. I love that they turned this into a full case study by comparing photos and analyzing responses. Anyways, enough spoiling, I put the link below, so go read it.

<https://www.snoqap.com/posts/2024/8/30/cuteness-i-how-feeling-fuzzy-helps-your-mind>



Bella Russell, Dual Enrollment

from Jurassic Park

by Michael Crichton

"Grant knew that people could not imagine geological time. Human life was lived on another scale of time entirely. An apple turned brown in a few minutes. Silverware turned black in a few days. A compost heap decayed in a season. A child grew up in a decade. None of these everyday human experiences prepared people to be able to imagine the meaning of eighty million years—the length of time that had passed since this little animal had died."

"Because the history of evolution is that life escapes all barriers. Life breaks free. Life expands to new territories. Painfully, perhaps even dangerously. But life finds a way." — Ian Malcolm



Trinity Coltellino, Dual Enrollment

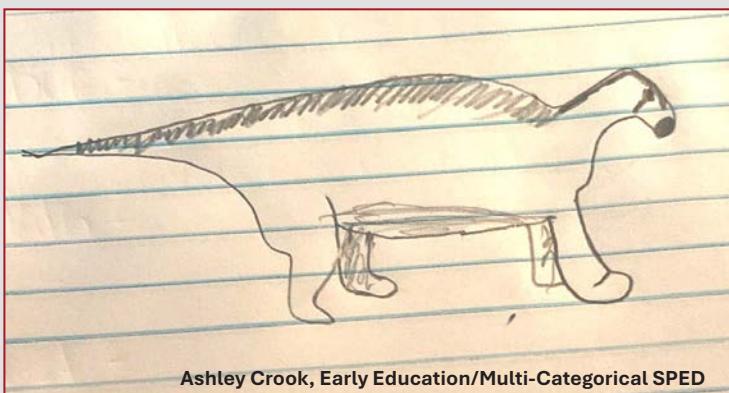
from The Age of Dinosaurs

by James Scruton

There are, of course, theories about the wide-eyed, drop-jawed fascination children have for them, about how, before he's learned his own phone number or address, a five-year-old can carry like a few small stones the Latin tonnage of those names, the prefixes and preferences for leaf or meat.



Logan Neal, Dual Enrollment



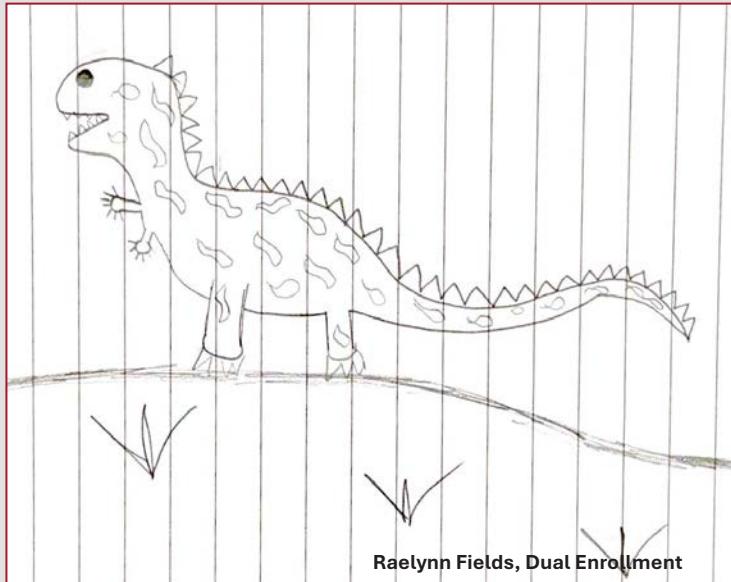
Ashley Crook, Early Education/Multi-Categorical SPED

WRITING IN THE AGE OF AI

Contributed by Elizabeth Oldaker, BA Undeclared

An article by Anne Rooney called “Prove You are Not a Robot” is about the struggles of being a writer in this day and age where the usage of AI is popularized. In the article she talks about being a nonfiction writer and how scary it is that AI is coming in and completely changing the game, in the sense that it can make covers, outlines, or even write the book entirely at just one click of a button. AI is absolutely destroying creativity, imagination, and critical thinking skills. Worst of all, AI is taking jobs from the visionaries and writers that pour their heart and soul into these publications, people who use writing as their form of self-expression, and whose lives revolve around their work. In the article Rooney states, “AI is good at dull” and then later states, “It can write a book, but the book will not be fun to read.” I could not agree with this statement more, because every enjoyable book is filled with life. Life and emotion are the key components to writing anything worth reading, and those are two things that Artificial Intelligence cannot give you. She also alludes that the fear of losing her job to AI pushes her to write more imaginative and creative works, but we should not have to live in fear that our creativity is going to be taken away or silenced. This is such a sad and frustrating time, to see all of the negative changes in this world and for them to be seen as “advancements,” it makes me feel a kind of dreadful feeling for the future.

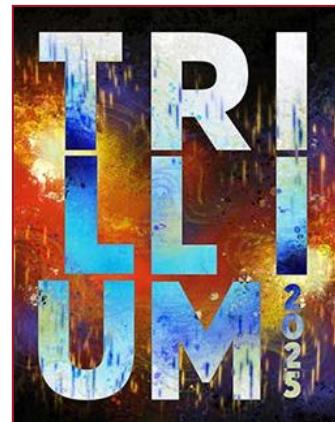
You can read Anne Rooney's blog here:
<http://awfullybigblogadventure.blogspot.com>



Raelynn Fields, Dual Enrollment

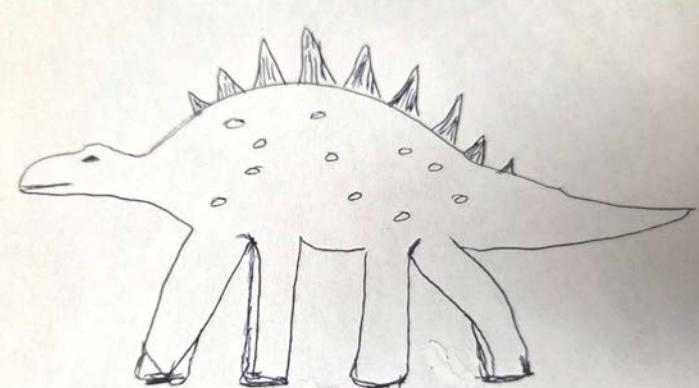
TRILLIUM DEADLINE EXTENDED

All GSU students, staff, faculty alumni, and community members are invited to submit poetry, fiction, song lyrics, and other forms of creative written expression to the *Trillium* through the deadline of **February 18, 2026**. Include a brief biographical note with your submission. Send your work to Trillium@glenville.edu as a single .doc, .docx, or .rtf file.



The *Trillium* is GSU's literary arts journal. With guidance from the Department of Language and Literature, GSU students have edited and produced issues of the *Trillium* annually since 1979.

The *Trillium* is not just for writers. It also includes art, and its student art editors are from the Fine Arts Department. Be sure to join us for the **Trillium Art Show**, which will open on **Monday, February 23**, in the Spears Art Gallery in the Fine Arts Building. It will feature works from the 2026 issue of the *Trillium*.



Aimee Huddleston, Regents Bachelor of Arts

February

I am illustration, and the sea is mine!
 I wash the sands and headlands with my tide;
 My brow is crowned with branches of the pine;
 Before my chariot-wheels the fishes glide.
 By me all things unclean are purified,
 By me the souls of men washed white again;
 E'en the unlovely tombs of those who died
 Without a dirge, I cleanse from every stain.



— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 from “The Poets Calendar”

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH: PIONEERING MUSEUM CONTRIBUTORS

Reprinted/adapted from the Field Museum, Chicago

The Field Museum's first African American taxidermist

Born in 1918, Carl Cotton was a taxidermist, artist, and exhibition preparator who worked at the Field Museum from 1947 until his death in 1971. He is the Field Museum's first African American taxidermist, maybe even Chicago's first professional one.

He was a black person working at an institution with a complicated racial history. In 1940, he wrote to the director of the Museum in search of a taxidermy job. He was turned down, but didn't give up. In 1947, he sent another, more detailed, passionate letter offering to volunteer. The next week he was hired as an assistant for the vertebrate anatomy department, and a month later, after demonstrating his skill, he was promoted to full-time. A school field trip to the Field Museum as a child was said to have been the inspiration for his desire to have a position at the museum.

Timuel Black—a Chicago historian and activist—and Carl Cotton were childhood friends. Both born in 1918, they grew up together near Washington Park. During an interview in preparation for the Field Museum's exhibition on Carl Cotton, Timuel Black joked about Cotton's early interest in taxidermy: "Cats and rats ran when they saw Carl."

Cotton spent almost 25 years creating beautiful exhibitions behind the scenes, never expecting to be the subject of one. Visitors to the Field Museum can see letters, reports, and photographs that tell the story of Cotton's contributions to the museum.

Read about Cotton and see highlights of his exhibit on the Field Museum website: <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/blog/finding-carl-cotton>

Reprinted from the Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian's first African American curator

A twentieth century Renaissance man, Louis R. Purnell lived a remarkable life. His career began in the skies above Italy and Germany, where he flew 88 combat missions as an original member of the Tuskegee Airmen.

After the war, while working at the National Museum of Natural History, he traveled the world's oceans collecting marine specimens, taught himself geology and paleontology, and wrote an important catalog of nautiloids and cephalopods that is still in use today.

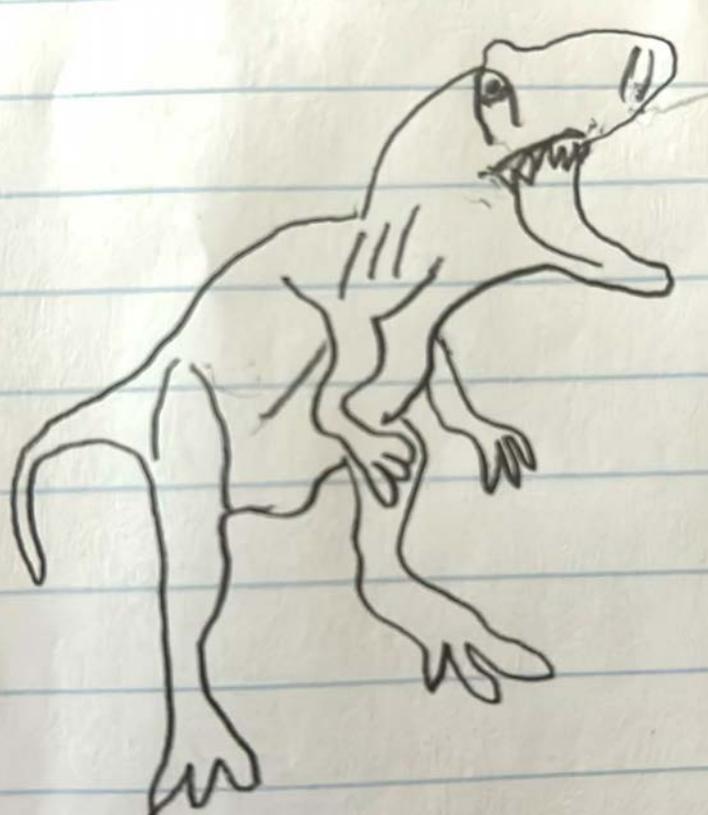
In 1968, just one year before the moon landing, he started working at the National Air and Space Museum, becoming one of the world's leading authorities on the history of spacecraft and spacesuits. Though racial discrimination had often blocked his career path and kept him from receiving full recognition for his accomplishments, he persevered, powered by an insatiable curiosity.

By 1980, he became the Smithsonian's first African American curator, blazing a trail for those who would follow. Purnell recalled his first days working at the museum: "In geology or paleontology, you are shown what is in the earth, and it's amazing when you go back millions of years and you can find a fossil, hold it in your hand, and say, 'This thing was living millions of years ago, and you're holding the remains of it in your hand to study what inhabited the earth way back there'."

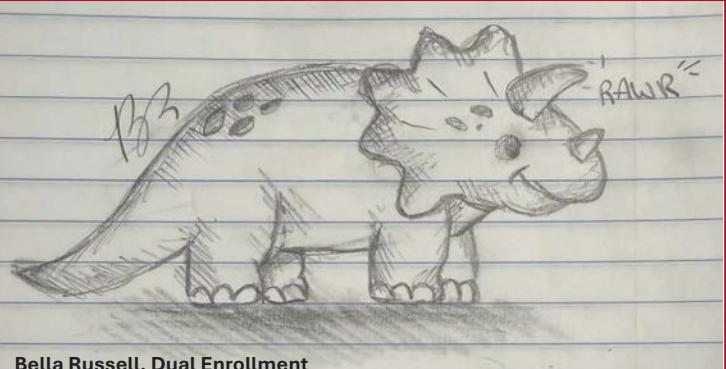
Read about Purnell on the Smithsonian Archives website: <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/African-Americans/louis-purnell>



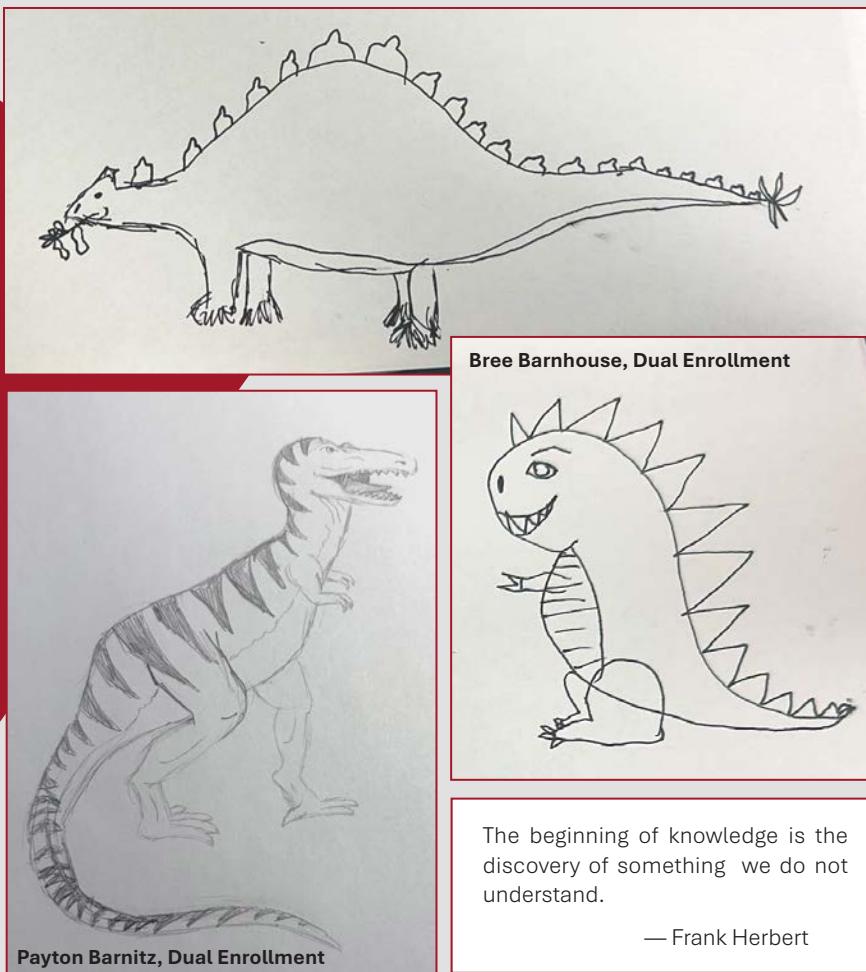
Brogann Henry, Dual Enrollment



LeQues Strother, Athletic Cond/Coaching (HHP)



Bella Russell, Dual Enrollment



Bree Barnhouse, Dual Enrollment



The beginning of knowledge is the discovery of something we do not understand.

— Frank Herbert

THE PUZZLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Contributed by Christopher Olah, Integrated Marketing Major

An article by Zoha Imran called “The Big Bang Theory: Revolutionizing Our Understanding of Existence” is about the scientific theory of how the entire universe started from a single point. This made me think about how big and old everything is and how super small we are in comparison. It’s an example of how science isn’t just a bunch of facts in a book; it’s a story about where we came from. It makes you think about all the huge questions like *Why are we even here?* Imran’s point is that this one theory totally changed how we see everything around us.

The most interesting part of the article for me wasn’t just the explanation of the Big Bang itself but how much we still don’t know about the universe. This is because science isn’t about having all the answers; it’s about learning how to ask better questions and being curious. A great example of this is when Imran talks about the mystery that’s left over even after we’ve discovered so much. Imran states, “It reminds us that the more we learn the more we realize how much we don’t know urging us to keep exploring the cosmic puzzle.” This shows that science is not finished. The outcome of this is that it makes the universe feel super mysterious and exciting rather than something that’s all figured out. It’s not a closed book; it’s an invitation to keep looking. This whole idea makes me think about how people who think they know everything are probably the ones who know the least. The smartest people are the ones who are always curious. This whole article showed me that the universe is this massive complex thing that we’ve only just started to figure out. It’s super humbling to think about and it makes all our everyday problems seem small in comparison.

You can read the article here:

<https://www.snoqap.com/posts/2023/6/30/the-big-bang-theory-revolutionizing-our-understanding-of-existence>

REAL SPORTS?

Contributed by Hector Arriaga Hernandez
Business Major

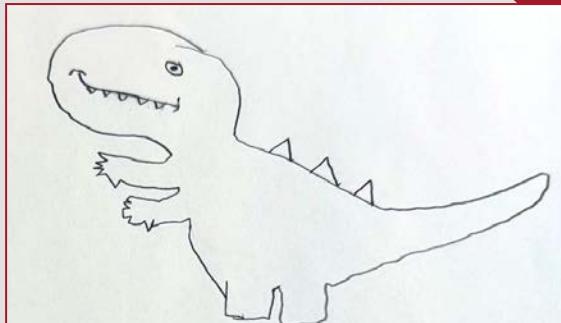
In a blogtribehub post called “Virtual Reality Leagues: Are We Ready to Watch Fully Digital Competitions?” the author explores the rise of VR-based sports and questions whether fans are prepared to embrace competitions that exist entirely in digital space. While the article briefly explains what Virtual Reality leagues are and how they function, its most interesting argument isn’t about technology; it is about how our definition of “real” sports is starting to change.

The article’s idea of full-body movement in VR is interesting, and the article explains how players sweat, train, and even experience minor injuries. However, I believe this comparison to traditional athletics is overstated. Physical sports are rooted in uncontrollable environments that VR can only simulate in a controlled and artificial way. The article claims, “If a sport has rules, players, fans, competition, and emotion—does it matter whether it happens in physical space?” I disagree with this assumption that it doesn’t matter because physical space is not a small detail; it’s the foundation of what makes sports risky, dramatic, and meaningful. The possibility of serious injury, physical limitation, and environmental challenge is exactly what gives traditional sports their intensity and emotional weight. Without real danger, the stakes are fundamentally different.

Another issue I have with VR leagues is accessibility. The article suggests that VR sports could “democratize” competition because all you need is a headset and space. In reality, VR technology is expensive and still unavailable to many people. Traditional sports, by contrast, often require little more than a ball and open space. This makes VR leagues far less inclusive.

In the end, I don’t believe VR leagues should be considered true sports. They may be entertaining, innovative, and even physically demanding in limited ways, but they lack the raw physical reality, universal accessibility, and historical grounding that give traditional sports their essence.

You can read the article for yourself here:
<https://blogtribehub.com/2025/05/14/virtual-reality-leagues-are-we-ready-to-watch-fully-digital-competitions>



Paige Taylor, Dual Enrollment

Glenville State University Department of Language & Literature,
Appalachian Studies Program, and the Robert F. Kidd Library

Little Kanawha Reading Series

Wednesday, February 11, 2026
4:00 p.m.

Robert F. Kidd Library
on the campus of Glenville State University



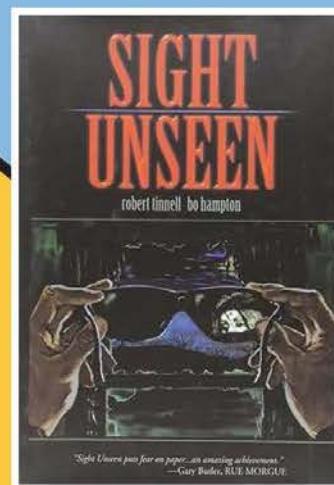
Scan to watch
the live stream

Robert Tinnell



Robert Tinnell is a native of Marion County, West Virginia. In 1983, his passion for filmmaking and storytelling led him to Los Angeles and propelled him into a long-running career as a writer, director, and producer. He recently adapted his Eisner Award-nominated graphic novel *Feast of the Seven Fishes* into a feature film. Robert and his wife, Shannon Colaianni Tinnell, are co-founders of Fairmont, West Virginia's annual Feast of the Seven Fishes Festival.

Tinnell's production company, Allegheny Image Factory, produces or production services a variety of commercials, image films, music videos, documentaries, television shows and feature films, among them *The Hunted*, *Child of God*, and *Fly Rod Chronicles*. Outside of the film industry, Tinnell is a well-respected graphic novelist, known for such works as *The Black Forest*, *The Wicked West*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Sight Unseen*, and the aforementioned *Feast of the Seven Fishes*.



All Readings are Free and Open to the Public
Watch us on the GSU YouTube channel: <https://qrc0.de/gsuy>

The Little Kanawha Reading Series provides a showcase for a diversity of literary forms and voices in order to acknowledge and enrich the cultural heritage of Appalachia and the communities around the Little Kanawha River.