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Elizabeth Acevedo will be at Texas A&M for the SCOLA conference.

Q&A: SCOLA hosts award-winning poet

The Battalion Life & Arts reporter Keely Wirries sat down with Elizabeth Acevedo, winner of the 2014 Beltway Grand Slam poetry contest, the nation's largest slam poetry contest, who is one of only three women in the country to have won the contest. Acevedo is in town for the SCOLA conference over the weekend. This year the conference is focused on individuality, which is Acevedo's specialty in poetry.

the classroom experience but then there is establishing ideals and the ways in which you are going to walk to the world and I think a lot of people are going to relate to the fact that my poetry is about passion and about being who you want to be and focusing yourself on that journey.

THE BATTALION: How does your diverse background influence your poetry?

ACEVEDO: There is a way in which you grow up in a very diverse atmosphere, and I went to school with people who spoke all different kinds of languages and from all different islands and from all countries, I think that lets you have the perspective of thinking globally, which was very big for me and is still big for me in order to be looking towards the world to understand where I'm at. And definitely being Dominican, which there is a huge population in New York city, is big because I'm an American and very much a New Yorker but that's all influenced by my parents' background and my immigrant story, so there is a way in which I navigate being an American when its being influenced by growing up in a very global world and with a global view on what it means to be an American that affects my writing.

THE BATTALION: Some of your writing has been labeled

controversial, what adversities have you faced because of that?

ACEVEDO: I talk a lot about race and I talk a lot about being a woman. I don't shy away from any of those topics. I think that especially creative writers should always write what they are most afraid to say because it's probably what isn't being said by anyone. I don't really concern myself with if my topics are controversial, I know they might be depending on who is listening, but I think that is part of what I want to bring to the discussion is that it's okay to talk about things and work through things as a community, luckily the stage and interacting with the audience allows that.

THE BATTALION: Why did you start performing?

ACEVEDO: I started performing because I had a high school teacher who kind of forced me. I wanted to be a rapper, honestly, I wanted to do hip-hop. I thought it was really cool and I just I love music — so I've always had a little bit of a performer in me. But I started doing poetry and putting myself out there because I had a lot of influential people in my life who encouraged me to share that work and exchange with people and to listen to poetry and to believe that what I had to say was important.

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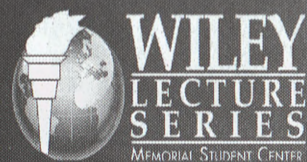


THE BATTALION: What does it mean for you to get to travel the country influencing young people with your poetry?

ACEVEDO: You know, it's a dream come true. I've been performing since I was 14 years old and always was kind of looking for performers who were of the same background, and women I could look for as an example, and there were very few. So for me it is really important to get out and engage with college students and high school students and as many young folk as possible to be the example I always wanted to see.

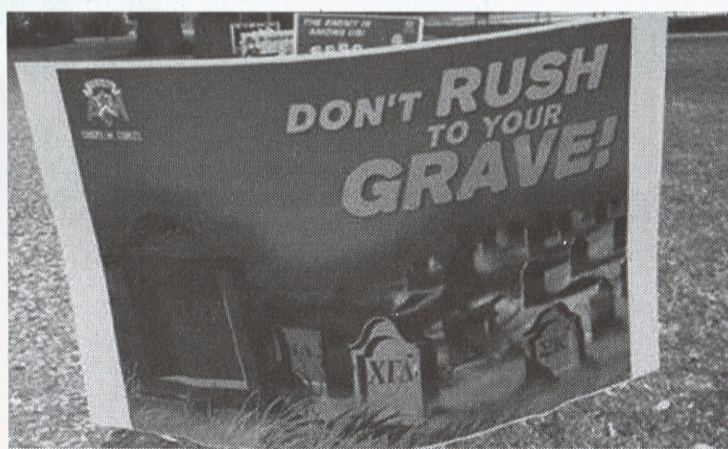
THE BATTALION: What about your poetry is so influential?

ACEVEDO: I speak a lot about identity and about the ways in which I am still figuring out the person and woman I want to be, and I think particularly with the age range of 18 to 22 that are in college, a lot of that is the goal. There is



David Axelrod, Senior Advisor to President Obama and **Ari Fleischer**,

Press Secretary for President George W. Bush.



A sign on campus Thursday shows fraternity letters on tombstones.

SIGNS CONTINUED

The actions of a few don't always reflect the attitudes and impressions of the overall student population, Trigg said.

"It's very important in this day and age to understand that social media allows everything to get blown out of proportion and for people to see it as a majority of opinions when in reality it could just be a small group of individuals reflect that opinion," Trigg said.

Lanz said when he saw the signs from photos his friends sent him, he did not overly concern himself.

"I did not put much thought into the signs until I learned more about what was going on," Lanz said. "However it was evident to me from the start that the Corps of Cadets was not behind it."

Whether or not the signs are of a satirical nature, no good comes from them, Lanz said.

"I do not believe any good comes from the content of these signs," Lanz. "Whether the agenda was humor, or to poke fun at the Corps of Cadets or Greek Life, the signs just created unnecessary drama and were disrespectful. That

is not what Texas A&M is about."

Lanz said the sign depicting the Yell Leaders is far from the truth.

"Zach, Ben, Chris and Will have done an outstanding job of accepting me as one of them," Lanz said. "I have truly enjoyed getting to know them better this past month and I genuinely could not have asked for a better group of guys to serve alongside in the upcoming year."

Zach Lawrence, appointed 2015-2016 Head Yell Leader, said Lanz is a great Aggie with tremendous faith. Lawrence said Lanz has shown an overwhelming enthusiasm and desire to serve A&M since the beginning of the election season.

Connor Roberts, president of BYX and mechanical engineering junior, said he was disappointed when he saw the signs, especially because Lanz did not run for Yell Leader on the pretense of dividing the student body.

"Steven truly has the most genuine heart of anybody I've met," Roberts said. "He wants to serve the university and unite the student body. He ran on the vision that he could unite the student body, representing non-regs and Corps members alike."

STAND IN CONTINUED

students walk by, the focus is drawn to singing and praying.

From 2-7 a.m. the participants did exactly that. Liz Harris, events coordinator and international studies senior, said a new prayer subject was introduced every hour, "to slightly meditate on but just be really praying over and keeping mindful."

The push for prayer plays a key role in the IJM by allowing the organization members and their audience to have a positive outlook on the fight against human trafficking.

"This is such a dark subject and this is such a difficult thing to talk about that we don't want people walking away feeling discouraged and hopeless," said Hannah Seela, community outreach officer and psychology sophomore. "One of the main aspects is finding hope in

God and Jesus to free people."

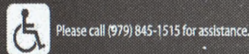
Displayed examples of stories and statistics brought to light the reality of modern day human trafficking. Along with the stories and facts presented, painted handprints marked each of the five letters of the display that spelled out "STAND."

Allison Booth, IJM member and history and sociology junior, said awareness surrounding the current state of human trafficking in the world is on the rise, which was reflected through the "STAND" display.

"We just wanted a visual representation of the growth of this movement as more people become aware," Booth said.

Through all the activities, members remained mindful of their main cause, Seela said.

"Our primary objective is just to raise awareness and our campus' collective consciousness," Seela said.



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