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Bonding through bondage

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BONDING THROUGH BONDAGE

INSIDE ONE OF CAMPUS'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL CLUBS

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BY WHITNEY MASON  DESIGN ALIXANDRIA COLLINS  PHOTOGRAPHY HANNAH OLSON
As 7:10 P.M. came upon them, the meeting started. Kenna, the vice president, stepped to the front of the room, also donning pink hair, and stood beside the projector ready to greet those in attendance. “No outing. Don’t go on the streets and talk to a random person about the meetings,” Kenna stressed right before a video started, attracting everyone’s attention.

The video titled, “Bondage 101” began, and a sex expert stood proudly in front of the camera demonstrating on an inanimate dummy the proper ways to rope bondage an individual. The woman in the video spoke repeatedly about something so important to each member of the executive board — consent.

“Every meeting we cover consent,” Ellorah, the treasurer, says. The first meeting following Clubfest is always the consent talk.

After the conclusion of the video began the discussion of the most popular topic members desire to discuss. “Lots of different types of rope play,” Evan, social media and PR chairperson quickly explained. “For different styles to engage in,” Ellorah finished.

Four different types of ropes in all different colors, including red, black, pink, green and purple were placed on the table and inspected by the club members. The difference between the methods of restraint and decorative ropes was explained by the executive board members — a heavy importance is emphasized on maintaining the consistency, thickness, and “rigor” of the ropes.
“You probably want to do suspending with them,” Ellorah says, receiving a few nods in agreement.

The projector screen was quickly changed to display artwork of people in suspension. “Suspending can get pretty elaborate,” Catie said as everyone around her looked in awe at the screen.

Holding the soft, purple rope, Ellorah carefully pulled on it, causing it to fall out of its tied-up position. “Rope tying is something you have to be careful with. Like tying up under the arm — if you aren’t careful it can lead to nerve damage,” she stressed.

“Communication and safe spaces are the two most important things. You have to talk with your partner and you have to have that safe spot,” Catie said.

Although they get “lots of stares, points and giggles” at Clubfest, Kenna said the club itself has always been a small one, with the number of regular members ranging from seven to 10. There’s always an increase in members for the first few meetings, but only a handful stick around afterward. Current members don’t understand why there is a stigma around the club with the campus population.

“There’s this benefit and stigma of saying you’ve been to Cuffs,” Kenna explained. “People claim all the time that they come and don’t.” Catie added. All the board members agreed that they hear false rumors about the club frequently.

The talk of misconceptions continued, “People think that this is a sex club and it is not.” Catie said. “It’s the people that stand away, don’t come at all or talk to us, who believe the rumors circulating social media and the misconceptions,” Catie suggested.

The four board members were swift to say that no demonstrations were done during the meetings — they are strictly discussion-based and the discussions are based on what the members want to talk about.

“We’ve had meetings that have explicit content,” Ellorah said, referring to past conversations about the topics of handjobs and blowjobs, but it has been a year or so since those topics have been brought up. “We don’t do anything with people involved,” Ellorah said, explaining that they use a demonstration doll which they’ve named Fred.

“He’s really heavy,” Catie jokes. “But our discussions vary — we’ll talk about mummification, fire play and lingerie, but we’re trying to express how to do things safely.”

The education and discussion aspects of the club are the main emphases. “Cuffs was the first place I could share things,” Evan said. Catie agreed. “I’m more open and confident in myself,” she said. “The good environment around Cuffs has brought comfort to all the members.” She explained that over time the feeling of comfort has branched out from their club.

“The LGBTA club is the club we have the best alliance with, many of our members including myself are apart of the LGBT community,” she said, mentioning how both clubs give each other support.
Foreplay is an area on which the members felt the general public needed more education. “Foreplay isn’t all sexual,” Kenna said, clarifying that “You engage in it because it feels good.” “People with anxiety use it for coping methods,” Catie added.

The disapproval of “Fifty Shades of Grey” brought forth a shift in the conversation. Not a single member supports or finds the film phenomenon accurate. “It doesn’t show consent correctly and it’s the wrong display of BDSM,” Evan explained. The other members in attendance seemed to be on the same page.

“To consent is to have an understanding of the circumstances around it,” Catie said. The group hopes to have a forum to discuss issues with the series.

The executive board, all seniors, are seeing their days in the club dwindling, but they are focused on the future of the club, and hoping to become more approachable to outsiders through projects with the health center and a possible name change. Before their departure, the executive board plans to continue to emphasize safe sex and work toward becoming a safe resource for consent. People’s views of the club hasn’t stopped them in the past, and the members don’t see other’s views interfering in the near future.
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