



PRAVDA?

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Special PRAVDA? Investigation: Campus Conspiracy Theories

Ellen Seeser, Pittsburgh

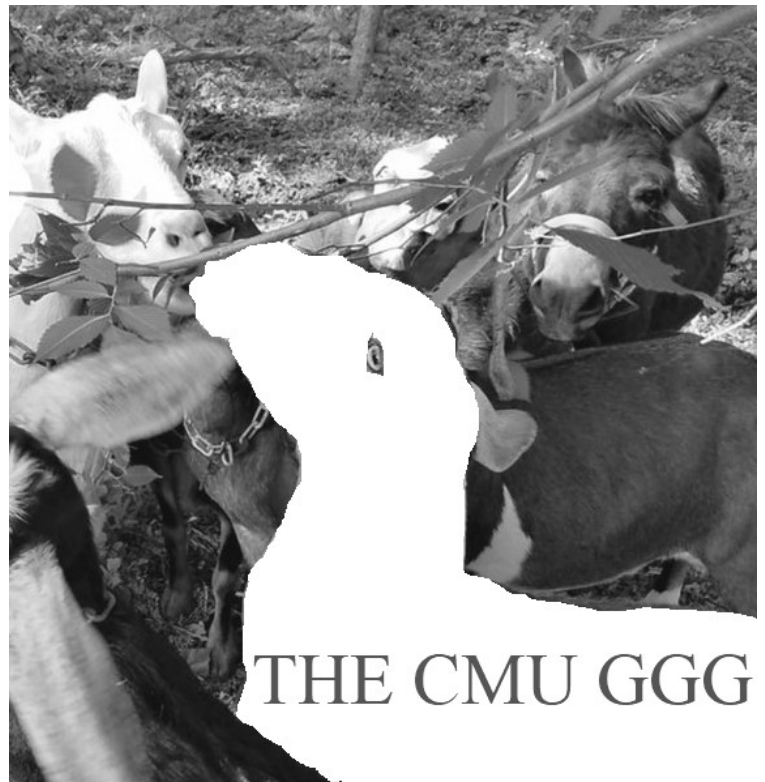
DOHERTY JUNGLE—The wind whistles. It's dark, a cloudy early evening. I'm standing next to the—tennis? badminton?—sportsball courts, waiting to meet with two members of the Gates Goats Ghosters, one of the many secretive conspiracy theory groups which call CMU home.

Soon, they arrive. The first, A, is the vice-president of the organization; the other, B, seems to be a mere lackey. They requested that I use pseudonyms in order to protect their identities, fearing judgement from their friends and classmates.

"Do you hear it?" A asks, gazing up into the sloping greenery separating Gates from Purnell. I hear nothing. "The bleating," A clarifies. "They're calling out for their friends."

"It's so touching," B adds, wiping away a stray tear. "Sometimes between classes I come down here and just... listen."

The Gates Goats Ghosters, or Goaties, were founded around the idea that some of the Gates Goats—the mammals which were rented to tame the grass outside of Gates last year—have returned as ghosts to haunt the area of campus they once roamed. According to their unofficial student group charter, the Goaties' goal is "to gain recognition of this issue on campus, encourage respect for the Gates Goats, and help the lost souls of the Gates Goats go peacefully into the goat-afterlife." It's an ambitious set of objectives, and one that doesn't necessarily garner positive attention from other students on campus.



The Gates Goats Ghosters Official Logo

"I just think it's kind of dumb." I'm talking to a group of students on the Cut about the issue. "Why would the ghosts of those goats come back here? It's not like they were here for very long..."

"Don't people usually think that you'd haunt the place that you died?" another student chimes in. "None of the goats even died here."

"I mean, I don't even believe in ghosts, but I heard that none of the goats even died at all," the first replies. "How could they haunt campus? It's impossible."

The students raise a valid point, one of the most consistently cited counterarguments to the Goaties' beliefs. Those committed to discrediting the Goaties will be eager to inform you that, in fact, all of the Gates Goats are still alive.

The Goaties don't see this as a problem, though—just because the goatkeepers say the goats are alive doesn't mean it's true.

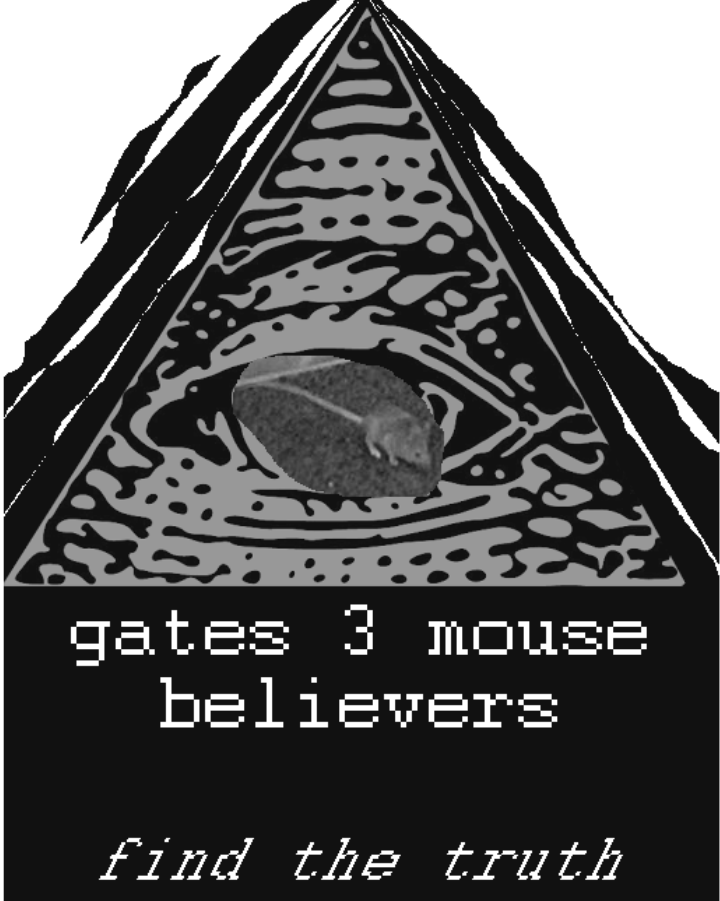
"We'll keep fighting until the ghosts get the recognition and respect they deserve," A tells me. "We'll keep fighting until they find peace."

An admirable sentiment from the Gates Goats Ghosters. They are, however, not the only conspiracy theory group on campus. Close by, on Gates 3, I meet a less well-known group—the Mouse Believers. Until now, few have heard the name, and even fewer are aware of what, exactly, the Mouse Believers believe.

"Our aim as Mouse Believers is twofold," says Cy McKibble, unabashed president of the organization. "First, to capture and interrogate the leader of the Gates 3 mouse population, and second, to share the truth that we will learn. In the past, we've carefully guarded our secrets. We were afraid of competition. But now, we believe our success is right around the corner, and we've decided to go public."

McKibble went on to explain that every morning, from 4 to 7 A.M., a group of dedicated Mouse Believers undertakes serious, high-stakes observation in a couple "strategically optimal" locations on the third floor of Gates. Mice are often spotted, but "they don't stop to say hello. Not usually. So the issue of finding their leader has been really problematic and difficult."

Come to our meetings:
4:30 PM Mondays DH 1212 - regular meetings
3:30 PM Wednesdays UC 329 - exec board meetings (all are welcome)
7 PM Fridays - events!
Tune into our Facebook group (cmukgb) and mailing list for updates!



The Official Logo of the Mouse Believers

Back on the Cut, some students seem more amenable to McKibble's organization than to the Goaties. "You know, that's kind of interesting," one student says. "Since they live in Gates, I bet the mice see and hear a lot of information."

"Oh my God, Jared, you can't be serious. It's mice, they can't talk," another student interjects. "This is actually more ridiculous than the thing with the goats."

"I don't know..." Jared looks contemplative. "They could be onto something with the mice, dude."

Seems like the Mouse Believers just gained another member.

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