

# DAILY TROJAN

*Letter to the Editor:*

## Statue of Hecuba represents the importance of female leadership

**By Arielle Yael Mokhtarzadeh**

*President, UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council*

In November 2015, UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council President Heather Rosen made a bet with USC Undergraduate Student Government President Rini Sampath on the outcome of the annual UCLA vs. USC football game: The president of the losing campus had to write an op-ed in the winning campus' school paper.

Last week, I made that same bet with current USG President Austin Dunn. And unfortunately, the tradition of UCLA undergraduate student body presidents publishing in the *Daily Trojan* continues.

In August 2017, the University of Southern California dedicated its newest sculpture of Hecuba, Queen of Troy. Hecuba is a homage to the women of the Trojan Family. She is celebrated for “preserv[ing] and protect[ing] her family and beloved city.” USC President C. L. Max Nikias said he wished for the sculpture to be a female mascot to stand alongside her male counterpart, Tommy Trojan. He believed she should embody the breadth of campus diversity — a feat that the *Los Angeles Times* claimed to be as impossible as Tommy Trojan flexing all his muscles at once.

Hecuba stands valiantly at 20 feet tall, on a platform featuring six women who are meant to represent her six daughters. Each woman was meant to depict a woman of Native American, Middle Eastern, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian or African descent. In addition to depicting the diversity of the University, the women are also meant to represent the diversity of USC's academic disciplines, including social sciences, arts, science, humanities, medicine and technology.

Hecuba stands on the shoulders of giants — literally and figuratively.

It is not easy being a woman in leadership. Whether we are running to serve as president of the United States or president of our undergraduate students' associations, women today face a slew of challenges and obstacles not faced by our male counterparts.

We need not look further than our Facebook news feeds to recognize these challenges, and women's resilience in the face of adversity. In January 2017, five million Americans joined together in solidarity to march in the name of gender equality. In February, Sen. Elizabeth Warren was silenced in her criticism of then-attorney general nominee Sen. Jeff Sessions, and nevertheless, she persisted. In March, the “Fearless Girl” was installed before the iconic Wall Street “Charging Bull” to shed light on gender disparities in the finance industry. And in October, women around the world took to social media to share their stories as victims and survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Me too, we said, united in one voice to uplift our experiences and call for eradication of gender-based violence.

That is why Hecuba matters.

It matters that one of the top 20 private universities in the country has a female mascot to stand alongside her male counterpart. It matters that her face is the combination of faces of women who have seen, heard, smelled, tasted and lived different experiences. It matters that one of her hands is placed over her heart, while the other is outstretched to every passerby.

Hecuba matters. And it matters that she is now leading the charge.

Now more than ever, it is important that we come together, not only as women, but also as people of different races, faiths, genders, sexualities, ages and abilities to uplift and amplify the voices of women in leadership and women pursuing leadership.

There are very few Trojans I can get behind. But Hecuba is definitely one of them.