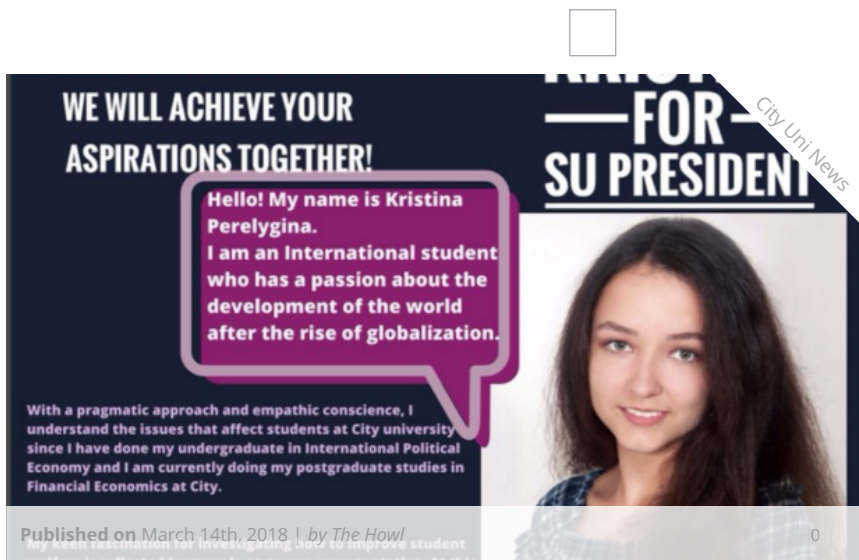


THE HOWL



Meet presidential candidate Kristina Perelygina

By: Gursimran Hans

Inclusivity, diversity and community are the buzzwords for Financial Economics postgrad student Kristina Perelygina, **who is in the running to become President of the student union.** An international student, who did her undergraduate degree in International Political Economy at City, she is hoping to use her experience to aid her in the role she is attempting to win.

Perelygina was not aware of the existence of the student union until her third year and this has influenced her decision to run: "I found myself very sorry that I didn't actually know earlier.

"The student union has amazing facilities, they give a lot of great support,

"Now, I see the Student Union is more productive and more transparent, but I would love to increase it as student president next year."

Perelygina's manifesto pledges to improve student networking, simplify exam information and procedures, introduce charging stations, maintain low prices at CityBar and give more support for international students to find housing.

She hopes to expand the SU and the opportunities offered within it: "During my campaign, I spoke to a lot of societies and I realised they are not promoted enough, they don't have enough possibilities to organise events.

"It should be a bigger community, inclusive community within this university," she explains.

The idea for the charging station comes after being asked for an iPhone cable whilst in the library and considering issues within the university. Perelygina's manifesto says CityBar provides the cheapest food prices in the square mile: "CityBar is not really a part of City University, this is a concern because this is a social, commonplace and it's not even a part of the university, it's another business. I'm pretty sure they subsidise the prices there. I will try to make a campaign to keep these prices low."

The candidate may need support from the university to follow through on this claim but she insists that "they definitely can afford it".

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As an international student, she found it hard to find accommodation when arriving in London, she just took the first place she found.

"I just took whatever was on the market and I didn't know where to look, whom I can speak with", she begins.

"It's especially difficult for first year. You are located in a different country this time, you have VISA problems, you need to pay your fees and all from outside the country."

Her solution for this problem is clear: "A common agent within the university to help students get into housing schemes, to explain that this is maybe a website you shouldn't be looking for accommodation on.

"Some really common sense things that some international students have no idea about."

Perelygina also points that international students cannot view a house before making a decision, something which is substantially easier for domestic students. She proposes that the agent could view the property on behalf of the student and advise them accordingly.

Her experience at the university is what she believes makes her the best person for the job, having also been a student representative in the past: "I've been here for a few years, I've been through all the stages of being a university student here, from induction week, trying to find internships, careers services, basically I've used all the facilities possible in this university,

"I am now a postgrad and this is completely another sphere, the student union does not seem very interested in that because we are here just for one year, no one knows what post graduates think or feel, how they live here and what do they do.

"With all these issues, I think I know and understand what exactly needs to be improved.

"I gained enough skills on how to help students."

A lot of issues have been raised regarding freedom of speech at the university. Last year, the Student Union voted to ban The Daily Mail, The Sun and The Daily Express from the campus. This was later overturned but Spiked Online awarded City a red ranking saying: "City University and City University Students' Union collectively create a hostile environment for free speech."

At the candidates' debate during reading week, this was a major talking point, however many deemed the responses from candidates unsatisfactory.

Perelygina herself admits: "I didn't really understand it."

However, after looking into the issue, she informs me: "This is something unacceptable. It shouldn't be like this, students need to be able to express their opinion."

A solution to the issue will take time, she admits: "I'm not honestly sure how I would improve this situation. I've never been inside the student union working there by myself, so this definitely will take time for me."

She feels she would need to wait to see the situation from the inside before making any policies: "Maybe I will understand how I can help more [if she wins], but I would definitely try to help to improve this situation."

Another sticking point is the government's Prevent strategy, a strand of the counter-terrorism policy that has been criticised for being divisive and alienating communities. Perelygina admits government regulations "cannot really be avoided" but did discuss the issue with the university's Palestinian Society.

"This is a sensitive topic, I didn't face any issues with that, I'm not that religion. It's not about the university only, it's about the government in this country. What City doesn't do, they don't try to make it smooth. This is very hurtful for some students, definitely.

"I need to represent all religions and all nationalities without any discrimination, I would try to do my best to make all people welcome in this university. And let all students express their opinion and be heard as much as I can from my side."

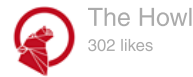
She proposes holding more events and meetings to create an inclusive environment and raise awareness on both free speech and Prevent and go from there to create viable solutions.

In February, the SU passed a motion supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and thus boycott Israeli products in a controversial AGM.

What does Perelygina make of the proceedings?

"This is a topic of research for me.

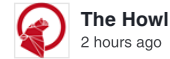
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"I don't think I can express my opinion fully on that situation, really, because I don't know much about that. University is university and university culture should be diverse and should be inclusive."

She hopes to reach a position where she can avoid physical conflict playing out on campus: "It's better if university would be neutral on this question. Because again, this is very sensitive, we don't want any aggressive confrontations inside uni."

"University is the place you should be safe and feel yourself and at home."

Should Pereygina win, she will replace the outgoing Olesea Matcovschi in September. Elections are currently open and will run until Friday 16th March.

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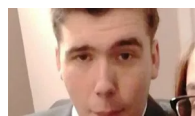
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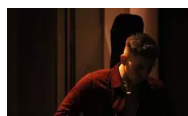
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