Opinion

Photo of the Day



Bands compete in WHUS Radio's Battle of the Bands on Feb. 21, 2026 at Rome Ballroom. Vices Inc, Part of the Problem, Elizabory and West of the Gate all competed, but attendees voted West of the Gate the winner. PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Alt, Gay and from New Jersey:

U.S. WOMEN'S FIGURE SKATERS SMASH STEREOTYPES

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Ciao and welcome back to Girl, Uninterrupted! As a resident sports-apathist, I've become incredibly invested in this year's winter Olympics, thanks to the U.S. women's figure skating team. Alysa Liu, Amber Glenn and Isabeau Levito, a.k.a. "the Blade Angels", a.k.a. "alt, gay and from New Jersey", have broken boundaries in winning gold and redefining what it means to be a skater. The trio have connected with audiences internationally on an unprecedented level, primarily because of their unashamed senses of self.

Alysa Liu: Alt

Taking home the U.S.'s first gold medal for women's figure skating since 2002, Alysa Liu made history. Out of the hundreds of athletes competing at this year's Olympics, Liu instantly connected with audiences and I'm inclined to believe that her personal branding played a part. Halo-striped hair, smiley piercing and fun-patterned tights instantly differentiate her from the clean pastels expected of a figure skater.

With the "clean girl" aesthetic dominating, it's refreshing to see a successful young woman (an athlete representing the United States, at that) who's unafraid to show up completely as herself. Figure skating is an especially significant platform to show up in: music choice, costume and overall appearance have a weight in judges' decisions. Rather than shy away or dull down her appearance, Liu welcomes perception. "I want [the audience] to see my hair, my dress, my makeup, the way I skate," she said in an interview. "I want people to see everything about me." Her success comes as a slap in the face to everyone who's uttered the sentence "you won't get anywhere in life with that hair/piercing/tattoo".

Aside from her alternative appearance, Liu is an inspiration thanks to her unique mindset. She returned to the Olympics for the love of the game after taking a hiatus to live as a normal teenager. Genuine passion is such a rare motivator in higher level athletics and Liu serves as the perfect example of what sportsmanship should be. She chooses her own music and outfits, cementing her performances as an extension of herself and her art rather than existing solely to be judged.



LOGO BY ALEXA PAPPAS STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Amber Glenn: Gay

Amber Glenn made history as the first openly queer woman to figure skate at an Olympics. She continued breaking boundaries after taking home the gold alongside Liu in the team event. Glenn's decision to come out publicly should not be minimized. Again, figure skating is a subjective event, a fact Glenn herself is acutely aware of. "It's not whoever crosses the finish line first wins," Glenn said. "Part of it is up for discussion. It's up to that person's opinion. So of course I was scared that I'd be looked at as less feminine, less graceful." Despite facing backlash, Glenn posed with a pride flag after competing in the women's free skate championships and remains outspoken about her identity.

Aside from serving as an inspiration for LGBTQ+ athletes, Glenn is also a strong advocate for mental health. She's been incredibly open about her struggles with depression and anxiety, ensuring that younger athletes know it's possible to succeed while facing mental health challenges.

Isabeau Levito: from New Jersey

She's beauty, she's grace, she's the image of a classic figure skater. At 18 years old, new Jersey native Isabeau Levito is the youngest member of the U.S. women's figure skating team. Recovering from an injury earlier in the season, Levito was unable to compete alongside Glenn and Liu in the team event and placed twelfth overall. She's received less press but remained a constant beacon of support for her fellow Blade Angels.

Levito doesn't come with as strong of an identifier as "alternative" or "queer." What's the significance of "from New Jersey" anyway? As a proud New Yorker, I'm inclined to scoff, but I won't.

Levito's draw comes in the fact that she's able to simultaneously uphold the perfect graceful figure skater image while being a normal teenager. On the ice, she's professional, downright magical and impeccable skilled. In her free time, she's anything but an ice queen. Most notably, Levito posted a TikTok about her favorite memory in the Olympic village: hijacking a golf cart between the hours of 2 and 4 in the morning. Ultimate chaos executed through the vessel of a four-wheeled vehicle? That, my friends, is the spirit of New Jersey.

The Blade Angels

Unabashedly showing up for oneself on an international platform is the utmost test of self-confidence. Gold medals aside, the Blade Angels cemented their place in U.S. history purely through their authenticity. I have faith that they've inspired generations of young athletes and young women to come – they've certainly inspired me.



Alysa Liu jumping in the air following her gold-winning figure skating routine at the 2026 winter Olympics. Liu, representing the United States, is currently attending UCLA. PHOTO COURTESY OF @VANITYFAIR ON INSTAGRAM