

# PULSE





# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello! It is with great pleasure that I present to you the first issue of Pulse, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's student magazine. Undergoing the merging of two existing universities brought big changes to our Edinburg and Brownsville campuses, as well as to this magazine. As some of you may remember, our magazine was formerly known as Panorama Magazine—a magazine that won dozens of awards in its time. The staff of this year's issue is proud to bring you content for every type of reader. You will see feature articles as well as photojournalism pieces to give you an inside look at the people, places and things in our university and community.

As the first editor-in-chief of this newly-named publication, it was important to me to be inclusive of the entire student body and the Rio Grande Valley. I wanted Pulse to cover a variety of topics, taking into consideration the different interests of our students and community members. My goal was to further promote unity amongst our university and the RGV. I believe this was made possible by including two fresh sections: Community and Business + Science. You will also find some more familiar categories: Student Life, Music + Art, Sports, Fashion and Politics.

Some of the hardships we underwent as a new magazine were trying to rebrand the magazine and gain publicity with a new name, discovering our image as Pulse and deciding what content to cover. Trying to balance work with staff members on both main campuses was also a challenge. I believe that we published a noteworthy magazine.

Our new logo was designed by Adrián Castillo Lara. From his point of view, the incomplete circles represent that there is room for improvement for this magazine and that although we may never reach perfection, we will strive for it.

On the cover is a photograph captured by local documentary photographer, Verónica Gabriela Cárdenas. The photograph comes from her project "Los abuelos." In this particular image, a grandmother is trying to get her granddaughter to smile for the camera. Cárdenas graduated from The University of Texas – Pan American in 2010 where she studied Spanish and minored in English. She was born in Monterrey, Nuevo León, México where she lived until she was 12 before she moved to the United States. You can read more about her and her project "Un retrato" on page [insert page].

Now, Andy De Llano, who started out as the copy editor then section editor for the Edinburg campus and was recently promoted to co-editor-in-chief, will give you insight into the different themes we explore in this first issue of Pulse.

I hope you all enjoy reading through the articles and looking through the content. If you have any questions or comments, you can email Pulse at [pulse.magazine@utrgv.edu](mailto:pulse.magazine@utrgv.edu). Enjoy!

**Betzaida Rivera**

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The point of our new school, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, was to emphasize the unique culture that this university is entrenched in. We're an overwhelming Hispanic/Latino population of students and our lives are significantly affected by our proximity to Mexico. That being the case, our reporters have focused on families who today struggle through customs and borders, like in Sage Bazan's "Sacred Heart" where she volunteers at an immigration relief center. Likewise Mariela Cedillo points out the individuals who proudly commemorate the trouble their parents went through to establish their lives in the United States by designing creative images and graphics in her article "REM: The American State of Mind."

Though Hispanics normally outnumber white, or Anglo, Americans significantly in the Rio Grande Valley, our reporters will also draw your attention to the hotspots where the Anglos outnumber Hispanics such as The Frio Grande Ice Center where men congregate to play hockey in Nathaniel Mata's "Hell Freezing" article. Mark Maynard goes further to examine how a few of our Winter Texans are enjoying their retirement in "Snow Birds and the Bees."

Of course, being an area so highly populated with people who have, or are related to individuals who have, emigrated to the United States, our students and professors tend to view immigration policy differently than the average American. In my article "On Immigration" I aim to share that point of view with readers while also pointing out the ways in which the United States has benefited from the immigrants who have made this country their home.

Because we are all, for the most part, college students, our reporters also had an interest in millennial trends in different areas. Jacqueline Arias conducted a survey of UTRGV students to shed light on their views of this year's presidential election in her article "The Youth Vote." Similarly, Dannae J. Gomez observes the rising trend among millennials to live with a partner before marriage in "Next Step or Misstep" and Mariela Cedillo informs us of the decline in car and home purchases among millennials in "An Economic Conundrum."

I hope these and other articles collected in Pulse will give you a glimpse of the culture UTRGV is immersed in and the views and concerns of our student's generation. But more than that, I hope you enjoy the read.

**Andrea "Andy" De Llano**

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Justin Escobar prepares his hair and makeup before his show.

Since then, the Edinburg resident suppressed his urge to wear feminine clothing and makeup for years. However, once he started attending the University of Texas – Pan American, he was slowly immersed in the world of drag. Now he spends most of his evenings wearing form-fitting dresses and sharp heels while dancing at McAllen clubs.

Escobar, also known as drag queen Sally Robbin, works a part-time job during the day. When the sun sets, he rolls out hundreds of dollars of makeup, countless club outfits and numerous wigs.

His Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday night routines last eight hours. From the two-and-a-half-hour makeup application to dancing at his favorite gay clubs until last call at 2 a.m., Escobar said it all makes him feel complete in a way that nothing else can.

“I think it’s because my life as a boy is kind of sad. I have nothing to look forward to sometimes. Then when it comes to the night time, I can put on this makeup that I learned to do,” he said, his face free of any makeup and his real, short hair exposed. “Now I do this every night and everybody comes up to me to say hi; they treat me like a celebrity. That makes me feel like I’m important.”

Sally has been his “feminine extension” for more than a year and a half. His custom club mix, which takes him about 20 minutes to create every night, played quietly in the background while he recalled the moment his alter ego’s name dawned on him.

His best friend was giving him suggestions, only listing first names. Escobar knew he wanted his surname to be Rob-

bin, inspired by one of his favorite artists -- Swedish singer, Robyn.

“He said, ‘What about Sally?’ and I got a chill in my stomach, you know, like when something just sounds right?” he said. “And I was like ‘Oh, shit. Sally Robbin. That’s cute.’”

He had his first public performance at the age of 19 -- though he does know younger queens -- at Club Rehab on Nolana Avenue in McAllen.

“I shaved my legs and I’d never done that before. I felt like everyone was watching me and kind of making fun of me,” Escobar said.

He explained how his nerves were through the roof, his heart racing beneath his hot skin. Once he began to dance the way he thought a woman would, a wave of confidence washed over him.

“It felt exhilarating. It was an inner confidence I never had before,” Escobar said. “It was awesome to have everyone’s eyes on me for once.”

While he is not presently enrolled in classes at UTRGV, Escobar wants to major in dance. Even though he’s a natural at performing, entering the world of drag was not a smooth transition. His first serious attempt at drag makeup did not go as planned, which discouraged him.

“I threw on this makeup and I didn’t know what I was doing. It just looked horrible,” he said. “I remember throwing everything to the ground and saying, ‘I don’t want to do this. This is stupid.’”

But the next day, he woke up and decided to give his all to his new hobby, which quickly became a large part of his life. Now he's surrounded by supportive peers from the drag world, also known as his "drag family." He's also found a mother figure in local queen Betty Crocker, who has more than 35 years of drag experience under her belt.

"A drag family is people who take care of you and a drag mom is the one who is there in case you need something like wigs or a costume or someone to help you out," Escobar explained. "They're there to provide for you like a mother and you can talk to them like one too."

While he's presently surrounded by several friends who share his enthusiasm for looking fabulous and knack for contouring, it wasn't always that way.

"I'm shy, so I was really taken back when I first started,"

***NOW I DO THIS EVERY NIGHT AND EVERYBODY COMES UP TO ME TO SAY HI; THEY TREAT ME LIKE A CELEBRITY. THAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M IMPORTANT.***

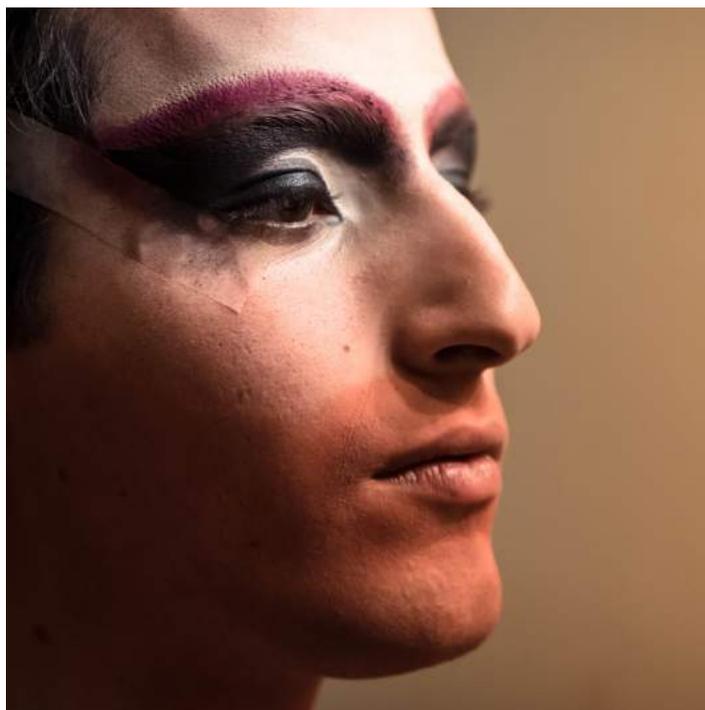
he said. "I would walk in in drag and everybody would turn around to look at me, analyze me and find something that was wrong. On the inside I was like, 'Oh, shit. They hate me.'"

But, he continued, it was all constructive criticism because his experienced peers wanted him to look his best.

Since Sally Robbin is a personality Escobar developed, she has her own Facebook page and her own quirks. She is far from being a secret, as his family and friends are well aware – and accepting – of her existence.

"[Sally] is crazy, but she doesn't know it," he said with a laugh. "She's a bunch of energy. I like to have fun so I'm always dancing everywhere and yelling when I'm at the clubs."

He described Sally as a "futuristic robot girl," which is reflected in her style and dancing.





**SALLY IS CRAZY, BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW IT, HE SAID WITH A LAUGH. SHE'S A BUNCH OF ENERGY. I LIKE TO HAVE FUN SO I'M ALWAYS DANCING EVERYWHERE AND YELLING WHEN I'M AT THE CLUBS.**

"I like taking a different approach to looking beautiful, but still serving my indie grunge alternative style in a robotic fembot dance style," he explained.

When it comes to where he dances, Escobar named PDB's Lounge, Studio 69, the Recovery Room and Club Rehab. PDB's on Ware Road in McAllen, he said, is his home bar.

"My favorite place to perform is PBD's because of the older crowd that's been there for the 31 years it's been open," he said. "They actually go to see the show and have a good time. It's not really like that at most gay clubs down here in the Valley."

He went on to explain how he's met spectators who visit these clubs just to see Sally Robbin strut her stuff, which he said means the world to him.

Even though he enjoys dressing like a woman, Escobar identifies as a gay man, something he said is highly common in the local drag scene. However, queens can also be straight, bisexual and any other sexuality in the spectrum

"Everyone has their different desire for doing drag and everyone is different," he explained. "I think as long as we appreciate each other we will all be happy, especially in the gay community."

Escobar said he does not plan on ever leaving the drag queen scene, making it a life-long career. He hopes to move to Dallas or Houston, cities he called key places for drag performers.

"A lot of people have told me that I can't make a career out of this. When someone tells me I can't do something ... I want to prove them wrong," he said. "And I know I can make this a career. I'm already doing so well. Sally Robbin has already slayed the Valley and she's still going to do better."

He added that he will continue up this path not only for himself, but for others who may not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

"It gives everyone hope that if you hang onto your dreams, you can achieve them," he said. "Anyone can say you can't do something; it's what you do that matters."

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# CONNECTING A CAMPUS

## A LOOK AT HUMANS OF UTRGV

By Angelica Clarice Cantu • Photos: Angelica Clarice Cantu & Humans of UTRGV

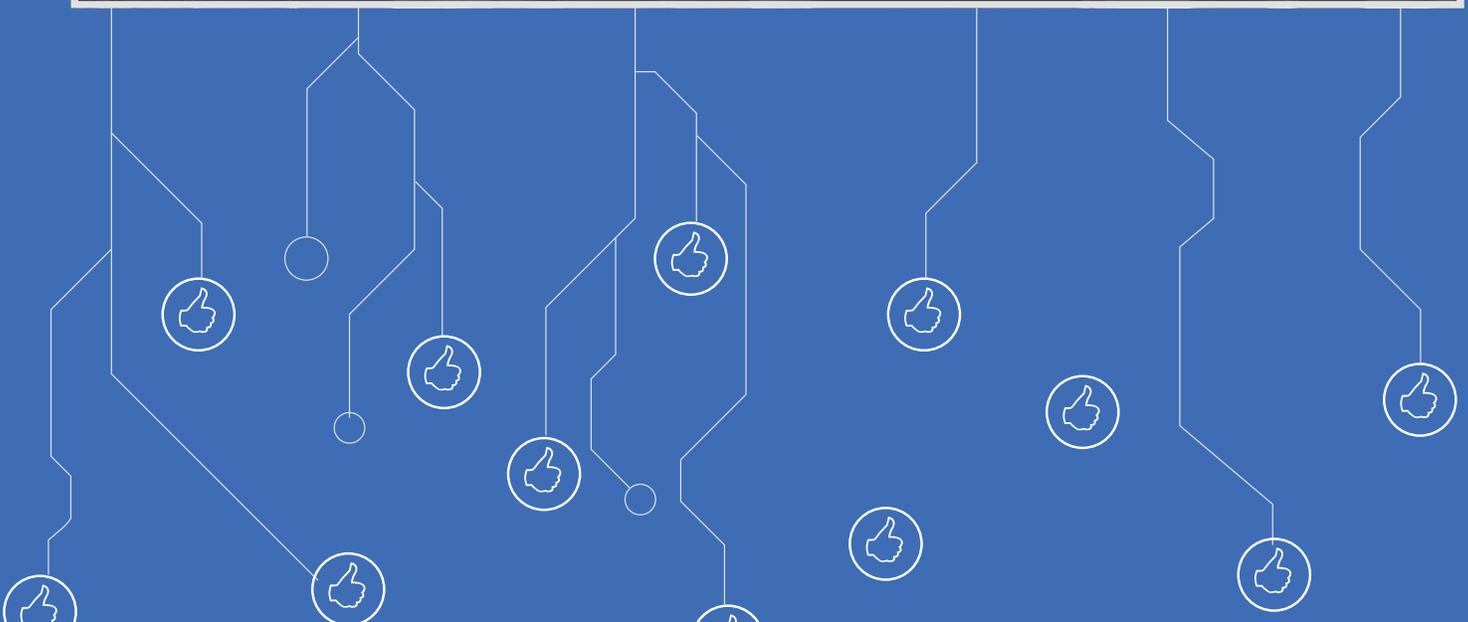


In a world full of pessimistic characters and harrowing headlines there are people in the Rio Grande Valley who are making it their primary objective to bring the community a healthy dose of optimism. Humans of UTRGV (HOUTRGV) started off as a concept to share personal daily experiences from students and staff of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Today, the social media page has continued to inspire an audience of all ages.

Share

Send

Like





What started off as a mere idea in April 2013 at the University of Texas at Brownsville, one of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's legacy institutions, is now an established Facebook page that boasts well over 3,000 followers. Various personal accounts from students, staff and faculty of the university grace the social network page.

Jennifer McGehee-Valdez, the new head of public relations at the university, started this entire project on her own. Taking note from the Humans of New York social media page, who she has based this entire project on, she started by routinely walking up to students, staff and faculty at the former University of Texas at Brownsville campus without hesitation to ask unplanned questions. Now with her current job title, she credits the continuation of her venture to her small-scale but exceedingly devoted staff of students that keep the wheels in motion.

"They're all great," McGehee-Valdez said. "It takes a special kind of person, a very certain type of person to not be afraid to ask a complete stranger a question about their life."

In a daunting, and sometimes nerve-racking task, reporters who work for the organization select students, faculty or staff at random during days of the week and ask a question that could vary anywhere from your favorite ice cream flavor to who your #MCM is.

Penelope Nguyen, a photographer for HOUTRGV mentions that her job is one of the highlights of her student career.

"The staff of Humans of UTRGV have been really kind and supportive," Nguyen said. "Their excitement for and dedication to the project makes me feel the same way."

Concerning the people she's approached, the Vietnam native mentioned that everyone has been relatively easy to talk to.

"Of the people I've approached, everyone has gone along with it, surprisingly enough," the Computer Science major said. "I feel really lucky that everyone has been willing to share their stories with me."

Although, Nguyen said she had to build up a lot of courage to get the job done.

"In the beginning, however, I was extremely nervous about going up to people I didn't know, so I asked my friends to help out for the first few photos," Nguyen said. "A few did refuse, which made me a bit sad, but it's understandable that some people are camera-shy or just shy in general."

Her boss admits that at times it is discouraging when people decline an interview.

"When I first started, there were times I felt embarrassed," McGehee-Valdez said. "But you always move on when someone says no."

However, when McGehee-Valdez and her staff do encounter someone that is willing to share, the reporters must follow a major rule.

"Just don't ever assume. You can't really assume someone's a certain way," the Chicago native said. "You don't know their stories, feelings, beliefs or thoughts."

One person out of many to be interviewed by HOUTRGV, is UTRGV Mexican-American Studies and Spanish

***IT TAKES A SPECIAL KIND OF PERSON,***

***A VERY CERTAIN TYPE OF PERSON***

***TO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK A COMPLETE STRANGER A QUESTION ABOUT THEIR LIFE.***



"I had a professor ask the class 'what were your thoughts when you were 5?' Everyone said 'making friends' and I said 'to not be made fun of.' What 5-year-old have you met that was trying to be accepted by their peers and not have the power to be invisible or could have the ability to read minds? I got teased and bullied by many for looking different. My bunny teeth were definitely something I couldn't hide no matter how much I tried. To make my self-esteem worse, I also had a speech impediment. Bunny teeth and a speech problem!? I was the perfect target. I eventually got braces and my speech has improved so much. Nowadays, you can't get me to stop smiling or talking! Best of all, I think I'm a really neat human."

student life

community

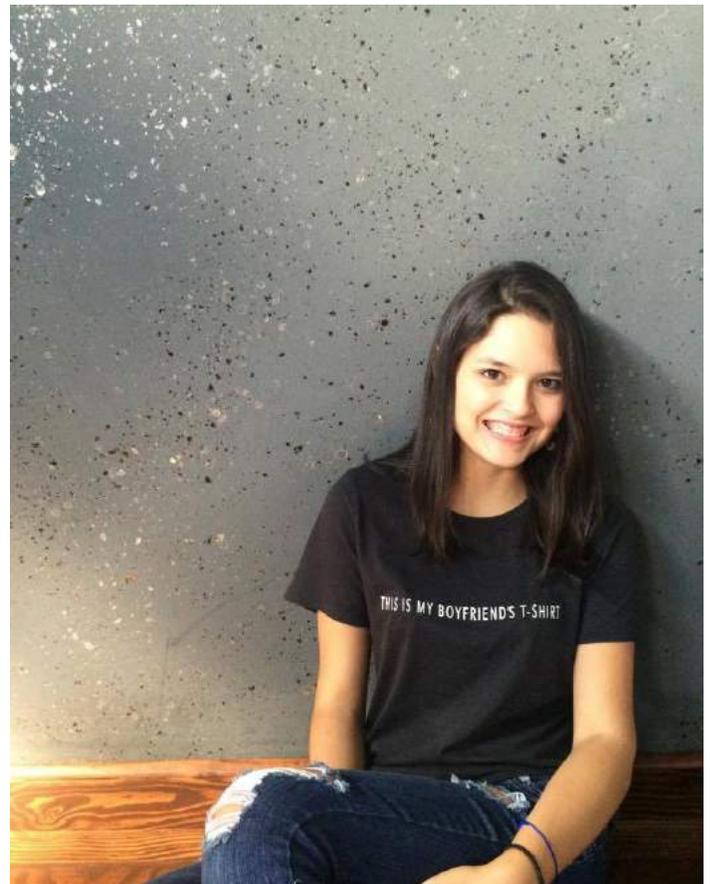
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"This is the marketing knockout punch."

"It's a weird fear. People call me crazy for it, but I know I'm not crazy. At the time I was only five years old, but I remember everything about that night. For some reason my family and I couldn't sleep so we were up late in my parents' room. My younger sister and I were making a card for my dad when my mom, who was pregnant at the time, received the call. She started crying and ran into the restroom. When she came out she screamed to the housekeeper to take care of us and then left. We fell asleep and the next day she told us my dad had been driving back home from the island when the bridge collapsed and his truck fell in the water. Because his windows were manual, he was able to climb out and he swam until a fishing boat rescued him. Up until I was sixteen I would cry every time I crossed that bridge. I don't cry anymore, but the feeling that it can happen again will always be there. Today, I'm very close with my dad and without him I don't know where I'd be



fashion

business + science

politics

graduate student, Sergio Gael. He believes that the Humans of UTRGV page is an excellent way to feature the uniqueness of the students on campus.

"I believe that pages like this one truly highlight the individual experiences that we have and it is a great venue to get to know the various Vaqueros/as being featured," the Pharr native said. "I feel that pages like this unite the university's community because the majority of us can relate to each other in one way or another."

Gael also hopes that by sharing his story, HOUTRGV's followers can face their biggest fears by opening up to others.

"I believe that overcoming one's fears is essential to grow as human beings," the 23-year-old said. "Although it could be intimidating to speak about our life because of fear of being judged. We have to understand that everyone has an opinion."

The first-generation college student also credits his mother for playing an influential role in not only his education, but in why he decided to share a slice of his life with Humans of UTRGV.

"My mom made me realize things that I had not done so before and I thank her for it," Gael said. "So it is also a tribute to her. Many of us whom are first generation college students feel a sense of responsibility and pride with our family."

Each and every story that graces the online page has its own piece of authentic relatability. It gives students a chance to connect, and realize that everyone is going through their own problems inside and outside of school.



"I was born in the U.S., but at the age of 6 my father was deported to Mexico. My mother packed all her personal belongings, rented a U-Haul truck, withdrew what she had from her savings account, and took my sister and I to live in Mexico with him. Growing up over there had its ups and downs. I had to wake up every morning at 4am to beat the long lines at the bridge and my first class wouldn't be until 8am. We dealt with danger and our lives were at risk due to the high amount of bloodshed that was caused by shootings, explosions, and/or barricaded streets. My parents struggled with keeping a stable job. Only one of them finished high school. I am going to make my parents proud when I graduate with my Bachelor's Degree in Education, and I will remind them that without them, I'd be nothing. All my hard-work and dedication was because of them."

McGehee-Valdez is aware of the page's success and is fully confident in what it has accomplished so far.

"We are pleased at how the page is coming along. We have excellent engagement and pretty positive feedback," McGehee-Valdez said. "I hope to have more photographers, so we can continue to share more stories! So that's the plan, to keep doing what we are doing and reach as much of the UTRGV community as we can."

*If you would like to share your story with Humans of UTRGV, send in a message to their page for more information: [facebook.com/humansofutrgv](https://www.facebook.com/humansofutrgv)*

#### Official Humans of UTRGV Photographers:

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Estela Martinez  
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Isaa Alexa Buentello  
Rebeca Rodriguez  
Monica Garza  
Karla Madrigal  
Alex Garrido  
Penelope Nguyen  
Astrid Ramos  
Carolina Avalos

"My advice, with anything really, is to find something you really like to do. I see it happen a lot of the times, kids try to become these super students, try follow these strict degree plans. I've taken countless classes not in my degree plan just to see what's out there. Just find something that you enjoy. You don't have to have your life figured out at 18 or 23, but look around, explore, look into the different classes at university. Find something you like and then stick to it. Most people will get on this path because they see the paycheck. Don't do anything ever just for the paycheck. If you try to get a job or go into a group because you're going to make a lot of money, most likely you're going to be miserable. I enjoy what I do in terms of business. Yeah, if I play my cards right and if I head in the direction I'm heading, potentially I can make a lot of money, but I also really enjoy what I'm doing."



# PARKING CONTROL

BEING A STUDENT SAFETY OFFICER

By Matthew Ramos • Illustration: Matthew Sustaita



# ***I SEE A LOT OF STUDENTS WHO WANT TO PARK IN THE VISITORS' PARKING UP HERE IN FRONT, ATTRACTIVE GIRLS IN NICE CARS ARE THE WORST. THEY FEEL ENTITLED.***

“I’ve seen guys take pictures of me. I know they’re going to post it on Facebook so others can hate on me because I gave him a parking citation. It doesn’t bother me,” said Orlando Valdez after checking the parking meters west of the Student Services Visitor’s Center.

Being a UTRGV public safety officer is far from his ideal situation, Valdez said as he typed on his hand-held computer for issuing citations. He applied for many jobs before being hired in July.

“I make eight dollars an hour and work only 18 hours a week, but beggars can’t be choosers,” Valdez said. “I survive by living at home with my family.”

The new UTRGV uniforms hadn’t arrived by the beginning of the fall semester, so he wore khaki pants and his own plain green collared shirt that has fabric that sometimes gets hot. Sweating outside in the sun doesn’t bother him, but having to shower before class is a hassle. The showers at the police headquarters don’t give him enough privacy and the showers at the recreation center are not clean enough. On Mondays he gets to stay in the air-conditioned information booth at the main entrance, where visitors drive up to look for parking or to ask for directions.

Working in the information booth is preferable for Valdez. Although working outside does give him a lot of down time, he views working from parking lot to parking lot as mindless work.

“The booth makes me more social and tactful when it comes to recognizing people playing mind games with me,” the junior said. “I feel like I’m improving my people skills and it’s fun sometimes.”

Yet the information booth also comes with some frustration. “I see a lot of students who want to park in the visitors’ parking up here in front,” Valdez said. “Attractive girls in nice cars are the worst. They feel entitled.”

His strategy when dealing with people he feels are rude toward him is to be passive-aggressive.

“I like that. It’s the only good thing about this job,” Valdez said. “Other than that, this job isn’t hard.”

Co-worker Martin Perez said Valdez has a distinct work persona.

“He’s very blunt about this job,” Perez said. “He’s very blunt about everything.”

Last month a man pulled up to the booth and asked for a visitor’s parking pass, despite having a student sticker on the windshield. Valdez asked him to park at the meters, but the student persisted about parking as a visitor by claiming not to have money. Valdez wanted to bypass the excuse, so he gave the student a dollar out of his own pocket. The man took the money and drove off as he yelled obscenities back at Valdez. “I knew he was lying,” Valdez said. “I gave him the money anyway just to get him to leave.”

A wide range of emotions can be felt when dealing with the student patrol and the campus regulations. When Maximo Salinas was a new student, he received a citation for parking in the wrong lot and felt both upset and understanding.

“I was mad at first because I thought it was unfair since I was just a new student who didn’t know where I [could] park,” Salinas said. “Then I was calm and thought I should have just bought the right permit for that parking lot.” As for Valdez, he is thinking about what to do after graduation. He is leaning toward being a history professor because he does not know what else to do with a degree in history. He will come back to school if he can’t decide. “I’m very straightforward about these types of things,” he said.

# ***I’VE SEEN GUYS TAKE PICTURES OF ME. I KNOW THEY’RE GOING TO POST IT ON FACEBOOK SO OTHERS CAN HATE ON ME BECAUSE I GAVE HIM A PARKING CITATION. IT DOESN’T BOTHER ME***

# NOT YOUR TYPICAL DEAN

A CHRONICLE OF UTRGV'S DEAN OF STUDENT SUPPORT

By Danielle Birnell • Photo: Gustavo Huerta

student life

community



business

politics

“Hello,” he said as he put his hand out to shake mine. “I’m Michael.”

It was a simple statement, but it was the look in his eyes and his smile that said there was much more to this man than his name. It is rare that a person compliments a stranger in the elevator, let alone begins a conversation with the intent of truly connecting with someone, and not just making an observation about the weather. But if I had to describe him in one word, I think rare would be fitting.

This wasn’t the first time I had seen Michael, and I am sure that it wasn’t the first time he had seen me. It was obvious that he worked in the University Center building; he was middle-aged, clean shaven, always dressed professionally and was frequently seen walking around the building, most of the time with a zest that is indicative of his personality.

would sit down and have our talks,” Banegas said with a nostalgic smile. It was these talks that he said guided him to be a humble, caring servant. Banegas didn’t follow the traditional educational route on his way to becoming a dean, and actually studied a short time in Spain to become a priest. That was something he tried, because he knew it would please his mother, but he ultimately decided it just wasn’t for him.

At the age of 17, a senior in high school, Banegas left school to work full time at a jewelry store. Even at his young age, he quickly became the manager. He said he was more concerned about making money and taking care of his mother at that point in time. He said one day he just decided that he wanted to do something else with his life, so he called his boss, and said he was done. He then joined the Army.

the day the church was full,” Groom said with a laugh.

Banegas, Groom and some other soldiers had a tent set up for church services, but only a few would show up each week. One day there was a malfunction with the controls that shot the patriot missiles. A scud missile was detected, and was heading their way, but they were unable to get a missile fired.

“At the last second we were able to get one missile off to stop the scud, and then the system went down,” Groom said.

After weeks of having only a few people at the tent, the church was full.

“It had to be divine intervention for something like that to happen,” Groom said.

After his time in the military, Banegas settled in Texas and eventually was offered the associate dean position.

## **GROWING UP, WE DIDN'T HAVE IPADS OR SMARTPHONES, BUT EVERY DAY WE WOULD SIT DOWN AND HAVE OUR TALKS**

That zest was what made me think, who is this guy?

His bright orange and white business card said Michael Banegas, Ed.D., Associate Dean of Student Support. His clothing matched his title, but his approachable demeanor and introduction as Michael was not something people typically associate with a dean.

His office was exceptionally organized, the desk and chairs were perfectly arranged and all papers were neatly stacked. As he sat down he said to just call him Michael and that he didn’t care to be called Dr. Banegas.

Although he was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico, his family moved to Spain when he was only 2 years old. He doesn’t remember very much about his father, because he died when Banegas was 6, but he remembers his mother’s dedication. She was not formally educated, but he credits her for teaching him much about life.

He recalled growing up having platikas or heart-to-heart talks with his mother every day.

“Growing up, we didn’t have iPads or smartphones, but every day we

Although he initially joined to be a military policeman, he found the job mundane, and searched for other positions within the military. During his time in the military he studied to get his GED, then his high school diploma, next his associates, then his bachelor’s and eventually a doctorate. He moved up the ranks quickly, and became part of a Special Forces unit. After his time with the Special Forces, he was assigned as a first sergeant under a commander named Kevin Groom, to whom Banegas is still friends today.

Groom, who is now retired from the military, said that his first memory of Banegas was not of meeting him, but of reviewing his personnel file. He said there was part of the file that he was not authorized to view, which indicated to him that Banegas had some experience in secret missions. He knew the first sergeant would be a positive addition to his company.

The retired commander said he is thankful to have met Banegas and that he has been a friend throughout the years.

“One thing I remember most about our deployment in Desert Storm is

His career enables him to provide support to students and fellow veterans.

His service to veterans, however, goes beyond the students. Patrick Roberts, a student who works in the UT-RGV veteran service center, remembers how the dean helped a disabled veteran with no connection to the school.

“A disabled veteran came in, very frustrated, trying to get help for his autistic daughter,” said the political science major. “I took him to Dr. Banegas’ office and he took the time to talk to the guy and actually was able to provide him with resources that could help with his daughter. In my experience he always extends a hand to help veterans.”

Through all of his experiences Banegas he was most grateful for his education, which he credits to his ex-wife and daughter. They had always motivated him to be a better version of himself. His education was ultimately rewarding because it allowed him to better serve students. “It isn’t about me,” Banegas said.



# THE “A” WORD

## A STUDENT’S ACCOUNT OF HER ABORTION

In the UTRGV Student Union, there stood Carolyn Garcia, a smile on her face as she displayed a sign reading “free condoms!” in bubbly blue lettering.

She wore a bright pink T-shirt in support of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Just like she backs them, the international reproductive health organization has assisted her and thousands of other women around the world by providing mammograms, birth control, and – the reason the group’s Medicaid funding was pulled by the Texas government in October – abortions.

As several students read her sign and giggled at the thought of condoms, the 21-year-old couldn’t help but grow silently angry. “Do you think STD’s are fun?” she recalled thinking. “[By using condoms] you don’t get pregnant, you don’t get the itches and the life-threatening things.”

She spoke from experience. When she and a partner had a drunken, unprotected encounter in the summer, it ended with her at the post-procedure room of the Whole Woman’s Health clinic in McAllen.

Her legs ached, feeling like she had just ran a mile. She cried, but she blamed it on the sudden change of hormones. Ten months later, she doesn’t regret having an abortion.

### WITH A CAPITAL ‘P’

Garcia admitted she’d seldom use any form of birth control in the past, calling her actions “irresponsible and stupid.” A hangover discouraged her from purchasing the morning-after pill, so she shrugged the experience off like she usually did. The suspicion that she was pregnant first crept up on her when she began to feel fatigued a few days later. She ignored it, she said, like she did some other signs -- including a missed period.

“The first day I was late I was like ‘Whatever, this happens,’” she explained. “I ignored it until I was two weeks late.” During those two weeks, the vegetarian said everything made her nauseous except her most hated food: Eggs.

When she finally took an at-home pregnancy test, she was skeptical about the positive result. After using a higher quality at-home test a second time, she received the same result. But she made the decision to have an abortion before she ever conceived. She explained that she refuses to have a child if she is not prepared.

“I’m sure that I’d survive. I’m sure the child would survive. But it’s not about that,” she said. “My biggest priority is obtaining a quality education. I love my future child so much that I don’t want to bring it into the world when it’s just going to be struggle and struggle.”

Garcia, who is studying Mexican American Studies at the university, recalled seeing her mother struggle to support her, both of her sisters and herself in their low-income household. At 5 years old, she questioned why her mother gave birth to her if she couldn’t “afford” her.

To avoid continuing that cycle, she made an appointment at Whole Woman’s Health, the only abortion clinic in Texas south of San Antonio.

The procedure cost around \$400, so she met with the man she referred to as the “embryo daddy” for his half of the cash. He was not pleased with her decision, she said, and told her to keep their baby because they brought the pregnancy upon themselves. That infuriated the very vocal feminist, who is a member of several human rights organizations and a strong pro-choice supporter.

“You understand this ‘consequence’ isn’t a fine; it’s a human,” she recalled telling him, her eyes narrowing at the memory.

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“This ‘consequence’ is a person with a mind and a life of its own that you are reducing to a consequence. You’re reducing your own child to a punishment.” He gave her his share of the payment. She was ready for the procedure, scheduled for June.

## THE ‘A’ WORD

Six weeks into her pregnancy, Garcia parked her car outside Whole Woman’s Health. She had done research and watched videos about abortions beforehand, but she said she still didn’t know what to expect. She did, however, feel an admittedly unsuitable spark of elation. “Now I’d know exactly what these women who I’ve supported go through,” she said. “I was almost excited. I felt a lot of solidarity with these women.” Garcia has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow pro-choice activists; a struggle that deepened last spring. The clinic had been shut down in March 2014 when Texas passed stricter regulations for abortion providers and the procedure itself. Women who sought an abortion had to travel to San Antonio, a three-and-a-half to four hour drive from McAllen.

“I consider myself very, very, very lucky to have gotten pregnant at a time when it was open,” Garcia said. “I had the means to leave, but it was convenient to have it here. I didn’t want to go to San Antonio just for that. I consider myself very lucky, which shouldn’t have to be said.”

Of course, not all women can afford this trek. Some will go so far as to induce their own abortion.

Up to 240,000 Texas women between the ages of 18 to 49 have attempted to end their own pregnancy, according to a November 2015 research survey by the University of Texas at Austin - the first research of its kind. They also found that Latina women living in a county near the Mexico border were more likely to have tried to self-abort than other Texan women.

All signs point to the Rio Grande Valley. According to a September 2014 article by The Monitor, Whole Woman’s Health provides between 40 to 45 abortions a week. The clinic’s closing likely affected self-induced abortion rates across the Valley.

Whole Woman’s Health in McAllen was reopened September 2014 after a federal judge struck down parts of the new regulations. This pleased locals who

had participated in pro-choice vigils and protests outside its shuttered doors. Religious protesters frequently stand across the street from the clinic, silently standing and holding signs such as “Pray for babies that will die here today.” Garcia said they tend to confront women entering the building to convince them to keep their baby. As a volunteer escort at Whole Woman’s Health, she’s dealt with them before. When they attempted to discourage her the day of her own procedure, she was not moved. “A woman came up to me and asked me, ‘How could you do this? You’re a woman,’” she recalled. “And I said, ‘It’s because I’m a woman that I’m doing this.’”

She said her time in the clinic’s pastel-painted waiting room felt like an eternity. About 20 or so women were also in the room, nearly all of them alone like herself.

Once she was called in and briefly counselled - required by law - it was time for her to prop her legs on stirrups for a mandatory ultrasound.

Texas law requires the abortionist to display and describe the image of the fetus to the patient, which critics view as a way of guilt-tripping women into changing their minds. Garcia was told her embryo was about the size of a sesame seed as the doctor dryly described how it had developed so far.

“The whole time they were doing that I thought, ‘I’m a person.’ ‘It has a spine.’ I do too. ‘It’s forming fingers.’ I have that. I have a heart,” Garcia said. “I already have something going for me and this tissue does not. It has ... my nutrients, my tissue, my blood and my life going with it.”

She described the discomfort of having the cold ultrasound probe inside of her during the ultrasound.

“This area that is for happiness and pleasure was being probed with these cold things,” she said, disgusted. “You’re being opened. Nothing about it felt good.” Next, it was time for the procedure. Garcia explained how her vagina was opened and her cervix was injected to relax it.

“The doctor said I’d feel a pinch. He gave me four shots, but I didn’t feel any of them,” she recalled. “The worst part was the opening pressure. It felt like a big penis that never came out.”

While the doctor worked and aspirated the fetus out of her, she said it was painless, which surprised her.

“There was no pain whatsoever. It’s bullshit,” Garcia said. “It’s probably in [the patient’s] head because they’re told so much bullshit.”

Once the embryo was removed, she was escorted to the post-op room. Within a minute of exiting the operation room, tears began to flow down her face. It was the hormones, she said; the same thing that caused her to vomit in a soda cup on her drive home, when her legs weren’t quite as sore.

“I was so happy. I had never felt more relieved in my life,” Garcia said. “It was this overwhelming sense of relief.”

## THE FACE OF ABORTION

While in the initial waiting room, Garcia noticed the 20 or so other women waiting radiated shame, which she blamed on the prevalent stigma attached to the word “abortion.” She explained that she is open about having had the procedure in order to erase that negativity.

“I want to talk about it. If it needs a face to be de-stigmatized, I’ll be that face of it,” she said.

The shame and fear attached with abortion, Garcia said, is what causes young women to have children when they’re not financially or emotionally prepared. Her voice became more aggressive when she went into this subject.

“You’re gonna have this baby and make things so tough on yourself. Statistically speaking, you’re not going to graduate college,” she said, her head cocking with her words more confidently than before. “You’re going to be poor. You’re going to stay poor. Your kid’s mobility is going to be damaged. Statistically speaking, not only is your life going to get fucked up, but your kid’s is too.”

If she had chosen to keep the child, she said she would certainly be disappointed in herself for impeding on her own future. Of course, she said, taking precautions to avoid pregnancy in the first place is the best route to go.

“I feel like the ideal thing is not getting pregnant,” she said. “I love being sexual. I think sex is a beautiful experience - when it’s not with a drunk douchebag.” In the end, she said, the decision was hers to make and she did what she felt was best for her.

“I didn’t have any crazy life drama,” she said. “Surely I could’ve raised it, but at the end of the day I simply didn’t want to have a child.”

# PASSING THROUGH

A LOOK INSIDE THE MCALLEN REFUGEE RELIEF CENTER

By Sage Bazan • Photos: Michael Angelo Medina

“Alright so when they get here you are gonna take these soups, pass them out. Then you are gonna come back, finish getting drinks, make sure they have everything they need. Then we are gonna get the phones and start helping them make calls, got it?”





“Yes sir, I have it!” “Then when you are done with that, I need you to organize some of the racks. No one can find anything anymore.”

It was Oct 26., my first day of volunteering at the Sacred Heart immigrant relief center. I met Eli Fernandez, the project manager, that day. Fernandez seemed to have the ability to be everywhere at once. Like a superhero with the power of duplication, he would register families, talk on the phone, check donations and give orders to volunteers all at the same time.

“Do you speak Spanish?” he asked. “I mean kind of,” I said. “I know enough to have a small conversation.” It was my typical answer for whenever someone asked me that question. It was a heaping lie, because my Spanish is terrible and

unfortunately he saw right through it. “It doesn’t matter, we need all the help we can get.”

During my first official orientation, various smells and sights took hold of my senses. Racks and boxes piled with donated clothing and shoes filled the entire left side and center of the room; the clothing smelled dingy and musty. Almost like my grandmother’s attic. The baby station was stacked with diapers and hygiene supplies; as we walked by it, the familiar aroma of baby wipes hung in the air like a humid fog. Outside the shower area was damp and smelled of a combination of cleaning chemicals and raw sewage. Everything was eerily vacant.

“Some days we have about a hundred people that come in,” he said, “It’s a lot of work and we try to find as much help as we can.”

I followed Fernandez into the kitchen and observed him robotically open cans of corn. After watching him in silence for almost 15 minutes, I asked him if he ever got tired of the work. He dropped the can opener and looked up at me. “I’m here because I haven’t gotten tired of it,” he said. “I never get tired of doing the Lord’s work.” He looked back down, more serious this time.

“Heat up those tortillas in the microwave.”

I nervously searched for the tortillas, knocking over a box of Styrofoam cups in the process.

“Once you find them, separate them into stacks of six. Then heat them up for a minute.”

“Are there any families this morning?” I asked.

“Only two, but if you come back this afternoon there’s gonna be a lot,” Fernan-

***IF THE BULKY PRISON-LIKE DESIGN OF IT DIDN'T CATCH YOUR ATTENTION, THE FLASHING RED LIGHT CERTAINLY WOULD. WITH EVERY BLINK IT SEEMED TO SCREAM, "I AM NOT AMERICAN!"***

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dez said. "We usually assign a volunteer a family to assist. We will give you one." That afternoon, I met Cindy Chavarria, a teenage girl from Honduras with a 10-month-old son. They were my first family. Chavarria was cool. She had an attitude that made some of the older volunteers cringe like when she breast-fed her baby, leaving herself exposed. This caused all of the seasoned female volunteers to gasp. "Tell her to use a blanket!!!" one of them whispered to me. I had to turn and cover

Government felt the issue had gotten out of hand.

"82-95% of the people we release, don't appear for their required court date," Breeden said. "Before the trackers, we couldn't find them. When we would contact the family they were supposed to be with, more than half said that they didn't know where they were. It has become a necessary evil."

After Chavarria came back from her shower, we waited patiently for her turn to use the phone. I asked her what it was

mission group to the immigrant center. After spending less than a week at Sacred Heart, she realized that she could not bring herself to leave.

"This place is just incredible," Boyce said. "After the mission trip I felt that I was called to stay here."

Boyce told me, just like an apostle, she left her life behind and started a new one with the church.

"It was a really difficult decision. My kids are in college and it's tough because they are so far away. But Sister Norma

**COMING  
OVER HERE  
WAS REALLY  
DIFFICULT  
BUT I KNOW  
THAT IT IS  
WORTH IT,**



my mouth to hide my laughter from them.

During the process of finding her clothes, Chavarria definitely wasn't timid about telling me what she didn't like; I loved that about her. It made the whole process feel less awkward. After the third time of picking something she didn't like, I finally got it right: long black jeans and a zebra shirt. She wanted her pants to be long as possible to hide the Border Patrol-issued tracker that was secured tightly around her ankle.

Chavarria didn't like the tracker; none of the immigrants did. If the bulky prison-like design of it didn't catch your attention, the flashing red light certainly would. With every blink it seemed to scream, "I am not American!" Border Patrol Agent Jason Breeden, was able to explain the reason for the trackers and the controversy surrounding them.

A law proposed and passed summer of 2015 now enables Border Patrol to keep track of all individuals that are released into the general public. After examining recorded data and statistics regarding immigrants missing scheduled court dates, the United States Federal

like in Honduras and why she decided to leave her home country behind.

"I love Honduras, it is my home. But it's too dangerous for my son," she said. "I want to make sure I do the best that I can for him. The United States is safe." She planned to move to Ohio with her cousin where she hoped to begin a new life with her son.

A little bit later that day, I met Ingrid Trevino; a mother who bravely traveled alone from Guatemala with the same aspirations for her daughter Chavarria has for her son.

"Coming over here was really difficult but I know that it is worth it," Trevino said.

"We are going to Houston."

On Nov. 4, I headed back to the center. While in the process of helping a woman try on a pair of shoes, I heard a shout in my direction.

"Excuse me. What are you doing?"

This was the day I met Deb Boyce: the wild card of the Relief group.

"Why are you giving her strappy sandals?" Boyce said. "It doesn't matter if she likes those, she cannot have those. It is November!"

Two and a half years ago, Boyce journeyed from Ohio with her church mis-

prays for me every day and prays that I continue to help with their work."

I followed her around for a little while and helped her pass out waters.

"What is your job here at the center now that you work full time?" I asked.

"Well, right now I am the Volunteer Group Coordinator. I help with arrangements for when missionary groups come to volunteer," the Ohio native said. "Right now I'm also working on this grant for Sister Norma, I worked on it for 15 hours yesterday. It's exhausting but it's worth all of the hours."

Her commitment to tirelessly help at the center is as unbelievable as Eli's.

"By the way, have you met Sister Norma?"

No, I had never actually met Sister Norma. We had spoken on the phone briefly a couple of times. Once when I asked for her permission to interview immigrants and volunteers and the other time just to inquire about the center.

People who I have spoken with about Sister Norma Pimentel, speak as if she were a mystical being sent from the heavens. Like a fairy Godmother.

However, this theory isn't too far off considering that the relief project itself



**WITH NO WAY TO CONTACT THEIR RELATIVES OR PAY FOR A TICKET, A LARGE PORTION OF THE IMMIGRANTS BECAME A PART OF MCALLEN'S HOMELESS POPULATION.**

is truly magical. Josh Ramirez explained how the project initially got started and that it was all thanks to Sister Norma. "About 2 and a half years ago, the city of McAllen started getting a lot of phone calls about hundreds of people hanging out around the bus terminal," Ramirez said. "Then someone, we still aren't really sure who, called Sister Norma because the Sacred Heart Church is right next to the bus station." Sister Norma then got into contact with the City of McAllen and Salvation Army; a week later, they started bringing the people into the church. "After looking deeper into where these people were coming from, we found out that they were all immigrants who had just been released from detainment by Border Patrol," Ramirez said. "They were being dropped off at the bus station so that they could potentially get to their families that live in the US." However, some of these families never made it to their final destination. With no way to contact their relatives or pay for a ticket, a large portion of the immigrants became a part of McAllen's homeless population. The City of McAllen, Salvation Army, and Sacred Heart declared the problem a humanitarian crisis and began doing everything they could to help. "Together we started collecting donations, set up showers, restrooms. We put up tents and got cots for people

to rest on. We brought medical teams in and voluntary doctors and nurses to help anyone with a medical problem," he said. "We let them use a phone to call their relatives in the US so that they can purchase a bus ticket and make it to wherever they need to go." I asked him how long he thinks the center and City of McAllen will continue the immigrant relief project. "As long as it takes until we're finished with the job." Nov. 30, I met Jose Eduardo, an 11-year-old from El Salvador on his way to California. Jose and his family had an extra day before their scheduled bus departed; they used this time to help out around the church and the center. Jose was your typical 11-year-old boy. While helping me arrange supplies, he showed off his enormous preteen muscles by lifting boxes of diapers over his head (yes, diapers). Our conversations were hilarious, yet strained. My Spanish skills were definitely not as impressive in comparison to his box lifting skills. He spoke a million miles an hour about his dreams for his new home and I had trouble keeping up with him. He patiently waited for me to respond and would laugh about my poor command of the Spanish language. After we finished organizing the storage room he looked at me, smiled and then ran towards his family. Later the same day, I met Roxebel Gon-

zalez and his son Frandel. As I helped find them new clothing, Gonzalez shared the story of their journey from Guatemala to the United States. It is truly one that I will never forget. In order to make it from Guatemala to the United States, Gonzalez paid coyotes (human traffickers) to first get them through Mexico. "We traveled for three days straight in a truck with 30 others," Gonzalez said. "They gave us very little water and almost no food." After making it across the border, the Coyotes held Gonzalez, his son and the 30 other immigrants in a small home in Puebla. There were already 60 other immigrants crammed into the home by the time they arrived. For another two days, Gonzalez and his son were held captive in the home with no food and little water. They had no choice but to sit on a dirty floor covered in feces and urine and were told not to move. "The coyotes eventually told everyone in the house that they would be able to take anyone to the United States who was willing to pay," he said. "I gave them almost all of the remaining money I had so that my son and I could have a chance to make it to the United States." After another day and a half of traveling, Gonzalez and his son finally made it to the United States' border. However, after being caught by Border Patrol, they were detained.

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***NO ONE STOPS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY GO THROUGH TO GET TO HERE, BUT IT'S MORE THAN I THINK MOST PEOPLE COULD IMAGINE.***

"Border Patrol fed us and we waited in custody for a couple of days," he said. "They then asked me if I had a family member in the United States." After telling Border Patrol of his brother in North Carolina, Gonzalez was able to contact his family. The next day, his brother paid the bond and they were both eligible for release. "From there, we were taken to a room where they told me that by law, I had to go to court so the judge could hear my case. Then they put the tracker around my ankle." Gonzalez lifted his jeans to reveal a black tracking band. "We were then put on a bus and taken here," he said. He and his son are grateful that they survived and excited for the last leg of their journey.

"I am just very happy to be here and I can't wait to start life with my family in the United States," Gonzalez said. I told Eli Fernandez about Gonzalez's journey. He was looking down into a giant pot, stirring noodles. "All of these people have a story like that, it took a lot for them to make it here," Fernandez said. "No one stops to consider what they go through to get to here, but it's more than I think most people could imagine." He was right. No one ever really puts themselves in these immigrants' shoes, including myself; or at least I never had before. I had never even considered an immigrant's journey until I began volunteering. They are humans but are treated with less compassion, in some cases, than animals. They are profiled with hateful rhetoric about Latin Americans,

causing the spread of a disease called intolerance. Unfortunately, there is no known cure. Cindy Chavarria is not a criminal. She wanted to escape violence in Honduras to protect her 10-month-old child. Roxebel Gonzalez is not a killer, a rapist, a thief or a liar. He is a father who wants to give his son a better life in North Carolina. Ingrid Trevino is the mother of 1-year-old Sofia Trevino. She is not a drug runner; she is looking for a happier life. Jose Eduardo is 11 years old. He is loveable, has eyes that sparkle and light up when you talk to him and he has a smile that is contagious. He is not trying to steal your job and he is not threatening the American Dream. I watched Fernandez drain the noodles and began opening cans of corn. "Hey could you heat up those tortillas?"

# A BENEVOLENT DIRECTION

## AN INTERVIEW WITH SISTER NORMA PIMENTEL

Executive Director  
of the Catholic  
Charities of the Rio Grande  
Valley

By Allan Fisher-Garcia  
Photo: Jon Nutt



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### **Would you mind telling me what your childhood was like?**

My childhood, playful, I was a child I enjoyed myself as a little kid playing and having fun with dolls and I loved to paint. So I remember since I was little I always painted. My mother was an artist herself she would paint when she had her time off. She was a homemaker, a housewife, so I would see her put out her colors, her oils and her canvas and start painting, and I would sit there and admire, look at her while she was doing this. It was amazing for me to see her paint, and she would sometimes paint us, and paint the scenery, so I had fun being a child. It was wonderful.

### **Were your parents very religious people?**

My parents were just like regular -- every other family that goes to church on Sundays, pretty much. I didn't see them being extremely religious, but they were just people who always made sure we always went to our religion classes, and go to Sunday Mass and do everything that we needed to do as people. I do remember my grandmother, she was from Matamoros. We would spend a lot of time with her, practically took care of us a lot, my sister, older sister and myself, and we spent a lot of time with her. At night, I would see her kneel before the bed and pray her rosary before she went to bed, and her room was dark, and she was just quiet and praying by herself. Those images come to me as I think back to my childhood.

### **Did that inspire you to become a nun?**

I don't know that it did, I know that I was drawn to religion in some way, but without understanding really. It was everything having to do with God and the church, that was always a mystery to me, what attracted me, but I didn't understand because I was little. It was not until I graduated from university in Edinburg, and finished college and ready to finish my professional art, and I went back home and as I was waiting to go and get my master's in Austin, I happened to go to a retreat to a prayer group, and there they prayed over me, and I experienced something that is so wonderful, that I could not explain it, and I was drawn to know more about God. So, the next thing I knew I was entering a convent.

### **Has there ever been a moment where you questioned your faith?**

I have never questioned my faith as far as believing in God, I've always believed in God. I have been angry with life in certain circumstances and not understanding why sometimes. For example, when a very dear person in my life passed away I could not understand the pain that she endured the last couple of days before she passed, and it was hard for me to understand because she was a wonderful and very holy woman. They were growing pains for me, they helped me understand Jesus' pain

on the cross when I was experiencing her pain, and it was not until after that I realized that, so I struggled through that.

### **This question may sound a little bit risqué, but I don't mean it in an inappropriate way. Do you have any guilty pleasures, like food, music, television?**

Oh! I have many guilty pleasures. There is certain food that I love, I love pizza, and sometimes even though I try to be good about keeping myself from certain food because it is not good for me, pounds add up, so you have to be careful, but pizza if I have it and I smell it before me it is hard to resist it. The other thing that is a guilty pleasure that I will always have it every chance if I do smell it is popcorn. I can't go to Target without eating popcorn. It is a weakness. I can't go to the movies without having popcorn.

### **I know you're a very busy woman, but do you ever have time to do anything fun or recreational?**

I love to do a lot of recreation. One of the fun things that I enjoy is painting. That is my natural gift that I love to do, and people may think it is work, but for me it is a pleasure and I can spend hours doing it, and if I don't do it it's because I am very busy. I need to really center myself in what I am doing before, because I just can't start and then stop in a few minutes, I want to stay there for hours just doing it. I can easily go for most of the night painting because I enjoy it. Although I pay for it afterwards, I love the outdoors a lot. I love to beach and to go cycling, so when I have the chance I love to do that.

### **Whats a typical day in your life like?**

Very busy. I wake up very early in the morning. I like to start my day with God, so my very first thing that I want is to go to Mass, and it is very easy for me because I just go across the street and we have the basilica right here. We're fortunate to have the 6:30 in the morning Mass. It's wonderful to start my day with God and to say my prayers in the morning. Then a series of a lot of meetings. Whether it is to work at something that is happening here in the Valley that I am working in partnership with other entities like United Methodist or the Food Bank or whoever it is, we try to address and work together to do something to the community, or speaking engagements I've been having a lot. Recently, I was invited by a university professor to speak to her creative writing class. So it is things like this is what my really takes a lot of chunk of my time. Being here at Catholic Charities offices trying to make sure that everything is running the way it needs to, and responding to the needs that we have. So jumping from one thing to another. Lately I find that I am doing a lot of travel, going to different places for different things, all having to do with what has happened with the immigrants. So I'm more engaged in that aspect as well. Towards the end, I try to end my day as much as I can around 6 o'clock so that the afternoon after that is my

***I EXPERIENCED SOMETHING THAT IS SO WONDERFUL, THAT I COULD NOT EXPLAIN IT, AND I WAS DRAWN TO KNOW MORE ABOUT GOD.***

***SO, THE NEXT THING I KNEW I WAS ENTERING A CONVENT.***

time to kind of catch up with things that I love to do, and that I have my own time. So I try not to schedule appointments or meetings anytime in the evening so that I can have my time to rest, time to be with myself and my community, and paint if I can. Weekends are also, I try to preserve them, but sometimes they get overextended.

**Do you mind if I ask you about Pope Francis?**

Of course not.

**How does it feel to be recognized by him?**

OH! Well you probably saw in my face, everybody saw that expression, it was the most wonderful gift that I could have ever have wished for or wanted. If you would want to wish for something like that it is so unbelievable to be recognized by him, and called out by your name and asked to come forward, applaud what I'm doing, and to tell me 'I love you,' was the most wonderful thing that could ever happen to me in my life.

that issue as an important issue to bring forward. I'm certainly hopeful that it will help policy makers and politicians to reflect and seriously look at who they are as our political entities that are responsible to care for the good of our communities. That they put into practice good social justice policies that respect human dignity and the lives of people.

**Do you favor any of the current presidential candidates?**

Oh, I cannot say. I am tempted to say who I favor and who I do not. I think in all fairness, I'll have so many people angry [at] me if I don't favor that one and they do, so I wouldn't want to go there because of that. If I say something it would not be good.

**How does it feel to be considered by some as the Mother Teresa of the 21st century?**

It is quite an honor to be compared to this lady because she is a saint, and I'm not there. I have a long way to go. I admire her and her great dedication. I think that everybody is called

## **WE LIVE ONLY ONCE**

### **AND WE MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GIFT OF LIFE WE ARE GIVEN.**

# **DON'T LET ONE DAY PASS BY WITHOUT MAKING IT COUNT FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND.**

**What is he like as a man? I'm pretty sure he doesn't get a lot of off-duty time, but what is he like just one-on-one in an intimate setting?**

Well he is very, very nice. What I saw when I met him in person is, he is a very sweet, gentle, wonderful man you know. And, you see it in his expression, so welcoming and willing to listen to you and to hear what you have to say and attentive to what you're saying. He is just a wonderful blessing to us, to have him as our holy father.

**At the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, you said there hadn't been enough done about the humanitarian issues regarding immigration. Do you believe the publicity has risen awareness and prompted action among citizens and policy makers?**

I believe it has been very good to the whole immigration reality, it has brought it forward and helped everybody who is working and trying to do something about the immigrants and address them and help them. It brought a lot of attention to what they're doing and so I think it helped everybody. It has helped the church, immigrants, any entity that has ever tried to raise

to do like her, and dedicate their life as she did it, just like me, and so many people. We have so many volunteers. Women I admire deeply because of their dedication and their commitment to love and care for so many families. I am always edified by looking at their lives and how beautiful they are as a person, as a human being in their care for others. So to me, there are Mother Teresas of Calcutta in great numbers here in the Valley.

**If you were gone tomorrow, what wisdom or advice would you like to impart on mankind?**

We live only once and we must take advantage of the gift of life we are given. Don't let one day pass by without making it count for the good of mankind. This is our chance, let's live it to the fullest and do it right. Whether you are married or whatever, do it right and do it your best, and do it to make mankind a little better.

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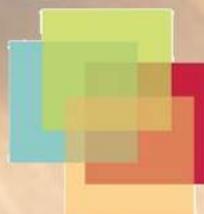
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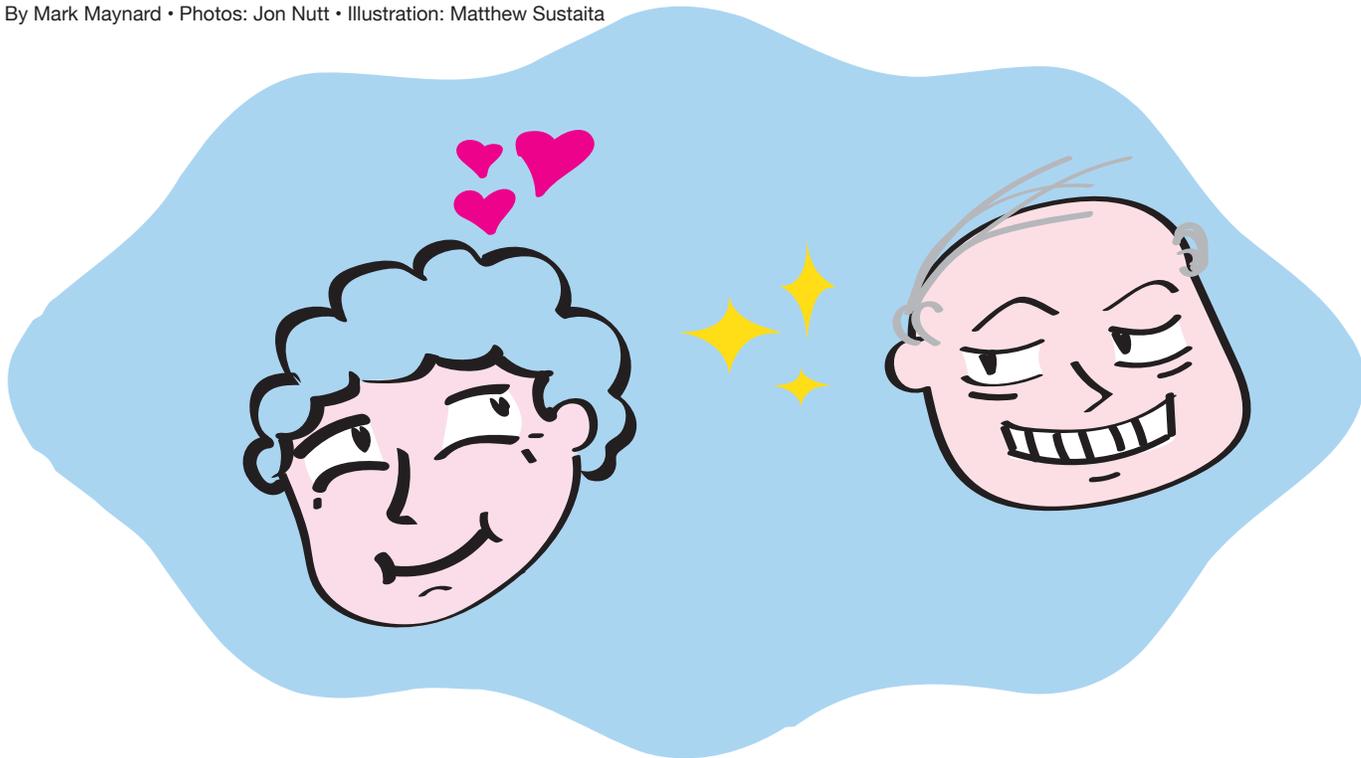
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# SNOW BIRDS & THE BEES

## WINTER TEXANS AND THEIR SEXUAL ESCAPADES

By Mark Maynard • Photos: Jon Nutt • Illustration: Matthew Sustaita



*\*Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.*

Each year, winter marks the start of the southern migration for many northern species. This is especially true for a species which native Texans affectionately refer to as “snow birds” or “winter Texans.” They are easily identified by their colorful license plates and inexplicable inability to drive above 55 miles per hour on the highway. Flocking to Texas by the thousands, they seem to inhabit every mobile home park within 50 miles of the coast. Sustaining themselves on a steady diet of Mexican food and happy hour specials, they search for ways to spend their time and Social Security checks, which is where it gets interesting.

It was a calm weekend at the Harlingen Fire Department for fireman Andy Galvan when he was suddenly called to respond to a ruptured sewer line outside of one of the local RV parks, Fun N’ Sun. Arriving at the scene, he waded through the water in the street so that he could open the fire hydrant, relieving pressure from the sewage line so that the Harlingen city workers could repair it. Three hours later, the work crew found the point of the leak and began removing a section of pipe so that

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KINDA JUST GO  
OUT THE  
WINDA’,**

they could find and remove the blockage. Rooting around, they were able to get ahold of what was causing the mess. Unprepared for what he was about to witness, Andy watched as the crew took out a colorful, dripping glob. Upon further inspection, the colorful glob was found to be comprised purely of used condoms. The seniors living in the RV park had flushed enough used condoms down their toilets to clog a sewer pipe! Were those old snow birds really having that much sex?

The answer is yes. Sitting in a faded, suede armchair, a man we will call Ben was surrounded by a wood paneled room with thick carpet, everything in it a varying shade of brown, except for a framed print of airbrushed scenery, complete with a howling wolf, and two photos of his smiling grandchildren poised upon the television. For some years, Paradise Park in McAllen, Texas has been his home. Making Ben quite knowledgeable about what goes on when no one is looking. “When you leave home and are around a group of strangers you don’t really know too well, inhibitions kinda just go out the winda’,” Ben said.

Ben disclosed that there are many roles one can play in the senior sex

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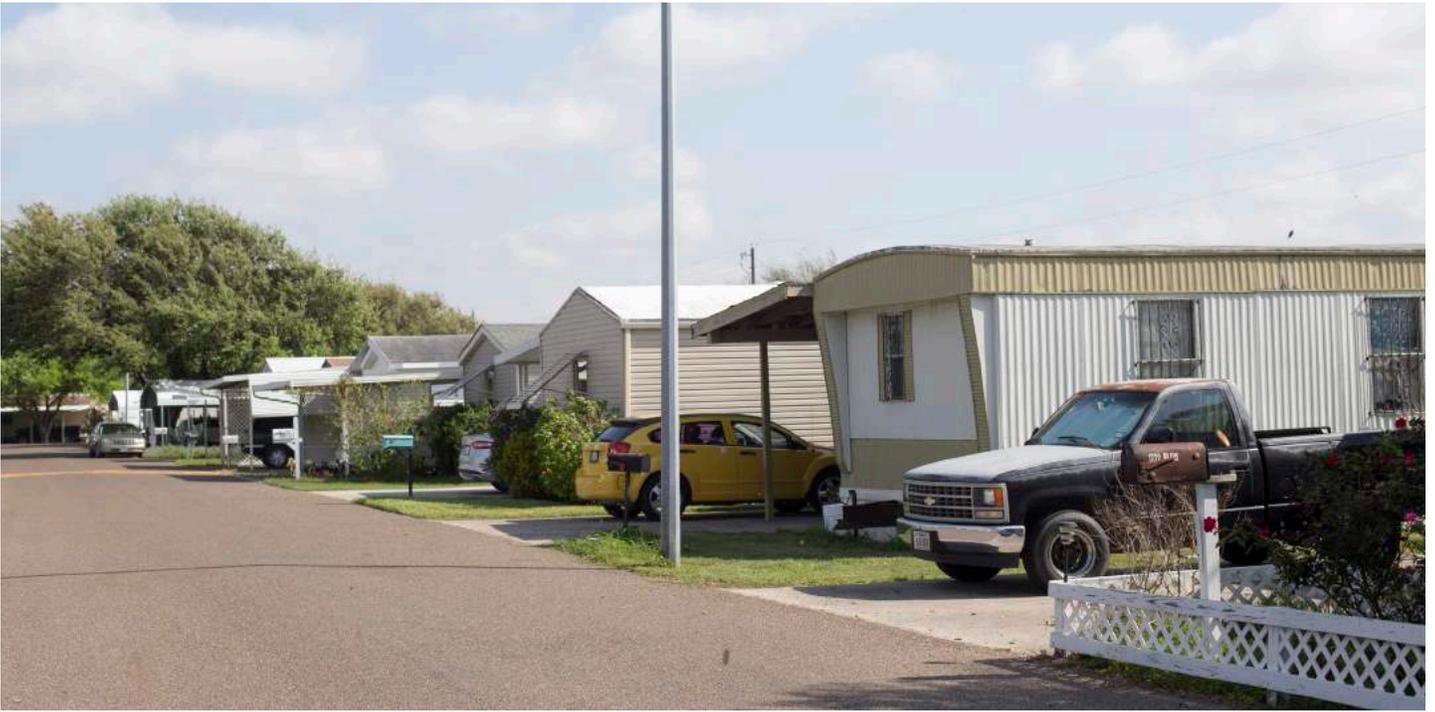
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scene. All of these parts can be categorized into three main roles: the occasional dabbler, the workhorse, and the fetishist. Ben falls neatly into the category of “the occasional dabbler.” A usual day for Ben consists of a round of golf, arguing with friends about politics (really they just gripe about Obama destroying the country), and some television before bedtime. But every once in a while, Ben gets a wild hair about him and looks to the ladies for some comfort. His wife having passed away 5 years back, Ben gets quite lonesome at times. When he goes out on the hunt for some company, he needs only to look to the rec hall. Ben looks for a no strings attached relationship with some of the widowed women who reside in the park. He goes about getting the girl the same way anyone else does, he invites them back to his place for some drinks and lets one thing lead to another. Once they are done pressing their wrinkled bodies together, they head their separate ways.

One of Ben’s regular golf buddies is a man we will call Tony (short for Tony the Tiger). Tony is an energetic man in his mid-60’s. He is not quite six feet tall with a full head of neatly parted brown hair. Despite his age, his skin is tight and his jaw line is as chiseled as ever. Tony is easily identified, before being seen, by the scent of his cologne, a spicy, woody, leathery sort of smell. His Minnesota accent is so thick it leaves no one guessing where he is from. Tony

## **UPON FURTHER INSPECTION, THE COLORFUL GLOB WAS FOUND TO BE COMPRISED PURELY OF USED CONDOMS.**

enjoys the typical winter Texan activities such as golf, yard sales, group breakfasts, drinking cheap vodka and shopping at Wal-Mart. Tony is the self-proclaimed “workhorse” of the mobile home park.

“A workhorse is a guy who takes care o’ da lady folk whenever they need takin’ care of,” Tony said, “Those ladies have got needs just like everybody else, and I’m here to take care o’ ‘em.”

If you had not caught on yet, a workhorse is a term Tony created to describe what he does. It is similar to a prostitute without the financial gain. Tony says he does not discriminate against any clientele except for guys, making it very clear he is not gay. So as you may imagine, Tony interacts with all sorts of women, single, married or otherwise. To keep him from an early grave, Tony requires any woman in a relationship to have their significant other’s consent. Though it may seem unlikely for men to give their wives consent, it helps with

maintaining boundaries.

“All o’ us here don’t have proper workin’ parts. So to keep ‘em happy, I do it, no strings attached,” Tony said with a slight undertone of pride.

Tony keeps a tight schedule. So much so, that he goes to two different doctors every month, just so each one can refill a full 30 day prescription of Viagra. As you can imagine, packing that much Vitamin V (more cool old guy lingo), that Tony has his regulars. Most of his clients significant others never want to see him come or go. So,

he has worked out signs with each of his regulars to let him know when it is good for him to come over. These signs may range from something as subtle as a trashcan lid being open or a welcome mat on the doorstep to not so subtle signs such as standing in the doorway wearing only a bathrobe.

The last role to be filled in this world woven by sex starved senior citizens is that of the fetishist. This role encompasses a plethora of different activities, so many so, that it makes it difficult for a single person to represent the group as a whole. The fetishist is a person who derives sexual pleasure from a very particular act or thing. This can include, but is definitely not limited to, orgies, swinging, feet, crossdressing and even catheterophilia. One of the most common fetishes is that of older women being attracted to younger men.

It was this fetish that led to a woman named Jenn, a California transplant.

Jenn is an attractive 50 year old with long curly red hair and green eyes. She is a free spirit with an open mind, and her attire, a loosely fitting sun dress, reflects that. She has a bubbly attitude, but a soft gentle voice.

"Honestly, I feel as though men my age just can't keep up," Jenn said, "I love to go out and do things. Men my age just won't get out of the house."

She explained that her sexual preference for younger men was fairly recent and that she is still exploring. It began when she met a young man at the McAllen dog park. He was 18 years old at the time and she said that she had no particular interest in him until they struck up a conversation.

"He was so mature and acted like a gentlemen," Jenn said, "I was instantly attracted at that point."

It began as any relationship would. They went out on a few dates and continued a relationship for two months.

"I guess I found myself thinking about him sexually later that day. As far as acting on it, it isn't exactly like it is here [Orange Grove Park]. Most people here explore freely, but I had to take my time with him. Kind of like I did when I was younger. I find younger men appreciate my experience and I appreciate their stamina," Jenn said with a wink.

Jenn explained what it is like to explore sexual fetishes within the mobile home community. She explained that two group fetishes happened quite regularly in the community, orgies and swinging parties. Orgies are often attended by single men and women, with there being slightly more men. At Orange Grove Park, orgies are somewhat of an open event without an entry list. However, orgies are known to be dangerous due to the prevalence of STDs. Recently, the Department of Health and Human Services released a report stating that 2.2 million beneficiaries of Medicare in the elderly community received free care for STDs. They also have stated that STDs are on the rise in the senior community. Jenn then explained that swinging parties were vastly different. Swinging parties go by a stricter set of rules. They are couples only, and you must be on the list. You may only join a group if you are invited and all members agree. They often require all participants to be tested for STDs.

According to a New England Journal of Medicine survey, 75.5 percent of people aged 57 to 85 are still sexually active. Based on this, there is a 78 percent chance that your grandpa is swinging his club at more than just the golf course. Your grandma could be one of the 48 percent of senior women that not only knits quilts, but plays under them as well. Despite the hot weather and their old age, some have made South Texas their winter wonderland.

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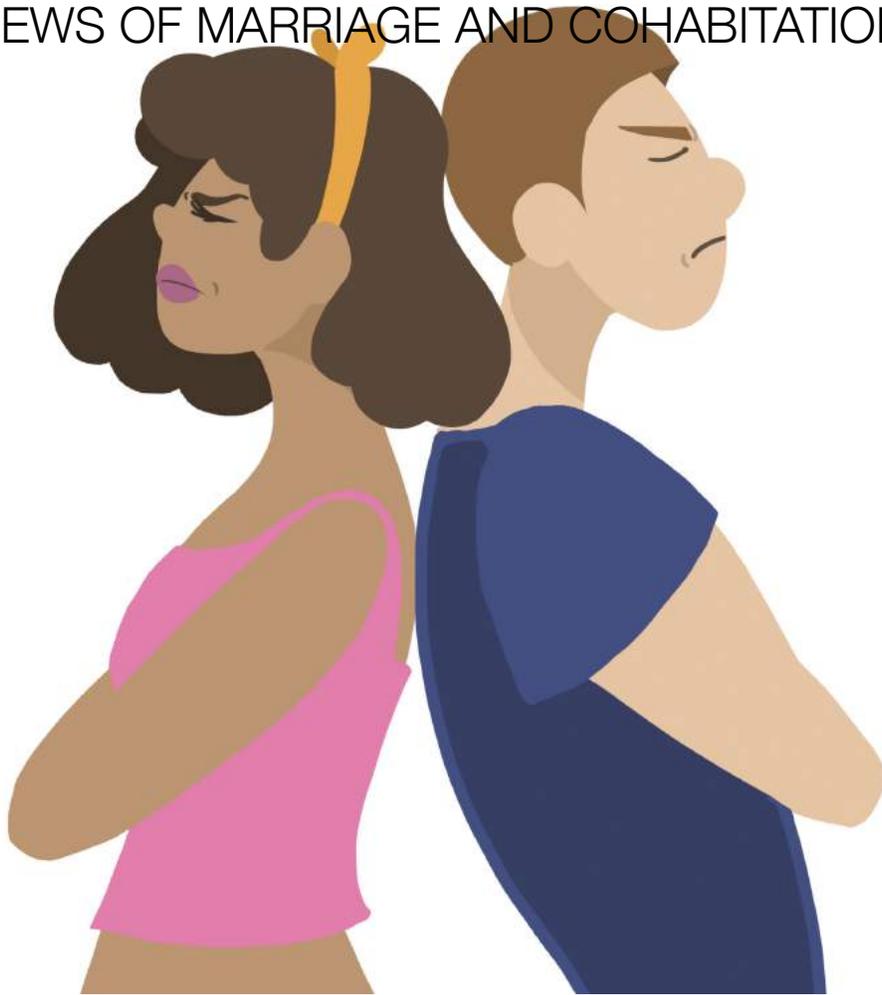
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# “NEXT STEP” OR MISSTEP?

## SHIFTING VIEWS OF MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

By Danae J. Gomez

Illustrations: Melissa Alatorre



The 70's reigned supreme for ushering in a revolutionary period of profound change and a push for nonconformity. The rebellion against tradition was a catalyst for the liberal lifestyle that endured and inspired a response in the form of the 1990's widely-heralded study "Should We Live Together?" by David Popenoe and Barbara Whitehead, concluding that moving in together before marriage would inevitably end in failure, making it the ultimate relationship death sentence.

Since then, an onslaught of contradictory studies has presented data disproving the theory, especially in the last decade. Most recently, a 2012 Pew Research study stating 64 percent of Americans who had ever lived with a significant other before marriage viewed it as a step in that direction as opposed to an alternative. According to an article in The New York Times titled "The Divorce Surge is Over, but the Myth Lives On," the divorce rate reached an all-time high in the 1970's and 1980's, declining ever since and residing at 40 to 50 percent presently.

Generation Y has been attributed with bucking convention and cohabitating, subsequently bringing down the divorce rate and initiating a new societal norm down the road to marriage. But is this observation of national trends and

acceptance of prenuptial cohabitation really so applicable for students at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley? Controversial ideas frequently originate from collegiate settings during which students challenge their belief systems. The Rio Grande Valley consistently strives towards progressivism in its endeavors, but how applicable is that to ingrained biases and the preservation of traditionalism?

In a 2015 study conducted by Tech Insider, national statistics showed a remarkable disparity from the 11 percent of women living with their significant other more than 60 years ago and the 66 percentage doing so today. Examining the national data puts forth the question, how accurately do these findings reflect reality for UTRGV students and why? Of the 100 UTRGV students randomly

polled, 48 percent said they'd move in with their partner before marriage. Motivations and beliefs behind either stance were varied and therefore revelatory of a true melting pot of ideas.

Gabriela Pulido, a 21-year-old studying business administration, explained a new dynamic at play.

"I know in the Mexican culture we as women are told 'you're not leaving until you get married,'" Pulido said. "But we're not getting married so young anymore, because we really don't have to."

"I feel we're more independent now and have a mindset of pursuing our careers and getting stabilized," the 21-year-old said.

The gender factor is a recurring reason cited by female UTRGV students as expectations for women pursuing higher education are now the same as

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## **OF THE 100 UTRGV STUDENTS RANDOMLY POLLED, 48 PERCENT SAID THEY'D MOVE IN WITH THEIR PARTNER BEFORE MARRIAGE.**



those for men: establish a stable life and sustain it independently.

Today's 20-somethings emphatically renounce premature commitment as an antiquated and self-serving ritual they don't feel the need to partake in.

A correlation with higher education is prominent in the myriad of studies pertaining to millennials and their overall disinclination toward commitment. Jacqueline Arias, a 20-year-old junior pursuing broadcast journalism, conveys this very sentiment.

"The only reason why I wouldn't want to [move in with a partner] is I'm very comfortable at my house," Arias said. "My parents afford me the ability to study without the added burden of worrying about how I'm going to support myself." However, moving in with a significant other before marriage is still something of a sore spot for parents in the Valley. With 79 percent of students living at home, familial support can prove crucially relevant.



While 41 percent believe their parents would have a *laissez faire* attitude, 52 percent found their family to be inflexible. Despite whatever stance they took personally, 72 percent of students felt their parents' approval or disapproval was a factor they took into account. Relationships can be one big proverbial coin toss, but are some couples at a tactical disadvantage? Students who shared misgivings about moving in unwed echoed similar sentiments pertaining to a moral high ground where it was simply ill-advised to do so.

Joel Ramirez, a 27-year-old in the nursing program, cited his personal regard for the sanctity of marriage as an insurmountable obstacle to moving in prior.

"My wife and I waited until we were married to move in because neither one of us would consider another option," said Ramirez. "What's the point of merging your life with someone else if you don't want a future with them? Why act married and not be married when a piece of paper is the only difference?" Humanity is complex and some students

that fits me better because I'm able to make my own decisions."

An aspect of growing up entails changing one's mind, because we don't truly know the answer until we're faced with the question. Our experiences shape us. On the same wavelength Jesse Trevino, a 19-year-old biology major, believes it is impossible to make big decisions, like whether or not to live with someone first or marry them, before you've even met that person.

## **WHILE 41 PERCENT BELIEVE THEIR PARENTS WOULD HAVE A LAISSEZ FAIRE ATTITUDE, 52 PERCENT FOUND THEIR FAMILY TO BE INFLEXIBLE.**

make rules to fit their circumstances. As a whole we're constantly socially evolving to accommodate progressivism.

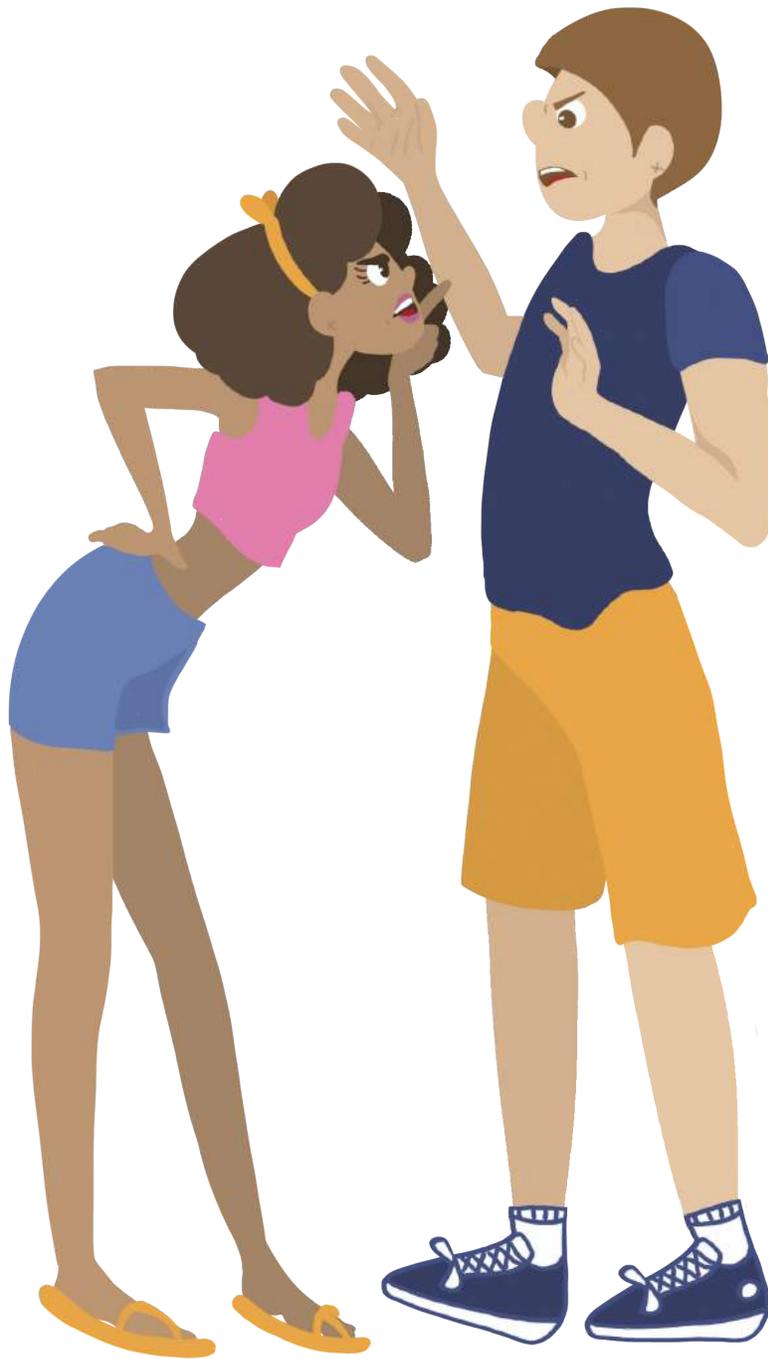
Paola Robles, a 21-year-old who studies civil engineering, countered with an opinion that evolved over time.

"I wasn't raised here in the Valley, but rather in Mexico where it's completely different," Robles said. "People get married and have kids very young, and I thought that was going to be my future, but when I moved over here I saw that things were really different and I guess

"You don't know what you'll do until you really love someone," Trevino said. "Honestly, I'm a big believer in 'never say never' because life is so ironically unpredictable and once you say it, that's probably the next thing you're going to do."

From a psychological perspective, Dr. Eisenman of the Department of Psychological Science at UTRGV gives some insight as to the benefits of moving in with a significant other prior to tying the knot.

"In some ways it makes sense to move



**IN SOME WAYS  
IT MAKES  
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**TO SEE WHAT  
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THAT PERSON**

**THE REALITY  
MAY BE  
DIFFERENT  
THAN THE  
FANTASY.**

in with someone before marriage, to see what it is like to live with that person,” Dr. Eisenman said. “The reality may be different than the fantasy. The fantasy may be based on mass media distortions and distortions from romantic love fantasies.”

The latest study to inspire further analysis, conducted by Dr. Arielle Kuperberg at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, stated that in the last 50 years the percentage of men and women who cohabit before marriage increased by a remarkable 900 percent. Kuperberg also found that two-thirds of couples that did end up marrying also lived together for up to two years before taking that step.

“Also, people may learn how to compromise with another, which could prove beneficial to being married to that person,”

Eisenman said. “This is an interesting area that is definitely worthy of study. We do not yet have all the answers regarding these important issues.”

Parents of millennials are confronted with a popular custom that, while rapidly catching on, can’t be mistaken for a fleeting trend. Customarily, such a generational disconnect indicates a noteworthy shift in values. While the general consensus may not be entirely representative of the RGV’s zeitgeist, it may be a matter of time. Whether students find the prospect gratifying or anticlimactic, an overwhelming majority is not so easily negated. As Bob Dylan so succinctly put it, “The times are changin’.”

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# TRANSCENDING SOCIETAL NORMS

## TRANSGENDER IN THE VALLEY

By Gustavo Huerta • Photos: Gustavo Huerta

student life



Cantu checking her makeup before a night out in downtown McAllen.

## “I used to hate that I felt this way or I used to hate that I couldn’t fit in,”

said Valerie Cantu, a transgender woman. “I hated that I wanted to be a girl or that I liked feminine things; I saw how other boys acted or talked, and it felt unnatural to me.”

Cantu just recently discovered after years of depression and torment that it’s okay to be who she is. Throughout the course of Cantu’s life she’s experienced and interacted with people who have

assumed she knows exactly who she is without thinking about the possibility of the internal battle Cantu faces with her gender identity.

“For about nine years I just kept it all inside and it resulted in further depression, anger, and suicidal thoughts,” Cantu said.

From the day of transgender individuals’ births they are thrown into a gender

that doesn’t represent who they are or who they want to be. Who knew that pronouns like “he” or “she” had the potential to make a person think so negatively that they’d consider suicide? The meaning attached to these pronouns isn’t something we think about in our daily lives, but that isn’t the case for those who are constantly fighting their inner feelings about who they feel they

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Anaya giving blood to monitor how the testosterone is affected him.

deserve to be.

"I first identified as being a crossdresser because it made sense to me at the time," said Cantu. "Liking makeup and women's clothing but it didn't feel right because it felt like I was wearing a costume."

In Cantu's case she was in constant battle with herself when it pertained to her gender identity and biological sex. Cantu didn't realize she was a person who identified as transgender and was not able to find the label she fit under.

"Growing up in the early 90's I never really heard that word before," the 28-year-old said. "I heard drag queen and crossdresser because of Jerry Springer but never the actual word transgender."

It's understandable that words such as crossdresser, drag queen and transgender can be confusing especially to those who are trying to figure out who they are. Growing up we heard the terms gay and lesbian and saw the acronym LGBT, but with each generation, there seems to be more to understand about gender identity.

"I remember around 2009/2010 doing a google search because the word transgender was coming up a lot more and the first thing that came up was nothing but porn," said Cantu. "I got scared and

shut off my computer and it wasn't until 2013 that I started seeing a counselor for not just my anger issues but also my gender dysphoria."

People diagnosed with gender dysphoria are in constant battle with the sex they were born in and the gender they identify with. Coming out as someone who is transgender can be an especially scary process when coming from an area influenced by Latino culture such as the Valley. They are faced with the "machismo" mindset and the Catholic religion in addition to a very strong sense of family.

"Machismo is the idea that men are held in a position of superiority in all ways. That women are to serve them and their needs before their own needs," said Victoria Garza, a gender equality activist. "Mexican/Mexican-American culture is pretty machista and it's just not men who holds these ideas."

Keeping the pride that comes with the blood Cantu was born with can be difficult when identifying as trans. Cantu found herself having to live two separate lives due to fears of what could happen when she finally does come out.

"It's still hard having that balance between a double life until I can fully come out to everybody," said Cantu.

Finding support and others who can re-

late to Cantu's situation can be exponentially difficult, especially when it pertains to something as controversial as being transgender. The Valley can be behind at times, so Sabastian Bryan Anaya found himself pondering where he'd able to find answers to his questions. For people like Anaya, a female to male transgender person, this was especially true when looking for resources to begin transitioning.

"It was kinda like a maze for me and a lot of other people. I know personally if my life wouldn't have been so public I know of two or three guys who wouldn't be starting their transition," Anaya said. "So I made it a point to make this aspect of my life public because that moment that I felt so alone not knowing who to go to I don't want anyone else to go through that."

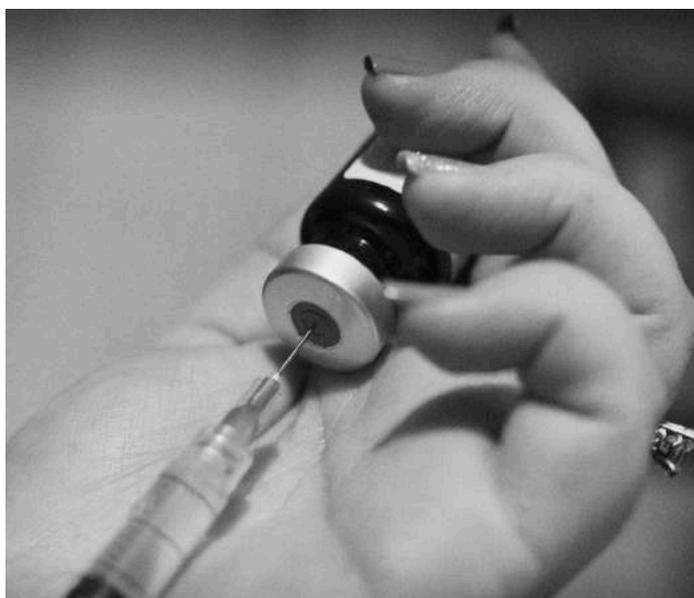
Being so close to the border most individuals who identify as transgender look for other resources and healthcare treatments on the other side. Many trans individuals here in the Valley consider hormonal treatment across the border for the mere fact of how easily accessible and cheap it is despite the dangers and health risks that come with improper administration.

Dr. Michelle Cordoba Kissee, a endo-

***I REMEMBER AROUND 2009/2010 DOING A GOOGLE SEARCH  
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Anaya's vial of testosterone for his hormonal therapy and transition.



# **IT'S DEFINITELY A LACK OF EDUCATION SO MOST OF US GOING THROUGH MEDICAL SCHOOL WILL HAVE LITTLE TO NO EDUCATION ON TRANS HEALTH ISSUES**

crinologist in Edinburg states the potential hazards of what counterfeit hormonal injections can do to a patient. "If it's something that they want to do by changing their hormonal replacement it's best to do it safely. The risks are just like any hormones usually related to the risks of blood clots we can also have the risks regarding liver function," Dr. Cordoba said. "Those are all things we monitor pretty frequently. They're basic tests and easy to do and the good thing is if there's a problem then we can adjust the hormonal replacement accordingly."

Stories have surfaced about incidents occurring when individuals self inject without the knowledge of what makes up the composition of these treatments. Anaya heard from another trans individual of what these treatments can consist of.

"One of my friends said that she was injecting her breasts with silicone that ended up being platelets to what they use to make concrete," Anaya said. "So I recommended her to Dr. Cordoba and said she would make it a point to talk to her about that because she didn't know if later on if it's going to affect her in a negative way when she gets her implants."

Transgender is a term that's not commonly heard in the medical field so they encounter discrimination not just from the outside world but also in a place where Anaya and Cantu are supposed to find compassion and an understanding of who they are. There have been incidents not just in the Valley but elsewhere around the world involving cases where transgender people have either been mocked or in worst-case scenario been rejected medical treatment.

"The previous doctor I was seeing I wouldn't of dared say I was trans because of his background," Cantu said. "It wouldn't of gone very well and he would of ended me as a patient." When a loss of trust towards medical professionals occur transgender individuals can't help but wonder, why situations like these happen.

"It's definitely a lack of education so most of us going through medical school will have little to no education on trans health issues," Cordoba Kisse said. "Physicians are always under so much pressure to learn so many new things that our response a lot of times if it's not something we're familiar with is to say, well that's not my problem and I think the judgemental part can be a little bit of fear."

It isn't just the medical field that many transgender individuals fear but also the workplace environment.

"Employers can fire people in many states for openly

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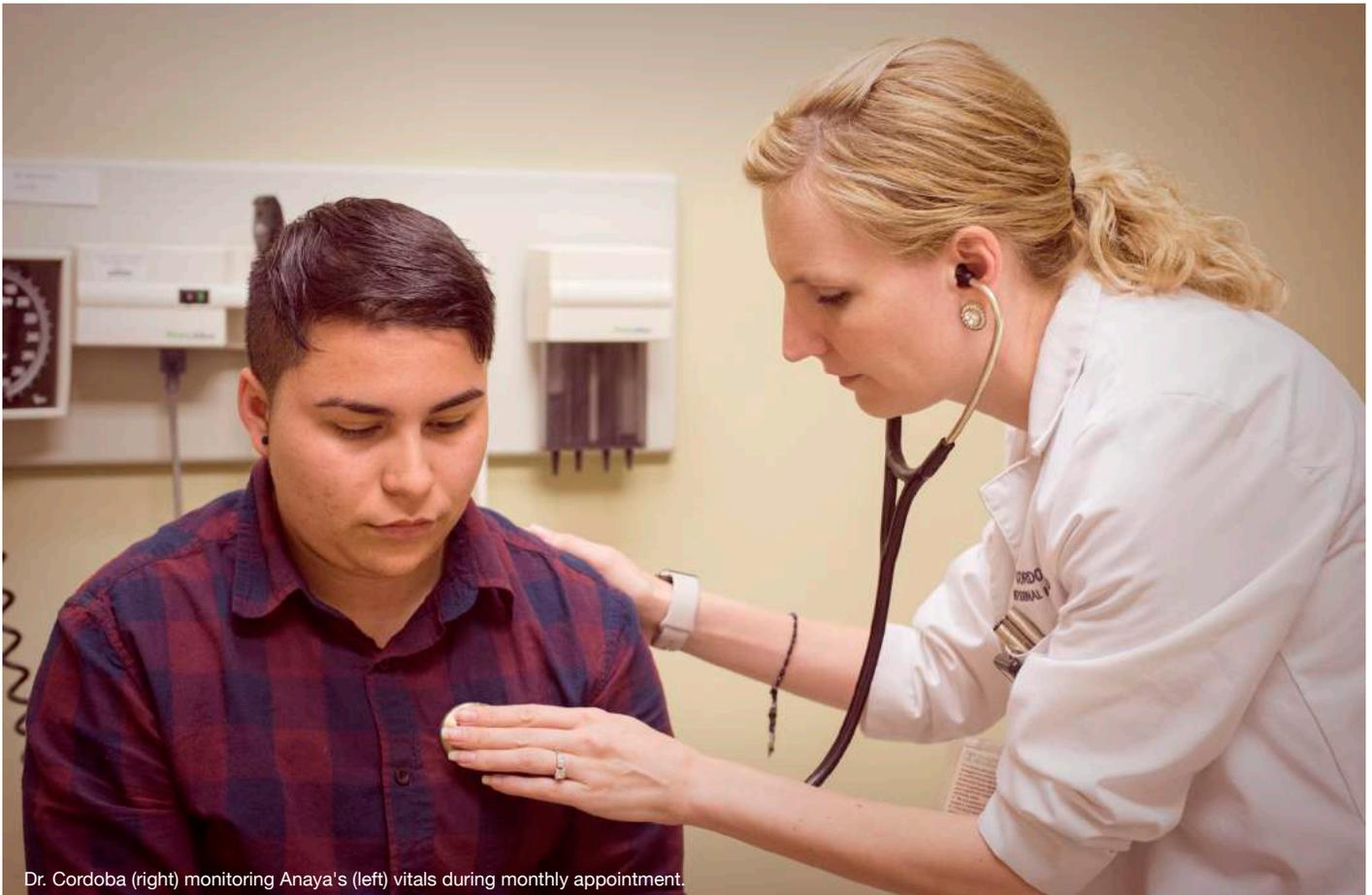
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Dr. Cordoba (right) monitoring Anaya's (left) vitals during monthly appointment.

## ***THERE'S ALSO AN ISSUE WHERE LANDLORDS CAN EVICT ANYONE SINCE THERE ARE NO DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.***

being LGBT or deny applications,” Cantu said. “There’s also an issue where landlords can evict anyone since there are no discrimination protections for sexual orientation. So we’re stuck in an endless cycle of being in fear of unemployment and/or kicked out of our homes which often leads LGBT people to poverty.”

Anaya and Cantu haven’t been alone with these challenges. In fact they’ve both had the support of their wives and, in Cantu’s case, support from her 6-year-old son.

“I asked my son if I became a girl would he still love me and he answered very seriously with his eyes really big ‘of course!’ but that he would have a lot of questions,” Cantu said. “He still calls me dad and I will never tell him that he has to call me anything different, but it gives me anxiety thinking about what could happen one day when I’m out in public with him and I’ve gone through the transition. What do I do when he calls me dad?”

Christine Severn, Cantu’s wife, shares her perspective on the process of Cantu’s transitioning and its affect on their family life.

“There’s always fear for all of us about what could happen, but we’ve taught our son that everyone is different,” Severn said. “It’s been interesting learning about what comes with transitioning and what comes with being LGBT, but I know it’s going to be difficult sometimes.”

28-year-old Linda San Miguel, Anaya’s wife, has always known of his transition and the story behind who he is since the first

day they’ve met. She’s seen the struggles of being a transgender person and knows how he feels when he’s misgendered. “When we first started dating I never called Sabastian by his birth name. I’ve always called him by his preferred pronouns, but with my family it’s been taking time for them to use proper pronouns,” San Miguel said. “When they do call him ‘she’ I can notice how much it hurts him and to see that hurts me.”

Anaya shares his experience with being misgendered and what he feels when it occurs.

“For me I get really sad because I feel they are ripping away a victory that’s taken my whole life to achieve,” Anaya said. “I finally won the battle against my inner demons so to be misgendered makes me feel I haven’t conquered or won this fight.”

To be misgendered can be a difficult situation to be in especially when documentation similar to driver licenses and birth certificates show the wrong gender marker that you identify with. Cantu shares her perspective on why it seems to be difficult for transgender individuals to change the gender markers on their documentation.

“There are fees that we do have to pay for but it can be expensive for a person who is unemployed and trying to change their name,” Cantu said. “Unemployment is a huge issue for LGBTQ people but especially for transgender people who need to change their identification. If unemployment for trans people is twice as much as the national average of unemployment than there’s something wrong.”

Many people in the LGBTQ community have experienced the feelings and conflict of coming out to family members. For most there is a fear of becoming hated or even disowned. Their true identities end up bottled up. For Anaya and Cantu they've both shared their feelings and thoughts about coming out.

"She raised us to be men and that was always my mom's mentality, so when I do come out to her I just hope that she can still love me and accept me," Cantu said.

Anaya's coming out to his family wasn't as nerve-racking as he expected because of the close bond he has with his family.

"When I first came out to my family it wasn't a huge surprise to anyone," Anaya said. "In actuality my brother didn't allow me to finish my sentence before he said he always knew. I told all of my family before I told my father but the second I did come out to him as trans he immediately said that he wouldn't allow me to go to Mexico to receive hormonal

treatment."

Though they have common experiences with coming out, there are still people within the LGBT spectrum that discriminate against people who identify as transgender. Cantu has witnessed what people who are part of the community say when talking about transgender individuals.

"I've seen negative comments or jokes made by gays and lesbians towards trans people. There's been a history of that discrimination going back to Stonewall," Cantu said. "Authors have written out trans woman from the early narratives of Stonewall. They've written out Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera who did amazing work for the trans community. In fact Sylvia Rivera in the early 70's helped to organize the first pride marches in New York City and after a while they told her that they didn't want her there."

Patience, liberation, and satisfaction are words used to describe the experiences that San Miguel, Anaya and Cordoba

have gained when being involved with the trans community.

'Vale' a latin word that Cantu became familiar with in her studies is the latin derivative of her name Valarie. The meaning behind Valarie, 'to be strong', helped pave the way through her journey as a trans woman.

"If I could go back to see preteen me, 18-year-old me or even me four years ago I would say it's okay to be different. I used to cry myself to sleep in hopes that I'd wake up normal whether it was without diabetes, or feeling suicidal or without feeling that I'm supposed to be a girl," Cantu said. "Now I realize I am normal and that there was never anything wrong with me. That it is okay to like different things, to feel this way, and that you don't have to feel ashamed for being different."



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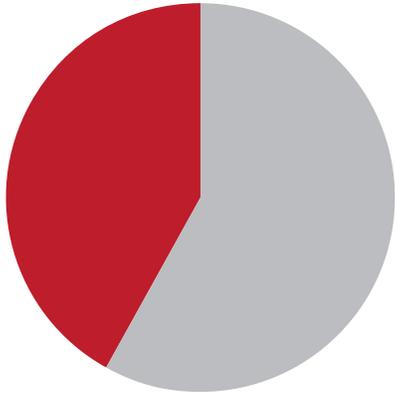
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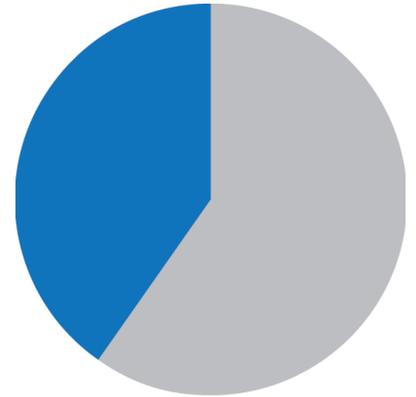
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A 2013 report from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs(NCAVP) offered alarming statistics about violence against trans people:



**72 percent** of victims of anti-LGBT homicide were transgender women.



**67 percent** of anti-LGBT homicide victims were trans women of color.

**3.7x**

More likely to experience police violence compared to cisgender survivors and victims.



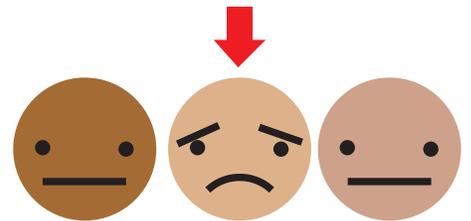
**7x**

More likely to experience physical violence when interacting with the police compared to cisgender survivors and victims.



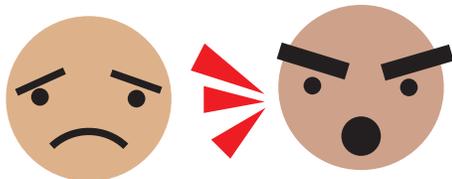
**1.8x**

More likely to experience discrimination compared to cisgender survivors and victims.



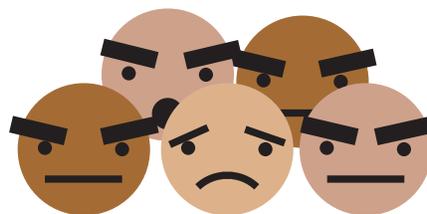
**1.4x**

More likely to experience threats and intimidation compared to cisgender survivors and victims.



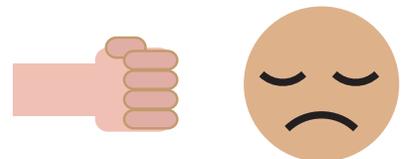
**1.5x**

More likely to experience harassment when compared to cisgender survivors.



**1.7x**

More likely to experience sexual violence when compared to cisgender survivors.



# “UN RETRATO”

A LOCAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORK

By Betzaida Rivera • Photos: Verónica Gabriela Cárdenas







**T**imeless and meaningful photographs are what Verónica Gabriela Cárdenas, a documentary photographer based in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, hopes to capture with her project “Un retrato.”

The project, viewable since January 2016 at [veronicagabriela.com](http://veronicagabriela.com), showcases images of people in the isolated village of Santa María Alotepec, Oaxaca, México holding prints of their portraits. Some of the people photographed do not remember the last time they had their photo taken, while others know they haven’t had their picture taken in decades. A man, for example, remembers his last portrait being taken more than 30 years ago. A couple who has been together for more than 50 years got their first photo taken by Cárdenas as well.

Cárdenas’ interest in photographing the people of Alotepec began with her first visit to the town. In June 2013, Efraín Martínez, a friend of Cárdenas’ and hostel-owner in Oaxaca, invited her to Alotepec. He showed her around the village of Alotepec—one of the poorest towns in the region.

“She wanted to learn more about the cultures of Oaxaca and take pictures of people,” Martínez said. “I told her that I was working at the same time in communities in the Mixe hills helping

chilli and coffee farmers find commercial opportunities in Oaxaca and other regions of Mexico. So, we decided to go together to visit the chilli farm and get an overview of how the real rural life is.”

After getting a first-hand inside look at the culture in Alotepec, the photographer got an itch to keep returning to the town to take more photographs.

On a different occasion, in August 2014, Cárdenas attended a bull-killing event—a special festive sacrifice intended to feed the townspeople of Alotepec—which she decided to document.

While walking back to her friend’s house from the bull-killing sacrifice, a woman by the name of Floriana approached her and asked to get photographed, unknowingly setting off the project “Un retrato.”

“She saw me with a camera and she asked me, ‘Can you take a picture of me with my grandpa? My grandma passed away two years ago and I never took a picture with her,’” Cárdenas said. “And of course I said yes. So we met up the next day and I went up to the grandpa’s house—everything within walking distance, it’s a small village—and when she showed me the photos of her grandma, they had been taken at least 15 years ago.”

Cárdenas was so moved by the experience with Floriana that she decided to print copies of the photographs she took and gave them to her friend to deliver to the woman.

“I went back in November and I went to ask if [Floriana] had received the photos,” the Monterrey native said. “So she showed me the photo and I don’t know why my first instinct was to take a picture of her holding the photo. I guess it’s kind of a way to document that she had received the photo.”

After photographing Floriana and her family, Cárdenas took photos of more town inhabitants at random as she explored the village.

To make it easier for the townspeople to receive their photos, Cárdenas bought a portable printer that prints 4-by-6 photos, making it possible to distribute photos the same day they were taken or the following.

Cárdenas has been able to deliver photos to about 40 families within the four times she has visited Alotepec. She usually takes a wide shot and close-up of each individual and gives them two copies of each photo to give to their relatives. Others also choose to take family portraits.

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**SOME OF THE PEOPLE PHOTOGRAPHED DO NOT REMEMBER THE LAST TIME THEY HAD THEIR PHOTO TAKEN, WHILE OTHERS KNOW THEY HAVEN'T HAD THEIR PICTURE TAKEN IN DECADES.**



## **I TOOK SOME PHOTOS OF THEM LOOKING AT THEIR PHOTO AND SOME, THEY DON'T SAY MUCH, BUT THEY JUST STARE AT IT.**

Due to the language barrier between Cárdenas and the people of Alotepec, little feedback beyond facial gestures and smiles is exchanged with the photographer.

"I took some photos of them looking at their photo and some, they don't say much, but they just stare at it," Cárdenas said. "I've asked them 'How meaningful is this photo to you?' And [according to the translator] they say that they're glad they have a photo now because they can pass it on to their grand-kids."

Although some of the people of Alotepec have lived without photos for years, Cárdenas feels that she is bringing a good experience and service to the town.

"I feel good that I can bring a photo to their family—a way they can remember them," the 31-year-old said. "People do look for me sometimes, if they see me they already know that I take pictures, so obviously it is something good."

### **VERSATILITY**

Cárdenas first picked up a camera when she was 7 years old. Her aunt asked her to take some family photos and noticed that for her young age, she took well-centered photographs using a film camera, unlike her 17-year-old cousin. However, Cárdenas didn't pursue the hobby until she was 24 years old, when she discovered nature photography and started taking pictures of birds, butterflies and flowers.

After gaining an interest in photographing people, Cárdenas began taking pictures of people on the streets of South-Central Mexico on trips that her aunts from Monterrey would organize.



"I noticed that what also attracted me was the everyday moments in people's lives," the documentary photographer said. "Like my family or just taking photos of somebody drinking coffee. It was more people that started interesting me, rather than birds."

Cárdenas began collecting works of street photography in 2011 with her small point-and-shoot Canon Powershot S95. She would take pictures of random people on the streets, sometimes following them around for a couple blocks, hoping to remain unnoticed, just to snap a photograph at the right moment. The adrenaline rush fed her passion for street photography and she liked using photographing tricks used by the pros such as her role model Eric Kim, a street photographer and photography educator currently based in Berkeley, California.

"I'll pretend I'm taking a picture of a building, being all touristy,

## **ME SIENTO MUY ORGULLOSA DE ELLA.**



Veronica's workstation where she printed her photos

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and then I pretend I'm looking at the picture I took, but I [actually] want to take a photo of the person in front of me," Cárdenas said. "And then I take the picture and the person's looking directly at the camera—and they think that I'm just looking at the picture I just took."

### IMPACTFULNESS

The experience Cárdenas has had as a photographer has carved new pathways for her.

"Eventually, I want to pursue a career in documentary photography full time," Cárdenas said. "I think now it's about time to put my work out there and see who can see it. I'm working and brainstorming about other projects over there as well."

Cárdenas' family is proud of her achievements and encourages her to continue to follow her dreams.

"Me siento muy orgullosa de ella," Aunt Bertha Cárdenas said. "Yo como tía, que la vi desde niña y vi cómo se entusiasmaba con las cosas y con los instrumentos [musicales] y todo, siento que ella ahorita, eso es lo que ella [en realidad] quería, la fotografía."

Translation: "I feel so proud of her," Aunt Bertha Cárdenas said. "As an aunt, seeing her as a child and how she was enthusiastic about things and [musical] instruments and everything, I feel that now, this is what she truly wanted—to take photographs."

Likewise, her friends are appreciative of her work.

Ricardo Antonio Monterrubio, a friend that helped deliver photos to Alotepec natives, believes in her future goals.

"Yo quisiera que ella continuara más que nada con este proyecto," Monterrubio said.

Translation: "I would like more than anything for her to continue with this project," Monterrubio said.

A former cycling friend was equally fascinated by the photographer's photos.

"I have no idea how she's able to add so much--it's such vivid connection with just an ordinary moment," Marissa Dávila said. "This is truly an artist who is thinking about this project on so many levels. This isn't just somebody snapping photos. This is somebody taking the time to honor the moment. Taking the time to honor the process. And really being careful with it."

Although the photographer prides herself in her work, one of the most meaningful moments during her time in Alotepec was one that she didn't document with a lens.

On an evening with a lot of work ahead, Cárdenas took a break to play with some children in the streets. She had her camera, phone and backpack with more pictures to deliver, but she chose to live in the moment. Cárdenas remembers this time as one of liberation.

"It got to the point where we were running around and I said, 'I better stop taking photos and just throw everything aside and just be free and enjoy this moment,'" Cárdenas said. "That moment was very meaningful to me, but I don't really have photos."

Now the children recognize her every time she visits Alotepec.

"Those are priceless moments," Cárdenas said. "Those are the moments I enjoy the most—even more than taking the photos. It's not about taking the photos, but more how people welcome you after you have taken their photos."

These are the items Verónica received in thanks for the photos she had taken.



**THOSE ARE THE MOMENTS I ENJOY THE MOST-EVEN MORE THAN TAKING THE PHOTOS. IT'S NOT ABOUT TAKING THE PHOTOS, BUT MORE HOW PEOPLE WELCOME YOU AFTER YOU HAVE TAKEN THEIR PHOTOS**



# MYRIAH ACOSTA

ANALOG PHOTOGRAPHER BASED IN SOUTH TEXAS

By Matthew Sustaita • Photos: Myriah Acosta

Myriah Acosta, is a UTRGV student in her third year at the university, Originally from California but raised here in the Rio Grande Valley. While her college career initially started with a psychology degree, her work as a photographer gave her confidence to begin film production classes. Her pictures have a unique tinge to them, something that you've probably seen in a dream, hazy portrait's that look as if they're in a hypnagogia and surreal looking scenes that are stuck between a type of dreamy head trip and reveire.





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**Could you tell us a little about yourself? Do you come from any sort of creative background?**

I was born in California, but consider McAllen, TX my home. I feel very lucky to have grown up in such a unique area close to the border. Being Latina is an important part of my identity and being surrounded by the creative diverse scene of the Valley influences me in what I do. My parents never pushed me into art and they don't have any creative hobbies, but they are supportive of what I do and that's all I need from them.

**Do you find yourself drawn to any specific creative mediums that influence your work?**

***BEING LATINA IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY IDENTITY AND BEING SURROUNDED BY THE CREATIVE DIVERSE SCENE OF THE VALLEY INFLUENCES ME IN WHAT I DO.***

I am mostly drawn to film photography and even digital photography to an extent. Filmmaking peaks my interest well because that is what I aspire to do next in life. I am not inspired by many directors, only because many seem flawed and in the end it is a male dominated industry. I have been deeply impacted by films and 2 of my alltime favorites are Paris, Texas and Tangerine.

**Aside from photography do you have any hobbies that you do on your off-time?**

Besides taking pictures on my free time, I also develop my own film, along with other people's film on the side. I also like to write and think of future script ideas, but most of that is private. The next thing I need to invest in is a video camera so that I can record and film as well.

**So how do you go about with producing your photos? Do you develop your own film?**

I rely on myself to get my work done and the main reason I began to develop my own film was because the Walgreens in my area stopped doing their 1 hour developing. I was impatient to wait over a week for my roll to return to me when I could be doing it myself. At first, I was really nervous about mixing chemicals properly and having them at 100-105 degrees fahrenheit when using them. I thought I'd mess up my first time, and was prepared for that. I surprised myself when everything came out fine, and that the results were even better than



what I had received from Walgreens in the past. I am at the point where I can develop everything in order and timely without the instructions I once depended on. I also put myself out there as much as I can on the internet to reach magazines and other talented artists who enjoy my work.

**When did your passion for photography start? Were there any other photographers around you that inspired you? And since your start has your family supported you?**

When I was 13, I was really influenced by two local female photographers. I've hardly met them, I used to lurk their Flickr's and remember shyly asking one of them where to buy film locally when I was first starting off. At some point, I remember they both stopped taking pictures and they both stopped posting. I didn't know them personally and they were older than I was, but seeing their work online sparked my interest in photography. Back then I'd just use my phone camera, which was probably some cheap android. It wasn't until I was 16 when I began to use film over analog. I had a hard time getting results I liked with a Canon Rebel my parents once gifted me, and preferred the results of my film camera (a Yashica TL Electro). After a while, I sold the Canon. I also read somewhere that film has a broader color range and is able to capture shadows and highlights better than digital cameras at times.

**Lastly, why are you still here? What keeps you going as an artist?**

I always want to produce art that I'm proud of and pushing forward with my talents helps me deal with a lot of stress. Getting recognition and good feedback helps me keep on going and helps me believe that I am where I need to be. I want to direct movies that are personal to me and that people can relate to and I want to try to include my friends in everything I do.





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# LAYERS OF CULTURE

INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS OCHOA

By Matthew Sustaita  
Artwork: Carlos Ochoa



Ochoa's work could be described a number of ways, Pop Culture infused with a bleak outlook, A Saturday morning cartoon left to it's own devices, or something you'd probably see in a bad dream.

**So where are you from?**

I am from the small city of Peñitas which is located between La Joya and Palmview,

**Has living in that area affected your art in any way?**

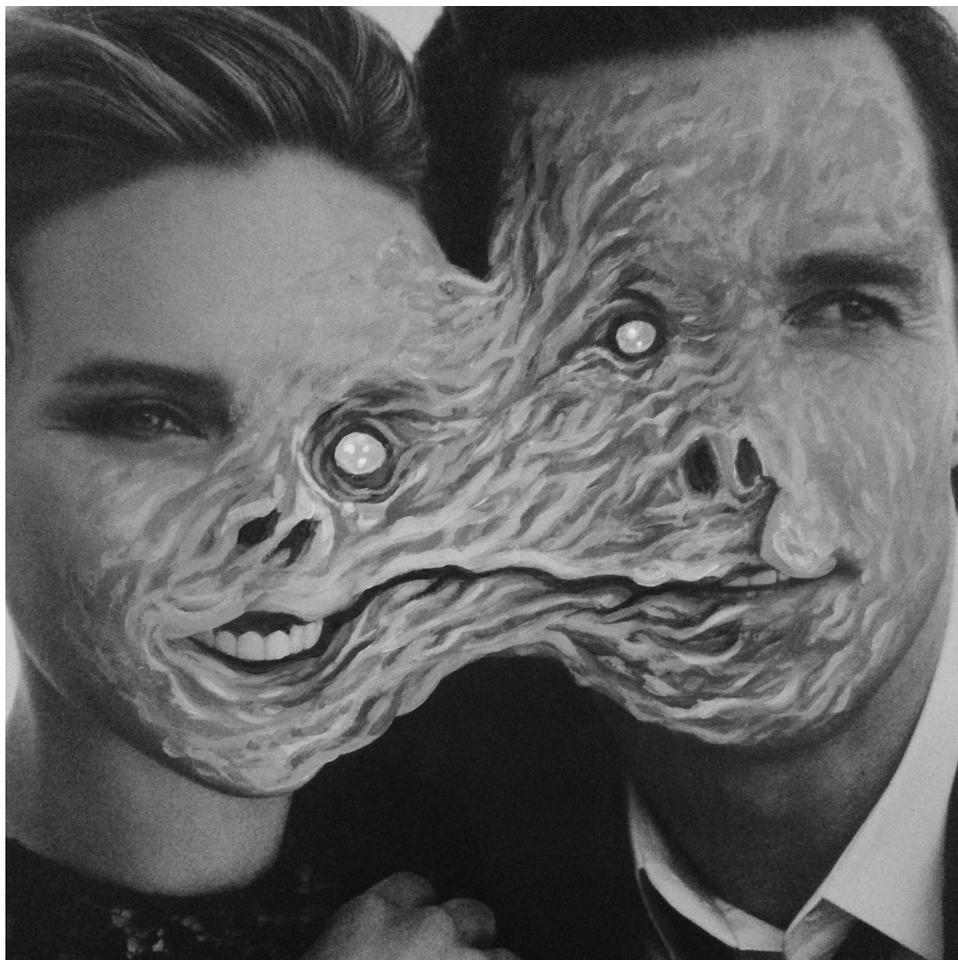
Even though I do not believe that this has attributed to my Art, I do at times find small hints of the environment within my work. Such as cactuses, mesquite trees or a direct light source, as the Valley is known for it's south Texas heat.

**Any creative medium that inspires you the most?**

I have been painting for eleven years, and it is the medium that I feel the most versatile. The atmosphere that can be created with painting is unlike any other medium.

**when painting, is there anything that you focus on in particular during your work?**

One aspect of the work I am currently focused on deals with the notion of Kitsch and the effects it can have when it is altered from its original form. Questioning the viewer's stance of what is or isn't art, by doing so I am combining high-brow and lowbrow idealism. The goal is to elevate this otherwise empty mass produced object or image into something much more authentic.



**THE GOAL IS TO ELEVATE THIS OTHERWISE EMPTY MASS PRODUCED OBJECT OR IMAGE INTO SOMETHING MUCH MORE AUTHENTIC.**

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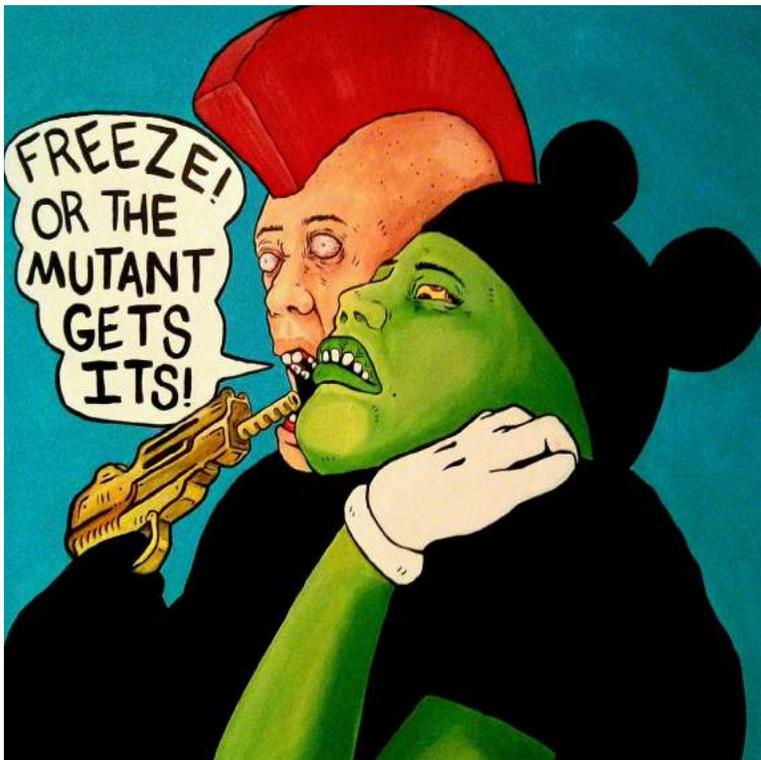
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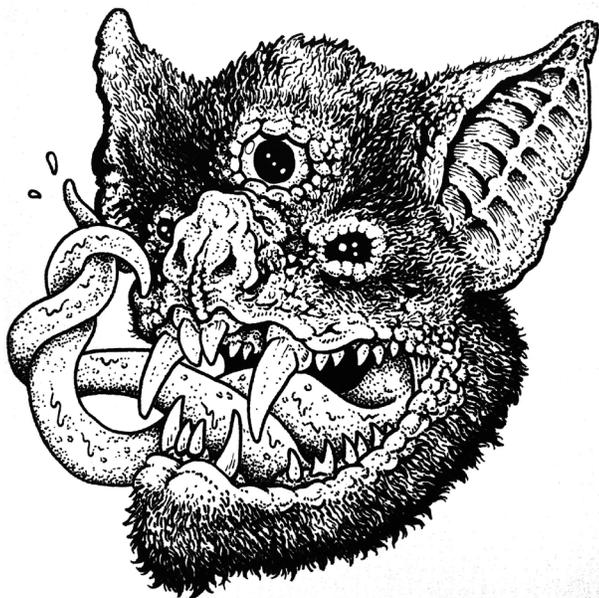
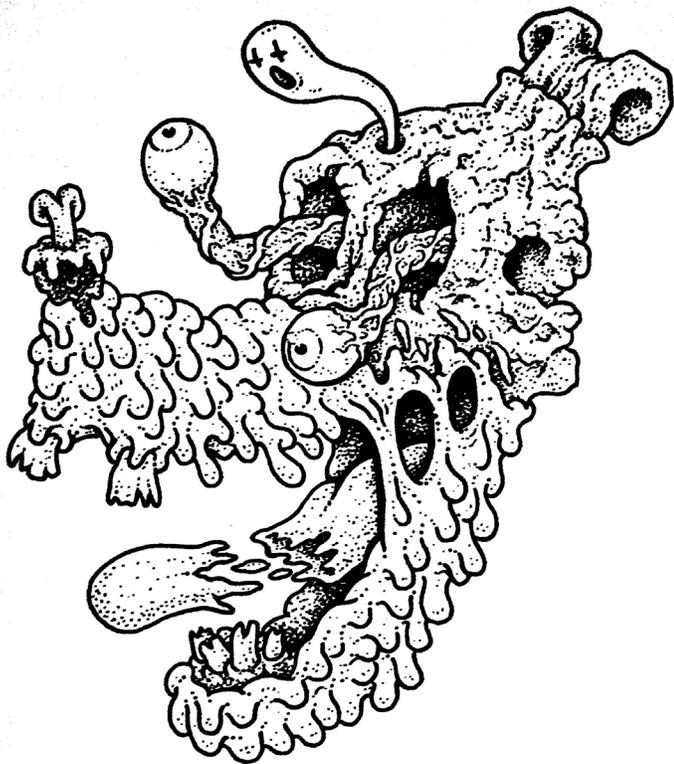
**So how do you go about this? Tell me a little about the design process that goes into making your works?**

Most of my work has a theatrical design, from lighting to figure placement, as well as employing bright colors and historical art themes. There are stages to my process when it comes to my oil paintings, first I do several sketches on paper then the final sketch directly on the canvas. Second I begin to block in the main shapes with acrylic paint, while developing the rough appearance of light and shadows. This is done to build up the layers that give the painting depth and weight. When I am done making the preliminary under-painting, I begin to go over the acrylic with oil paint. After a couple layers with oil, I start to add large and fine details that would give the final overall look to the painting.

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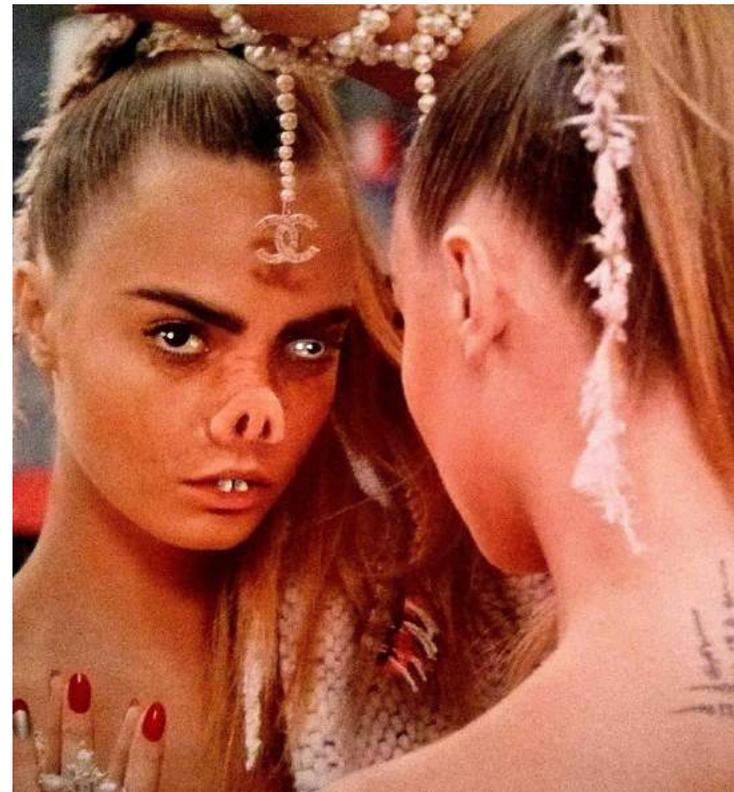
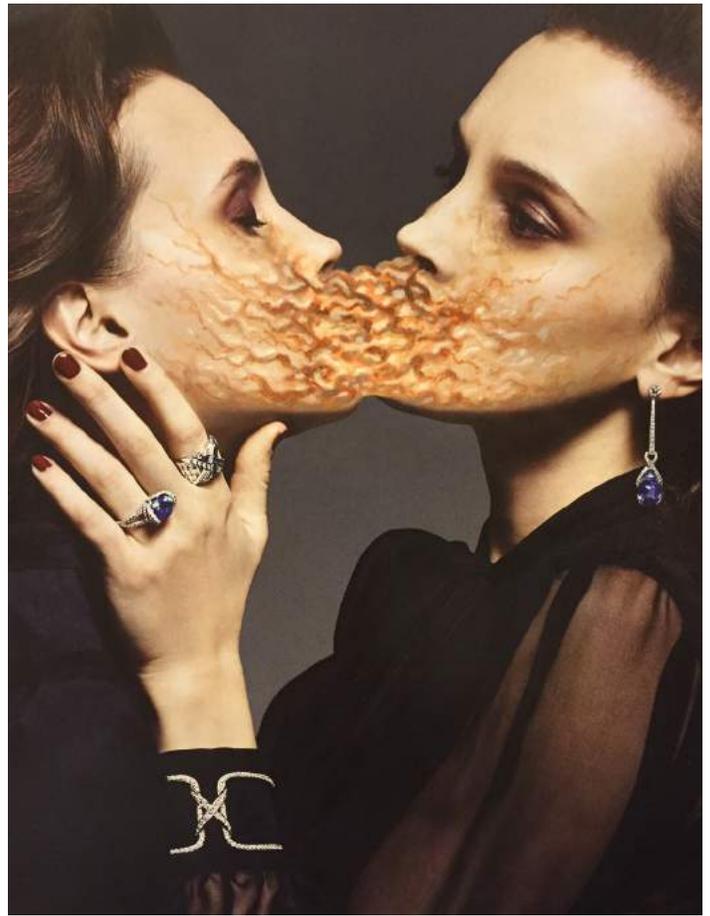


**When did you realize you wanted to pursue this? Have you always been painting like this?**

I have been drawing since childhood and kept developing my ability with ink and pencils, focused only on rendering without color. It was on March 2, 2005 that I first picked up a paintbrush with the intentions of seriously honing in on the art of painting and using color. I am now fairly confident in calling myself a painter, as art has always been a strange fleeting dream to me.

**Do you think you'll continue making art like this?**

I love creating art and I will always be doing so, it is to me the very act of being alive. The nature of art is to destroy and to create, knowing that both are meaningless and beautiful. My artwork expresses personal feelings and opinions to others as they convey social, religious, sexual, and at times dark humorous overtones. It is through the cathartic act of creating that I hope to further my understanding of the world around me, and the many ways it affects my own outlook on beauty.



**So some of these paintings seem like existing photos merged with acrylic painting creating a new image. Can you explain this method and why you chose to do this?**

I am fascinated with commercial beauty and currently working on a series of acrylic paintings based on this notion. The objective is to embellish the commercial ideal form of beauty and fashion by manipulating ads found in Vogue magazines. In distorting these ads, I am proposing to the viewer that even an everyday commercial advertisement can be altered into a social commentary form of art. The viewer can then evaluate their own perspective on how companies are trying to sell their products by exploiting the viewer's or buyer's notion of beauty.

*the sleep of reason produces monsters, I long to hope that one day through my art, I will become one of those monsters. -Francisco Goya*

*You can find more of Ochoa's work on his instagram @total\_faux\_pas*

**I AM PROPOSING TO THE VIEWER THAT EVEN AN EVERYDAY COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENT CAN BE ALTERED INTO A SOCIAL COMMENTARY FORM OF ART.**

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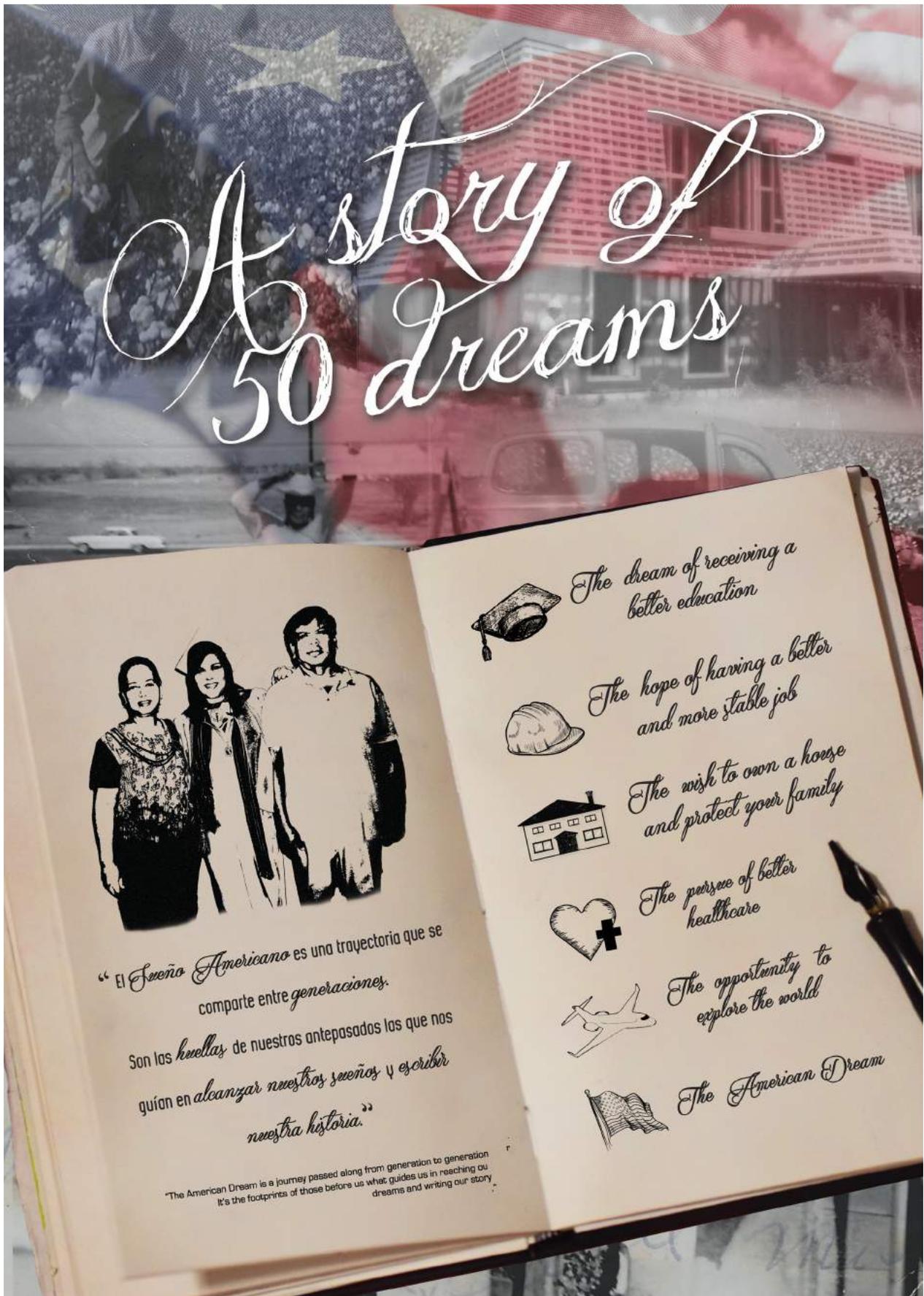
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# R.E.M. THE AMERICAN STATE OF MIND

THREE STUDENTS AT THE BFA GRAPHIC DESIGN EXHIBIT



*“El Sueño Americano es una trayectoria que se comparte entre generaciones.*

*Son las huellas de nuestros antepasados los que nos guían en alcanzar nuestros sueños y escribir nuestra historia.”*

*“The American Dream is a journey passed along from generation to generation. It's the footprints of those before us that guides us in reaching our dreams and writing our story.”*

Jessica Gonzales: "A Story of Dreams"

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On November 20, 2015 the Visual Arts Gallery hosted the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's first graduating class of graphic designers. The gallery's spotlights shined down upon the works of 27 students as they displayed their work for their fellow peers, family, friends and faculty.

At the beginning of the semester the graduating students were given a theme and spent the rest of the semester working on two projects along with their portfolios, which they presented at the end of the semester. Each student had the opportunity to showcase their interpretation of the semester's theme.

Professor Robert Gilbert, who has been teaching graphic design for 10 years at UTPA - now UTRGV - chose the theme for these University of Texas Rio Grande Valley students. He wanted to give them the opportunity to engage with their projects on an emotional and creative level. He chose the theme of dreams, but more specifically the American Dream.

"The American Dream is our mythology and I think it's very interesting that people have different ideas about what that mythology is and what the American dream is," Gilbert said. "Graphic designers usually serve the needs of a client. But I think that for the senior exhibit show, it really should be about their ideas, playing to their strengths and something that they feel passionate about."

He was motivated to allow his students to express themselves to the best of their ability. The students embraced the opportunity to exhibit what they believed the American Dream is, and what it means in their lives.

## PERSONALIZING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Senior graphic design student Paola Vargas from Reynosa, Tamaulipas displayed her works "La Bestia, El Tren de la Muerte" and "DREAM Act." The two graphic posters were inspired by her own experience as an immigrant.

"I'm an immigrant so I decided to pick the train, not because I experienced that but because I relate to that experience, those people that came from Central

America or Mexico here to the United States just to build a better future," Vargas said. "That's what my family did when we first arrived here."

Her second piece, "DREAM Act" was an infographic explaining the process and procedures of what exactly the legislation, of the same name was about. The DREAM Act was first introduced in August 1, 2001. It is a multi - phase process that allows illegal immigrants to gain first conditional residency. Upon meeting further qualifications the DREAM Act allows for permanent residency.

"The benefits that young students acquire are that they are able to obtain a Texas ID, a driver's license, a social security number, they are able to apply for scholarships, and travel within the U.S." Vargas explained. "The process is long. But it's worth it at the end, believe me."

Because the DREAM Act allowed Vargas and her younger brother to reside in the United States and pursue their own American Dream, she is passionate about educating others through her work.

"For this infographic yes, my purpose was to inform students about the DREAM ACT and all the benefits they get once they apply to it," She said. "Also, so they can realize this is the first step for immigrants to accomplish their American dream."

Fellow graphic design artist David Valle displayed his work "Borderless Roots" as an homage to his parents. The poster displays the image of a tree growing, flourishing with thick branches right through a fence. Its' roots grow without end, deeply imbedded in the ground they spread in all directions ignoring whatever border may be above the ground. The leaves are in shades of greens and browns, a cycle of life and time.

"I chose roots, border roots [because] I felt that my parents, being from Mexico, and I, being born in the States, I got roots from both countries," Valle said. "Some of my roots are in Mexico, some in the States and once they flourish, meaning once I graduate, it represents my parents who came from Mexico for a better life and myself continuing that as I graduate. "

Valle quoted Thor Heyerdahl in his poster, "Borders? I have never seen one.

But I hear that they exist in the minds of some people."

Jesica Gonzales, like Valle, aimed to display her combined culture and heritage. Though she was born in Reynosa, Tamaulipas she resides in the United States and has a strong connection to her family's history. The Reynosa native was inspired to display her history and remind others that being connected to one's history is very important.

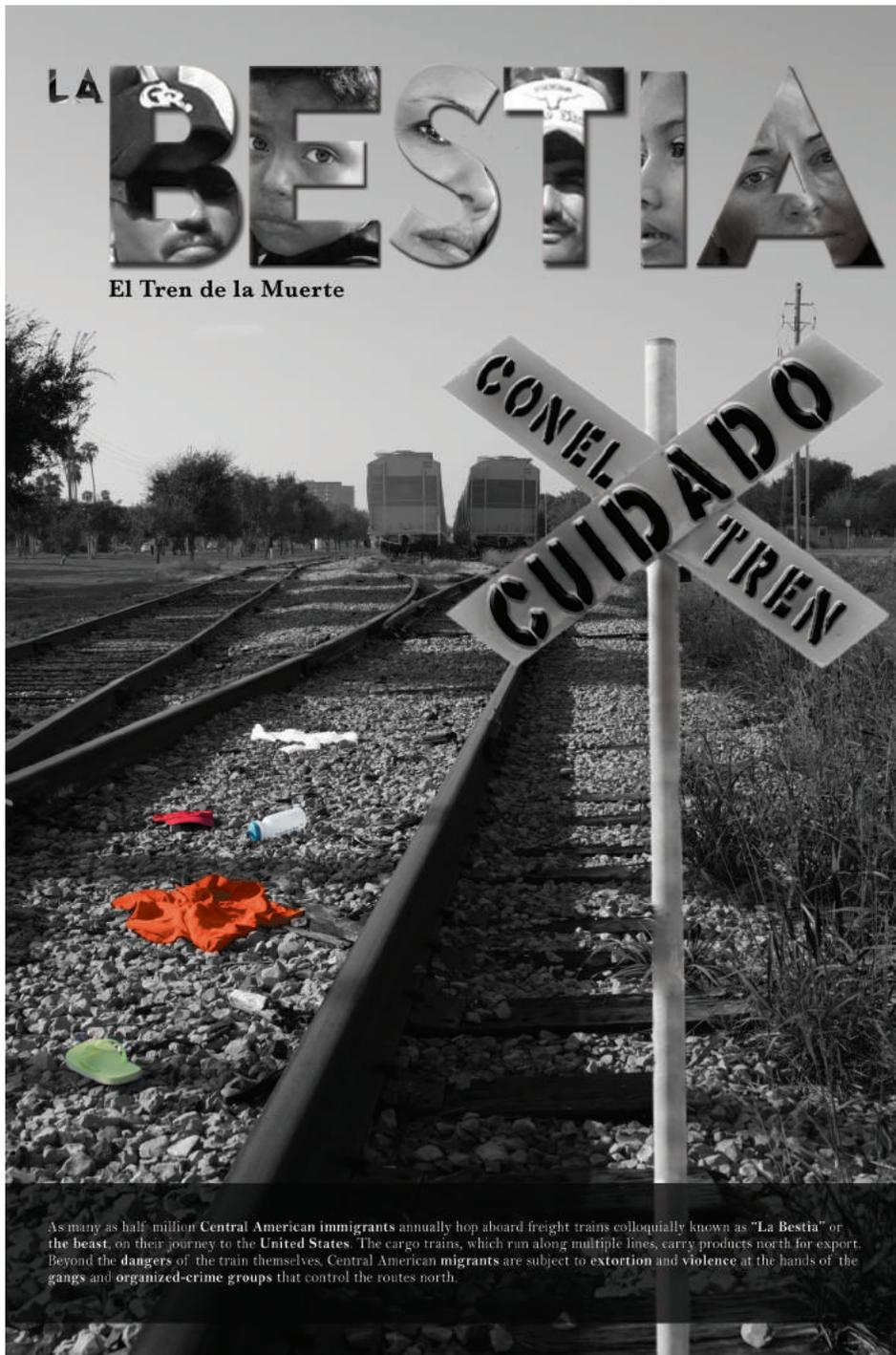
"I hope people get from it is that they don't forget where they come from. Like I know some people move from Mexico and then they'll be like I was from over there but I'm not [anymore], so I'm not Mexican," Gonzales said. "And to me it's like I'm Mexican but I also live in America now and I'm going to embrace it so it's like getting the best of both nationalities and histories."

For Gonzales it was important that she acknowledge the work that her family did, her first piece titled "A Story of Dreams" was a digital print poster that displayed a collection of photographs of her grandfather's journey from working in the fields to building homes. An image of a book beneath the pictures held goals and ambitions her grandfather and her parents aimed to achieve.

The meaning of the American dream lies in the eye of the beholder, adapting to the individual. These students were given the opportunity to explore what it meant to each of them. Each of their projects were deeply personal, a way of honoring their past and engaging with their future.

Vargas aimed to inform others of the extremes that immigrants are willing to face to come to the United States for a better life, and how programs like the DREAM Act are helpful and a safer road to enter the US. That though one can be wary of trusting the program, fearing a negative outcome, they could be looking at a better education and opportunity to become a permanent resident in the

**BORDERS? I HAVE NEVER SEEN ONE. BUT I HEAR THAT THEY EXIST IN THE MINDS OF SOME PEOPLE.**



As many as half million Central American immigrants annually hop aboard freight trains colloquially known as "La Bestia" or the beast, on their journey to the United States. The cargo trains, which run along multiple lines, carry products north for export. Beyond the dangers of the train themselves, Central American migrants are subject to extortion and violence at the hands of the gangs and organized-crime groups that control the routes north.

Paola Vargas: "La Bestia, El Tren de la Muerte"

**THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT DON'T KNOW ABOUT IT,  
OR DO KNOW ABOUT IT AND ARE AFRAID TO TAKE THE RISK**

**BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE ALL OF  
THEIR INFORMATION AND ARE AFRAID  
THEY ARE GOING TO GET DEPORTED**

United States.

"There are a lot of people that don't know about it, or do know about it and are afraid to take the risk because they provide all of their information and are afraid they are going to get deported," the Reynosa native said. "It's normal to think that, pero no es espada de doble filo [it is not a double edged sword]. The program is there to help."

Valle hoped that the exhibit would allow others who don't understand what graphic design is to leave with a better understanding of the hard work that goes into it.

"There is time and an art that goes into graphic design. I hope that it gives the students barely coming in the push to develop their skill and be better," Valle said. He is looking forward to what future UTRGV graphic designers will develop.

As the Fall 2015 graduates approached their December graduation ceremony, they prepared for their post graduation futures.

Valle is looking forward to exploring his options. He enjoys the business side of graphic design and creating an image and product for a client, but he would be interested in working for a magazine that would allow him the opportunity to illustrate and create more digital artwork.

Vargas hopes to move up north in the future where she would apply her graphic design degree to brand her own spa business that she is currently saving up to open.

Gonzales is currently still working for the UTRGV Athletics department where she's able to utilize her graphics design degree. In the Fall of 2016 she plans to travel to Florence, Italy where she will begin her Master's in graphic design.

The American dream is a set of ideals that guide the individual in the pursuit of goals. It is the opportunity for prosperity and success achieved through hard work. These students are no longer preparing for their American Dream, they are achieving it.

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# BENEFITS OF THE DREAM ACT TO ATTAIN THE AMERICAN DREAM

Get your Social Security Number



Get travel Authorization.



Apply for a Driver License or State ID.



Apply for Jobs



Look for Scholarships and Financial Aid if you want to go to College or University.

## WHAT IS THE DREAM ACT?

**Who are the DREAMERS?**  
The initial Dream Act s.1291 (2001)

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Legislation was introduced in 2001 as a bipartisan bill in the Senate. The legislative goal was to provide a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S as children to gain pathway to permanent legal status; provided those individuals achieved certain milestones.

## WHO CAN QUALIFY?

**Young people must meet several requirements in order to qualify for the conditional status it will provide them.**

These requirements include entering the country when they were under 16 years old, proving they have continuously lived in the U.S. for at least five years and graduated from U.S. high school or obtained a GED; demonstrating their good moral character; proving they have not committed any crimes that would make them inadmissible to the country. Only then can they obtain a conditional status for a limited period of time.

# THE MADMAN

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF MINISTRY'S AL JOURGENSEN

By: Frank Lozano-Jaramillo • Graphic By: Melissa Altorre

udent life



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The first time I met Al Jourgensen was in 1991, backstage at The Backroom in Austin when I was 18. I tagged along as backup for a drug dealer friend of mine who was there to deliver a Ziploc baggie full of Ecstasy and two tin-foil-wrapped sheets of Silver Palm Tree blotter acid. Security knew my friend and the crummy backstage area was almost empty except for another security guy, two wasted girls and Jourgensen, who was blasting a George Jones CD on this huge boombox and cutting huge lines of cocaine from a pile laid out on a framed Black Flag flyer that he'd pulled off the wall.

"Getting into real estate!" Jourgensen said. Everyone in the room heard his unmistakable Chicago staccato as my friend and I sat down on the worn sofa next to him.

He nudged the picture frame in front of us before palming the Ecstasy and LSD, stuffing it into a pocket inside his biker jacket.

"Gotta find a place out in the country around here," Jourgensen said. "Someplace I can shoot guns and not worry about getting my door kicked in!"

At the time, I was a big fan of Ministry and Revolting Cocks--two of the many bands Jourgensen masterminded in the late 80s and early 90s. It was a strange experience to be a fanboy listening to "The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste" over and over on my Sony Cassette Walkman as I bicycled to and from work on a daily basis; only to suddenly be seated next to the tiny guy who belonged to that loud, angry, distorted voice---helping myself to his cocaine.

"He is kind of asshole sometimes, you know. A madman," said Klaus Schandelmaier, better known as En Esch, the voice and guitars for German industrial band KMFDM.

KMFDM opened for Ministry on their 1989-1990 tours of the U.S.

"One day you are friends and drinking whiskey---the next day you beat up each other," said En Esch. "But no one is like him in the studio. A crazy man, a genius."

After leaving the backstage area, my friend and I headed straight for the bar and drank large Heinekens to take the edge off the drugs and waited for The Skatenigs to do the gig. Jourgensen was slated to be the guest vocalist. When the band finally did get up on stage, Jourgensen ambled up to the other band members, clutching the open Ziploc half-full of big yellow Ecstasy pills, offering some to each. The guitarist shook his head as well as the bassist and vocalist, but the drummer took one. Looking disappointed, Jourgensen then turned to the audience and proceeded to tip the open baggie into his mouth. He washed several pills down with a big bottle of Heineken before throwing the remainder of the Ecstasy into the crowd pressed up at the front of the stage.

Three songs into the set, a microphone had to be duct taped to Jourgensen's hand as a roadie both restrained him and held him up on his feet. Jourgensen had started waving his arms and punching and clawing at imaginary creatures that didn't exist. The strippers dancing on the P.A. speakers seemed to

**HE IS KIND OF ASSHOLE  
SOMETIMES, YOU KNOW.**

**A MADMAN**

calm him for moments at a time, but then his hallucinations would return and he would alternately laugh uncontrollably or fall violently onto an amplifier and then scream lyrics angrily into the battered microphone. It was a startling and delightful scene that left the audience yelling for more.

With the release of "Psalm 69" the following summer, Jourgensen would move from underground celebrity to true rock stardom and success. Chemical excesses transformed into full-blown addictions over the course of the next 20 years, and as the money rolled in the vices took their toll: numerous overdoses (two involving resuscitations from death), two divorces, a disastrous drug bust in 1995 and endless cycles of detoxes and relapses.

"You see him like this cool-guy rock star, but he's just an old junkie," my dealer-friend said two years after the Skatenigs show.

My friend quit the business after a turn in prison, and was living in a spare bedroom in his mother's house, unable to find work.

"I mean, he would sleep on my couch with a needle in his arm and throw up on my carpet and whatever," he said. "Yeah, I had some cool parties just because here was Al Jourgensen in my apartment---but that's what he is: just some old junkie."

**HE WASHED SEVERAL  
PILLS DOWN WITH A BIG  
BOTTLE OF HEINEKEN  
BEFORE THROWING THE  
REMAINDER OF THE  
ECSTASY INTO THE  
CROWD PRESSED UP  
AT THE FRONT OF THE  
STAGE.**

# ***I WAS SOMEWHAT STARTLED HIS VOICE HAS EVOLVED FROM “LOUD CHICAGO STACCATO” TO “LOUD TEXAS DRAWL” OVER THE YEARS,***

I got the opportunity to meet Jourgensen again in 2015, when Ministry did a show in Pharr, at the Boggus Ford event center in June. Walking into the well-lit backstage area was more like walking into a classy VIP area compared to the seedy location of our first meeting.

There were no hypodermic needles, no large piles of drugs, no half-naked groupies---just a few scattered half-full plastic cups of Lite beer, none of which belonged to Jourgensen. Aside from his famous fondness for European wine, he has been drug free since 2006.

“He’s doing a lot better this tour,” Ministry drummer Aaron Rossi said. “At most, it’s like two bottles of wine a night, maybe a couple of beers. But we’re all watching out for him.”

I couldn’t help but feel a strange déjà vu sitting next to Jourgensen on this plush leather sofa, like some kind of time warp. The last time we met I was an 18-year-old punk freshman and he was a 32-year-old imminent rock god. Now I was a 42-year-old with a family, and he was a 56-year-old rock legend. “Dude, can I grab some of that beer off you?” Jourgensen whispered to me as he signed my copy of his biography, nodding at my big, full plastic cup of Lite beer. I was somewhat startled---his voice has evolved from “loud Chicago staccato”

to “loud Texas drawl” over the years, but here was the famous yeller whispering into my ear—the last thing I could possibly expect. I instantly handed it to him.

“Thanks,” he whispered again, looking out for his handler, taking a thirsty sip. “Nobody takes care of me around here!”

“As one judge said to another: be just,” I said to him in my low, bassy voice, quoting the late William S. Burroughs, a friend of Jourgensen’s. “And if you can’t be just—”

“Be arbitrary!” Jourgensen said, laughing that loud, crackly laugh.

“Alright, that’s enough!” my wife snapped at us, over our chuckles. She hovered over us, aiming her iPhone camera lens at us. “Now pretend you love my husband!”

Instantly, he pressed closer to me on the sofa, clutching my arm and leaning his dreadlocked head into my shoulder like a prom date.

“Who’s pretending?” Al Jourgensen said.

***THE LAST TIME WE MET I WAS AN 18-YEAR-OLD PUNK  
FRESHMAN AND HE WAS A 32-YEAR-OLD IMMINENT ROCK GOD.  
NOW I WAS A 42-YEAR-OLD WITH A FAMILY,  
AND HE WAS A 56-YEAR-OLD ROCK LEGEND.***



The Author, Frank Lozano-Jaramillo and Al Jourgensen backstage at the Boggus Ford Event enter in June 2015



Gilberto Capistran posing with his guitar

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# RGV RHYTHMS

By: Ana Cahuiche • Photo By: Gustavo Huerta

**Gilberto Capistran is only 20, but he has already recorded and copyrighted six original songs all by his own effort and works on compositions for us to enjoy despite his hectic schedule between school and work.**

His musical interest became strong when, a few years back, one of his friends got his first guitar.

“My friend received a guitar as a birthday present and everyday after school I would go to his house to play with his guitar,” Capistran said. “I had learned a lot after that school year.”

Yet his musical senses first awoke at the age of 13 when his dad introduced him to the Beatles. From there he went and bought his first iPod in order to start his music gallery. He received his first guitar when he was 16. From there his dad was the one who taught Capistran the chords, which he further developed on his own through self-teaching and practice.

“I have received good response to my music from the people here,” Capistran said.

He often performs at nights in a local café located on Brownsville’s historic downtown. Here he has had the opportunity to develop performing skills in an ambiance which offers a calm and inviting environment. The slow paced life of Brownsville has also given him the opportunity to develop at his own pace. In the Rio Grande Valley, we are fortunate to live in a geographical area where two cultures mix and interact on daily basis. We live on the border between Mexico and the USA. This mix of cultures we have acquired from living in the RGV comes to light in the things we create, such as music.

“This region also provides a mix of culture,” the 20-year-old said. “Which opens an opportunity to learn two cultures at the same time and know local artists of these different cultures.”

Capistran says that what motivates him to compose is that he would like to inspire people through his lyrics. His goal is to write things that people may relate to and transmit personal experiences through his music.

“I want for people to listen to one of my compositions,” the singer and songwriter said. “[To] make their day better.”

Capistran looks to his life experiences for inspiration when writing his songs.

“Emotions and how we get to them, the things that we cannot touch but are real, and the unknown,” Capistran said. “[These] are things that influence me greatly when I compose.”

When thinking about the fame attained by all successful artists, Capistran feels a key connection is lost between the celebrity and their fans.

“Of course I want fame,” the Laguna Heights native said. “But a different kind, [I want] a more personal form of fame. Not like a celebrity ... I want people to get to know me, that they would recognize me here locally and that I might be able to live from my music. Ultimately my main goal is to reach as many people as I can with my songs and to keep improving.”

Like Capistran, there are many other talented musicians here in our cities of the Rio Grande Valley. Rising bands and aspiring artists gather in local cafes, bars and other public places to perform and share with the community the result of their creative minds and hard work. Live performances can most often be heard at particular hot spots such as BAM on East Washington Street in Brownsville, Thirsty Monkey on Chicago Avenue in McAllen and The Prelude on Jackson Avenue in Harlingen.

We all form part of the same community, sharing a diverse culture that stands out from the rest of the country. As a community we can build each other up and support our goals. In the music industry, support and response from the audience is no exception in order to achieve recognition.

“I would like for people to learn to appreciate music with the

***I WOULD LIKE FOR PEOPLE TO LEARN TO APPRECIATE MUSIC WITH THE SAME PATIENCE WHICH MUSICIANS TAKE TO CREATE IT***

# HELL FREEZING OVER

## HOCKEY, A MISFIT SPORT'S SURVIVAL

By Nathaniel Mata • Photos: Jon Nutt



Enter a crowded room full of sweat and a congregation of mature, brawny, white guys changing into pads. It's too early in the year for Winter Texans, and these group of guys are far too young to be retirees. They're middle-aged and young, all of them in shape and most are residents of the area. The demographic of the crowd is a bit bizarre, considering the homogeneity of the Rio Grande Valley, making hockey stick out like a sore thumb. It's the locker room after a Thursday night hockey game in McAllen, one of the furthest spots in the U.S. from the epicenter of the sport. The Frio Grande

Ice Center is the Island of Misfit Toys for South Texas hockey. The players aren't misfits themselves, it's the sport that doesn't belong in the region.

The men's league, comprised of four teams, is competitive, but not professional and not even close to that level. Players of all skill levels are welcome to join if they pay up. Prior to the season, from November to March, a draft takes place in which skaters are divided up in a way that balances beginner and expert hockey players in each squad. In hockey, the common term for a men's league like this one is a "beer

league". In Frio Grande's League, the concept is not much different. A majority of players who were on the ice during the 8:00 p.m. game take the walk up the wooden stairs to the bar and grab a cold one following their match. Everyone tries to get in position to watch the second, and last game of the night at 9:15 from the seats overlooking the ice surface.

It's a miracle hockey even happens in such a humid and hot area as opposed to where snow and ice are naturally occurring. It does happen though, every Thursday night men living in the valley

converge on the McAllen south side warehouse. It's a shady spot, right along the railroad tracks off Business 83, tucked away from the road. The building is in a district that is lined with about 20 other similar maquiladora, manufacturing and shipping buildings. You would really have to be looking to skate in order to find the place.

Despite the fact that the area hasn't seen snow in a decade, and before that a century, it's not an area completely barren of hockey knowledge. After watching for a few minutes, it's easy to see these guys know what

they are doing. Nearly everyone is a displaced hockey player from a colder state. It's almost like a military base where you know most folks are not local, but they all come from completely different backgrounds.

A beer league has a reputation for being pretty laid back. The only catch is "laid back" and hockey mix just as well as oil and water. Tempers tend to fly faster than the bouncing puck in a South Texas ice rink. It's intense and it's hard labor, and no wonder these men can be on edge over a glorified pickup game.

Chris Hernandez is one of the few local kids, born and raised in McAllen. Technically, he's no kid at all, at 20-years-old and hovering around six feet tall he's definitely a man. It isn't until you compare him to some of his teammates, with hair on their chest, facial hair and rough faces, in their late 30s and 40s it makes sense.

Unlike a majority of the others in the league who come from hockey backgrounds and a youth around the rink, Hernandez is relatively new to ice hockey. During high school in McAllen he was an avid baseball player, spend-



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# **NEARLY EVERYONE IS A DISPLACED HOCKEY PLAYER FROM A COLDER STATE.**

ing three of four years on the varsity team. Tonight he shares locker rooms with men who do not sprint with cleats but glide across ice on skates.

Combining athleticism from playing sports growing up and having some friends who played hockey, getting on the ice seemed almost like natural progression.

“I didn’t know shit about playing hockey, always watched it on TV but that was it,” Hernandez said. “I could skate really fast, and no one here is very judgemental so it was a blast right away.”

In one particular game between the top team in the league and the evening’s challengers saw two ejections. A player being disqualified for a match is a significant event in a hockey game, however two is almost unheard of. Both guys who were sent to the locker room early found out the hard way that no matter the level of play getting into an altercation with the guys in stripes usually doesn’t end well.

The first ejected player hangs around the entrance to the ice before hitting the showers, venting to whomever will lend an ear.

“The refs are bad tonight, well Justin is bad tonight, fucking idiot,” he said of the referee, who he knew well enough to call by name.

The second man, who allegedly swung his stick at the same ref, was off the ice and into the dressing room in such a hurry chatting was the last thing on his mind. They were on separate teams, so the gripe about bad officiating might have been spot on.

It was one of the most intense things you can imagine from close up. Somehow, despite all of this pandemonium

regarding discipline it was a real nail-biter of a game. Down the stretch the top team in the league almost had their lead in the game disappear. Then all of the penalties and ejections happened and the frontrunners added an empty net goal to secure the win.

Being on ice level is one thing, you can feel the animosity between the two teams, even through the ½ inch, nearly frozen, plexiglass.

From up above it’s a lighter mood. Fans and players watch the grab from upstairs with bar stools. Soon both games will be finished and bitter rivals from a few minutes ago be sharing a beer.

Craig Lewis is the man who runs the men’s league and has his hands in all things hockey in the Rio Grande Valley. He’s in his sixties but often even he puts on the full pads and plays out there with the younger men. That night however, he is perched above drinking a beer and talking to one of the wives of the players, just enjoying the action.

He came to the Rio Grande Valley from the Toronto area in 1979. He arrived in the Valley long before ice hockey did. Back then, Lewis said he was involved in roller hockey in Harlingen.

The hype around ice hockey in the Valley has come and gone. The Killer Bees, the local semi-pro team, has folded twice and this time it looks like they are gone for good. The Frio Grande Ice Center, where the Bees used to practice, is the last site remaining where hockey exists within hundreds of miles.

Lewis knows that the general public may have lost interest in the sport, but an active league is reason enough to be positive.

“This is the only ice rink in the Valley, it’s going to survive,” Lewis said.

“Whenever someone moves into the area, they always ask around, find their way here and soon enough they are regulars.”

Everyone else may have been at each other’s neck about the intense game earlier, but the fiery competition seems to please him. To Lewis, it’s a sign that the league is only getting better.

“This is definitely our best year yet, there’s a lot of really good games every week. That just means the gap [in skill level] is getting smaller, which makes for some real excitement,” said the businessman by day and hockey enthusiast all other times. “These guys become family, in fact two of those guys down there are my sons. But beyond that, the friendships and relations you build out here really brings people together. It’s those connections that are not actually family, that start to feel that way.”

Following their match Hernandez’s team files upstairs. Hernandez, with the youngest legs, is changed and sitting first. He quickly cuts to complaints about the goaltending tonight but quickly is in good spirits and enjoying the free popcorn the ice rink has provided for them.

A teammate of his rushes up the stairs, grabs a beer and flips the channel to catch his home state football team from Detroit. The man, Joe Haske, was born and raised in Michigan. The state situated amongst great lakes is a hockey holy grail, producing professional hockey players annually.

His hockey experience is similar to Hernandez, but with a few differences.

“Up north I played everything in a league, football, basketball, baseball,” the 30-year-old said. “Except hockey. That was the one sport we would play in [frozen] ponds. Never organized so

***THE KILLER BEES, THE LOCAL SEMI-PRO TEAM, HAS FOLDED TWICE AND THIS TIME IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ARE GONE FOR GOOD.***

not sure if it counted but we played a lot, everyone knew how to skate from a young age, but never before here had I played in an actual league.”

This season was his first year back following a long recovery after shoulder surgery. Haske said that it was a culmination of years of being active taking its toll on his body. When not playing hockey he teaches at the community college, where Chris Hernandez is one of his students. A small world indeed, but student and teacher are teammates on Thursday nights.

Their scholastic relationship, turned athletic teamwork is a microcosm for how people can be brought together in strange ways. They are brought together by a sport that is surviving in an odd spot.

Hernandez made sure to give credit where it was due on the resilience of local hockey. Even though he’s only been involved for a short time he recognized it quickly.

“Okay man, you can write this down,” the 20-year-old said. “There wouldn’t still be hockey in the area if it wasn’t Craig Lewis, he’s the one who makes sure it continues. Ask anyone, I’m sure they will tell you the same thing.”

Asking around was not even necessary. After the game ended and the stragglers caught up with Hernandez every single person shook Lewis’s hand before grabbing their beer and popcorn. His impact on all of them was evident in the respect the players had for him.

There’s no telling how long ice hockey will continue to have a pulse down here. But until it completely flatlines there’s no secret as to who keeps the I.V. connected. Until hockey dies the men in the league are the ones that will be that heartbeat.

# ***THIS IS THE ONLY ICE RINK IN THE VALLEY, IT’S GOING TO SURVIVE***



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# SUNDAY MUDDAY

WHEN MUDDING ENTHUSIASTS GATHER

By: Betzaida Rivera • Images by: Betzaida Rivera







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A man helps three girls get out of the mud on March 13, 2016.



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A man drives his ATV through the mud as the truck behind it is trying to get out of the mud on March 13, 2016.



A truck drives into the mud pit in south McAllen on March 13, 2016.



Aracely de la Fuente, 39, from San Juan, Texas drives her ATV through the mud pits in south McAllen on March 13, 2016.



Scott, a Toyota Tacoma, drives on a hill at the mud pits in south McAllen on March 13, 2016.





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# A DIFFERENT SET OF EYES

## THE LIFE OF A FOREIGN STUDENT ATHLETE

By Bojana Mitrovic

**Cao, which would be Hi in my first language. My name is Bojana. I am a tall, curly haired, white girl from a small country called Serbia. Central Europe guys, I know you have no idea where it is but it's fine. It is completely different in every single aspect.**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016**

Let me tell you a little bit about how I ended up here in South Texas. In my country education and sport don't go together. When you graduate you decide if you are going to university or you continue playing professionally. I wanted both but it wasn't possible. I was waiting for something to happen to help me make a decision. What was my next step? I kept wondering to myself. We were playing one of our last games of the season. We lost that game unfortunately and I hadn't performed very well. However, a bald guy with a huge smile came up to me and asked me if I wanted to go play for him in Texas. I laughed. His story was everything I ever wanted.

So yeah I am here now. It is everything that I could have imagined about the United States. However, I am happy. My school is paid and my team is awesome. I have great people around me. I could transfer to other schools but I found a family here. I have everything that I need to finish my education and my two years of eligibility to play. We'll see what the future will bring.

My weeks are super busy, but also fun. This week we started with our spring workouts. Volleyball is out of season during the spring semester, but we condition like crazy. Mondays are a struggle. We start with a dynamic warm up. After we are doing the Vertimax (strength, speed and resistance training). It takes us about an hour to finish everything. Once we are done we go straight to the weight room and continue over there for another hour. Tuesday are fun. It is a ball work out. We fix our technique and work on some defense and passing. We were already sore after Monday's workout. My legs were dead. Wednesday was leg day. Sore legs on leg day. Haha, well good luck!! I am just going to say that we survived. Thursday and Friday were conditioning combined with volleyball drills.

Spring is a calm time of the year for me since we are out of season. I am used to pressure and I like it. You know how Jewel said: "If I am not on the edge of failure, I'm not being sufficiently challenged." I think I'm getting to that point...I was optimistic and took 18 hours this semester. We'll see how that goes. All my classes are pretty interesting and I am curious and excited to learn some new things. I have three classes every day except Friday, we also practice two to three hours during the day as a team, this doesn't include the time spent in the training room while doing treatments in order to be able to perform well at practice. Also I have to complete eight hours of study hall every week. Once I am done with my daily routine of class and practice I go to Venom, which is my coach's volleyball club. I'm an assistant coach to a team of 17-year-old girls. It is exciting. I am learning a lot about volleyball from different perspectives.

People here consider me different. When I say different I mean everything. Which is normal I mean, I am 6'1 (that is not common here in South Texas). Also I am white and blondish which is not a thing you see here every day. They consider me different in the way I look but in the way I act as well. I have a different mentality and I see the world through a different set of eyes. I have traveled a lot and seen a lot. I've met different people and their cultures. So I am fine with being different. I don't think it is a bad thing. Being unique and different is who I am, and I am attracted to people who are like that.

Being foreign and different in the Valley makes even grocery shopping interesting. Wednesday I was in Walmart and a short Mexican lady with two kids were passing by. Kids were staring at me, and their mom as well. I turned around to see if something weird was happening behind me. Unfortunately they were staring at me. Then they started speaking in Spanish. I understand a lot, don't ask me how because I don't know I just do. They were commenting on my height and my hair color in a rude way. I didn't mind and I was pretending like I didn't understand. I just asked her if she needed something because she was staring at me like I was an alien. It was just funny. I feel sorry for her, because of the way she thinks. The world is huge. I don't want to be rude but there is so much more outside of the Valley, lady.

I kept walking and a man with kids was trying to reach a can of beans on the top shelf. He smiled and ask me for help. It was my pleasure. He asked me if I am number 23 from Pan Am's team. He knew some basic information about me. We took a picture with his camera. He said he is a big fan because the way I play, but also because of the way I celebrate points. He said I am different in a good way. It made my day! I picked up my groceries and headed home, I was in a hurry. My mom was about to Skype me and tell me all about her week.

I miss her. She is a fighter. She was telling me about her work and how my brother made her happy because he rocked on his game. He plays volleyball too, I was following the score online. It is something at least. She also told me that she was making my favorite meal for lunch. It is called Sarma. It is made from cabbage and ground beef. The most delicious thing ever! I told her a little bit about my day but I was in a hurry. She made me homesick with Sarma so I had to say bye and head to Venom. I missed them all

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2016**

**MONDAYS STRUGGLES AND SUPER BOWL MADNESS**

It's Monday and It sucks... Woke up at 7 a.m. to grab a quick breakfast, put my gear on, sat on my bike and headed to the gym. We knew what to do. It's the same old Monday and our

# ***WHEN I CAME TO THE STATES I WAS MAD AT THE WORLD AND I WAS IN MY OWN BUBBLE FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE TO BE SUCCESSFUL.***

best friend Vertimax, an exercise machine for strength, speed and resistance training. Before we do our warm up we set up the machines, we prepare everything and start. Our coach is very strict with his rules and that's what I really respect about him. We have a week plan, we know what is going on every week of practice, so we know how to prepare the court. As usual our Mondays are conditioning days. Therefore we don't need balls. I mentioned how coach is strict with rules and little things. Well, before a ball workout we always take carts with 50 balls out to the gym, we count it before and after to make sure all of them are there. But... Lately, coaches from other teams found a volleyball after their practice and they gave it to our coach. So, he was telling us how we need to be careful and pay attention not to lose balls and other equipment otherwise he'll come up with a punishment. Extra conditioning?? Nobody wants that, trust me!!! We got a new girl, a new recruit for 2016, a little freshman. In her first workout with the team, she goes to grab some chairs that we will need for conditioning and guess what she finds? A ball haha...

She grabbed a chair and the ball at the same time and started to walk. Coach was talking to his assistants. We spotted her with the ball, and the whole team freaked out. Everybody was quiet setting up the Vertimaxes but a few girls were coming up to her to hide the ball... of course. They walked her through the gym to the door. I was the closest one to the door waiting all prepared to run out to the locker room. I took the ball and ran over there, left it and ran back. Everybody was all nervous but excited at the same time. It was such a team effort and badass move from our little freshman. She is in!!!

Maybe it sounds silly for you, but for me it is amazing how our little family always has each other's back no matter what. The little freshman on her first day impressed us all and we let her inside of our circle. She is one of us now. We are the way we are because of the rules and discipline that coach made for us. Also, we have the spirit that we have because of him, he is teaching us how to connect volleyball with real life. Even though every single one of us is different in all aspects we get along because we are all there for the same thing.

It is a big week for USA! Super Bowl 2016 is about to happen, everybody is so excited. Am I? Well, not really. I am from

Europe. People, don't get me wrong, but I don't understand one thing in this particular sport. All I see is a bunch of guys in tight pants running around, fighting and rolling on the floor. However, I am really trying to be open minded about it and learn how everything works. Also there are a few things that I really like about this event. Chicken wings!!! I know I am an athlete, but let's just make Sunday my cheat day. We don't have chicken wings in my country. Actually we do have something similar, but they are made differently and they don't taste as good as these ones here. Yuuummy, I am excited to dip it in ranch. That is something we also don't have. The other part why I am excited to see this show is because I get to see Beyoncé performing. Last thing, and the best part of this event, is the way it gathers people together. I love the euphoria it causes. It reminds me of home when Novak Djokovic, or any of our national teams play. We are small country with only 7 million inhabitants. However, we were world champions in different sports. Towns get crazy when our teams are playing. Bars are full and there are big screens in cafes. They are broadcasting games and people hang out a lot. At home, it is normal but here not so much. People don't socialize as much here. I love the fact that my team has a lot of international people that are as outgoing as I am. So we get to hang out a lot.

## **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2016 THE DRAGONFLY**

Isn't it just amazing how we change over the years? When I look at me and the changes I have made in just one year it makes me happy. Have you heard about the dragonfly and its meaning? I didn't until a few days ago. It amazed me and made me realize how happy I am with all the people in my life and how blessed I am for the opportunities I have. The dragonfly, in almost every part of the world, symbolizes change in the perspective of self realization; and the kind of change that has its source in mental and emotional maturity and the understanding of the deeper meaning of life.

I found myself in this sentence. When I came to the States I was mad at the world and I was in my own bubble fighting for a chance to be successful. Serbia is a beautiful country with gorgeous nature, but the economics, politics and wars from

# ***AT HOME YOU PLAY FOR A TEAM BUT YOU ACTUALLY PLAY FOR YOURSELF. THE LEVEL OF PLAY IS PROFESSIONAL AND NOBODY CARES HOW YOU FEEL AND WHAT YOU DO AS LONG AS YOU ARE SCORING.***

the past make it hard for my country to be a successful one. Therefore, young people are leaving if they have the chance to do so. I am one of them. I came to the United States focused on making my dream a reality but that got lost somewhere in between. I was always putting myself down and I was so thirsty for success and a bright future. However, things here are different. People are happier and their mentality is different. I made some awesome friends that taught me so much and helped me adjust. Heather was my teammate and now she is my good friend. I remember meeting her for the first time. She has a gorgeous smile and positive energy. One great player and person. She was always complaining about my face on the court and the way I would behave while playing. I never understood what she was talking about and why my facial expressions bothered her so much. It was annoying for me and it was making me feel uncomfortable. Eventually I realized that my face and behavior was affecting the whole team. I was one of the best players on the team but also the worst one.

At home you play for a team but you actually play for yourself. The level of play is professional and nobody cares how you feel and what you do as long as you are scoring. So that's how my mind was set. I was in my own bubble doing my thing. But here the girls were different. I saw that I am different for them and it bothered them, especially Heather. She was our senior team captain. Of course she cared, but at the moment for me maybe too much. We went through the whole season and made it to the National Championship. And there we were about to play the final game. I swear the moment I stepped on that court I felt like a completely different person. All I was thinking about was my attitude and the way I will behave on the court. I didn't think about technique or the team we were playing against. I didn't think about me, I was thinking about my team. I wanted to think of ways to help make people around me better. Everything Heather was complaining about was passing through my head and it made sense to me now. I played my best game of the season without even thinking about it. I realized how much I've grown as a player but also as a person. Unfortunately, we lost the final game because of the same issues we had the whole season. I remember like it was yesterday. It was hurting like hell. I will never forget that day. It was the the day where I lost my National Championship ring but became a better player and a better person. It's also the day I promised myself it will never be just about me, it will be about my team, and I will be an example of hard work and dedication. I am so happy for the experience I had. Also thankful for Heather because she is the big part of who I am today as a player. I am so happy she entered my life and made me understand the true values and true passion of the game we share.

This season was completely different story for me, even Heather was proud of me haha...Looking forward to the next one!

## **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2016**

### **ROLE MODEL**

Being a student athlete takes a lot from a person because you have busy schedules, as well as busy weekends. However, being a foreign student athlete takes even more energy. You are far away from everything that is related to you, everything around you is just different but you find a way to go forward

and eventually fit in and it's not that different anymore!! It becomes your reality.

You leave everything that you love and that you grew up with for new experiences and a better future. Sometimes you have days when you are filled with happiness because you see that all your hard work pays off. You are getting all those awards and recognition that you always vied for just because the way you set your mind to it. This season, I worked hard like never before. It was all about details, small things that we never pay attention to. I set my goals high and believed I could reach

## ***YOU ARE FAR AWAY FROM EVERYTHING THAT IS RELATED TO YOU, EVERYTHING AROUND YOU IS JUST DIFFERENT BUT YOU FIND A WAY TO GO FORWARD AND EVENTUALLY FIT IN AND IT'S NOT THAT DIFFERENT ANYMORE***

every single one of them. I did even more, I was awarded the All- Conference first team, Conference Tournament first team. I finished the season averaging a program record of 4.30 kills and 12.37 attacks per set to go with a program record tying of 460 total kills and a program history of 1,324 total attacks. I bet all you see is a bunch of numbers and probably don't even understand what a "kill" is, but it gives you a clue as to what I am talking about. It seems like I've reached everything that I wanted in this past year. I put a lot of my time in making this possible. However, while doing so, I've given up a lot of things that girls my age enjoy doing. For example, I didn't party, I missed pretty much every birthday celebration of my friends, and I was gone almost every Wednesday until I came back on Sunday. In my free time, I was doing homework and even though it sounds kind of sad and boring, for me it was worth the sacrifice. I made my family and myself proud because I stayed focused the whole time. I made a lifetime of memories and stories while constantly having fun with my teammates and traveling and witnessing a lot of amazing places.

You must be wondering why am I telling you this? Well a few days ago, I was at Venom and we were having a team bonding with our 18-year-olds. Since they are about to go to college, coach wanted us to have a short talk with them and their parents. He wanted them to realize what it is like to be a student athlete. It was three of us talking and he wanted us to tell a little story about how we ended up here and how our daily schedule is. I was the last one speaking and they found me interesting because my story was different compared to the other girls. I started off talking where I was from and how I got here, which they found fascinating. I proceeded by telling them about my daily schedule and they all stared at me like I was a freak. I explained I do have time for friends so they wouldn't misunderstand me or get the wrong idea. Everybody started laughing and I just stood there and wondered, why? I do, I have a lot of friends and even though I don't go out very often and don't party as much as people my age do; it doesn't stop me from having friends. I explained how time management is important and helpful. Furthermore, the whole story made me think of how people don't understand true values and how having fun means a lot of different things. I prefer

## **#MISSINGTHEGAME**

making memories that will give me goose bumps every time I think about it. I would be able to revel in those feelings during upcoming crazy nights and summers and will always be remembered.

You know how they say success isn't just what you accomplish in your life, it is also what you inspire others to do. I am happy when I hear that some kids want to be like me. I remember wanting to be like someone else and admiring some other players. Everything I do has a purpose for my family and I, but it makes me extremely happy when I see it has purpose for others as well. I am still at the beginning of my journey and I barely started creating and writing pages of my life book. I am excited for new challenges, adventures, wins and loses as well as being proud of the huge family I have all over the world. I have those few people in each place that I go to which makes me feel safe and blessed. I am thankful for the questions those kids and parents had because it made me realize how happy I am with my life and the people that are a part of it.

### **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2016 I MISS...**

Every Friday we run a mile before our open gym. The fact that we are doing that every single week killed the phrase "Friday Funday." The whole team needs to be under 7 minutes and 40 seconds. There are a few of us that are way ahead and there are a few that are struggling. Everybody has to make the time, if not they are running again during the week. One of our teammates was struggling and she was running three times per week in order for her to make the time. It was Thursday and I was on my way back from Venom, I thought about Friday morning and I wasn't excited at all. But then I had a conversation with myself, I was like "Bojana it is four laps as fast as you can and you are done for the day." Last week I ran 7:09 and I desperately wanted to be 6 something, no matter if that was 6:59 haha...So, there I was Friday morning, woke up and headed to the gym. Bright and early, windy and kind of cold. We finished our warm up and it was about time to start our mile. It was surprisingly easy the first two laps, but on the third one I struggled a little bit. I kept talking and encouraging

myself. My mind was chaotic, a lot was going on over there, but not one second did I think of giving up. Fall and season were in my mind and the fact that this will help me and make me better. Last lap, all I thought about was the six minutes I wanted to reach. I was cursing myself and pushing like never before. Once I passed the finishing line coach yelled 6:41... I was barely breathing but I screamed out of happiness. I was happy like a little kid that gets a brand new toy. I reached my little goal and passed the mental struggle I had. Pushed when it was the hardest!! My teammates did awesome as well. The last one passing the finish line was the girl that was struggling, her time was 7:21. She made it!!!!

Being out of season is a struggle for every athlete. It is hard to practice hard and not be able to compete. In season you work hard the whole week and on the weekend you get your award, you get to play. While doing so all those hard workouts have a purpose. However, working hard in spring is the most important thing, because it makes you better for what is coming. You have to be mentally strong because you don't get the award every weekend, you don't get that magic push that keeps you going harder and harder. Now you have to keep yourself accountable, push yourself and keep saying that it will be worth it because it will make you better. Fall is so far and I really want to play. I miss that excitement I get before we hit the road. Home games are my favorites because it is an amazing feeling being able to play in front of your friends and family. I wish my parents were able to attend my games. I miss my crazy mom, her awkward advice from the bleachers as well as her huge smile no matter if we win or lose. I remember her going to all of my games when I was home, and supporting me. She knows basic rules about volleyball but she doesn't really understand the game. However, she was always giving me advice about how to be a better teammate and team player. My huge wish is for her to be able to come here to the United States for my Senior day game and my graduation! That would make me the happiest person ever...

# #MISSINGHER

# #MISSINGHER

# #MISSINGHER

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# MARKSMANSHIP

RECREATIONAL SHOOTING; FIREARMS IN SEASONED HANDS

By Mark Maynard • Photos: Jon Nutt



A custom built AR-15 features a 10.5" barrel system. Rifles under 16" are heavily regulated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and require special approval for manufacturing.

As she stepped up to the shooting lane, first time gun owner, Melissa Becerra, was a little nervous. It was her first time shooting her new Glock 19, a 9mm pistol. Raising the gun and pointing it down range, she aligned her sights and squeezed the trigger... BANG! The bullet punched a hole in the target just right of the center. Firearms have been a controversial topic lately, but this does not stop people from enjoying the sport of shooting. Every year, people venture out to purchase their first firearms. If you are new to guns and uneasy, it is a good idea to receive some instruction. Many gun ranges around the Valley, such as Rio Gun Club in La Feria, Point Blank in McAllen and Massey's Gun Range in Brownsville, offer beginner pistol courses which introduce the shooter to the gun and teach them the basics of shooting. These courses come highly recommended for those new to the firearms community. They are all taught by National Rifle Association (NRA) certified instructors, with some courses offered that cater speci-

cally to women.

"Everybody should, at least, get some type of basic training and have a basic knowledge of firearms," said Jeremy Reiley, owner of Rio Gun Club and NRA certified firearms instructor, "Even if it is not something that they want to pursue." Once you are familiar with how firearms operate, you might be interested in taking on the responsibility of purchasing your own.

"There are a few points I recommend new gun owners to look at," said Reiley. The first question you will have to answer for yourself. Do you want it for protection, hunting or recreation? The other two questions go hand in hand and can best be addressed at a gun store. When asking yourself, "Does it fit," you are simply trying to find out whether the gun fits comfortably in your hand. This is important for your safety and for building confidence in your ability to handle the gun. Finally, you need to ask yourself if you can use the gun safely. This is a matter of understanding recoil and your ability to handle it. The last thing you

want is for your gun to go flying!

One might wonder why so many people wish to purchase firearms and what they might use them for. To many people, the purpose of a gun is for self-defense. They certainly can serve that purpose, but there are a host of safe and fun activities, using firearms, in which one can partake. Three of the most popular activities are practicing or shooting for fun, hunting and competitive shooting. Becerra, a student at Texas State Technical College, explained why she decided to venture into the world of firearms. "My boyfriend got me into shooting guns first," said Becerra. "I have always felt the need to own one, though." Becerra, pursuing a career in law enforcement at the moment, feels the need to familiarize herself with firearms in order to make her transition into her new career a little easier. She understands that the use of her weapon in her future career may mean the difference between life and death. Originally purchasing the gun for protection, she realized that it could be used for recreation as well.

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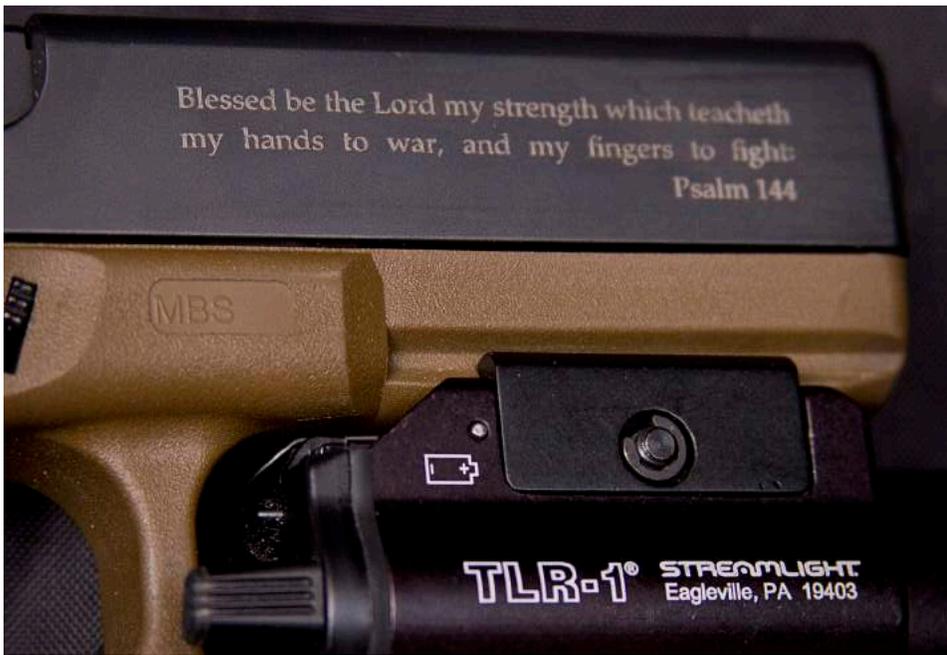
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"I have a gun for protection," said Becerra, "But I have really started to like going to the shooting range just for fun." Becerra, like most beginners, loves just practicing with her gun. Going to the range and punching holes in paper can definitely be very exciting. Watching one's shot placement and groupings improve every time they head to the range can be a real confidence booster. It provides a personal challenge for the shooter and gives them the chance to set goals. As goals are achieved and proficiency improves, one might wish to participate in other shooting activities. Hunting is the most popular shooting activity in the state of Texas, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife records. They found that every year, 1.1 million hunters take to the fields in hopes of bringing home some dinner. Different types of hunting require the use of various firearms. Depending on the game being targeted a hunter may utilize a rifle, a shotgun, pistol or a bow, with a rifle being the most common. Hunting is an involved sport, with hunters in the state of Texas spending a combined 20.4 million days hunting.

"Hunting is about the experience, regardless of whether you go home empty handed or not," said Alejandro Gallaga, a University of Houston law student and avid hunter.

Gallaga expresses the importance of enjoying the time spent in nature when hunting. To him, taking an animal is just one part of the hunt, but it is not necessarily the most crucial. He values the time spent bonding with his family that can only be had while hunting. To Alejandro,

a firearm or weapon is a tool used in the overall scheme of the sport.

"A gun or a bow is a tool that is used to take an animal," said Gallaga. "So, like when using any tool, you need to make sure you know how to use it well so you can accomplish the job as easily and efficiently as possible."

According to Gallaga, quite a few hunters spent too much time thinking about the big buck instead of practicing to make that moment happen. When taking game, the principle of marksmanship is imperative for the humane harvest of the animal.

"Making a good shot is extremely important when hunting," the law student said. "By making a clean shot, you are able to harvest the animal as humanely as possible. This not only makes it easier to find the animal after the shot, but it speaks to a person's moral and ethical values as well."

Gallaga practices year round with his bow in order to make clean shots at deer, pigs and nilgai (an antelope introduced to South Texas in the 70s). He says that hunting season is so short, extending from Oct. 3 to Jan. 31, that practicing only during the season is inadequate. Gallaga practices at different angles, distances and in different conditions in order to mimic real life situations. "I have been a hunting guide for a long time," Reiley said. "I really enjoy introducing new people to the sport of hunting."

There was no hiding his smile as he recalled good memories. He explained that his interest in the sport of hunting is driven by the ability to share in a new





Top to bottom: Benelli m4 Tactical Shotgun, custom built 10.5" AR-15 and Glock 17 Gen.4. These three firearms are necessary in order to compete in three-gun competitions.





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hunter's excitement and experience.

If sitting in a deer blind, an object that a hunter uses to block themselves from the view of the animal, does not suit you, and you are looking for a fast paced hobby, try competitive shooting on for size.

"Shooting competition is work," Reiley said. "There is a lot of stress and adrenaline involved."

Reiley has been shooting competitively for the past 32 years. He is disciplined in the use of handguns, shotguns and rifles. An NRA certified instructor, a Scholastic Pistol Program (SPP) team coach and 4H shooting coach, Reiley knows what it takes to shoot competitively. He has successfully lead his SPP team, South Texas Shooters, to two state and national championships, and offers advice for those looking to get into competitive shooting.

"For adults, most of the ranges around the Valley hold local competitions almost every week," Reiley said.

These local competitions are just a friendly way of getting into competitive shooting. They are set up for fun with safety being foremost. Reiley suggests three gun shoots, or International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA), for those looking to take the sport of competitive shooting to the next level. Both of these offer a more real life scenario for the competitive shooter. 3-Gun is a competition utilizing a pistol, a shotgun and a rifle, that operates under rules approved by the 3-Gun

Nation organization. It is fast paced and is regarded as one of the most difficult, but fun, competitions in the industry. IDPA follows along the same lines as the three gun in its fast paced character, but instead of using multiple firearms, it focuses on handgun proficiency.

"I enjoy it when I see a new shooter, a teenager, finally get it," said the SPP coach. "I like seeing a teenager go from being intimidated because someone who has been doing it two years is better than they are, to finding their groove. To see a teenager progress and get better and better in the sport is probably my favorite part of competitive shooting."

For teens looking to get into the sport of shooting, Reiley proposes joining his SPP team or the 4H shooting club. Reiley explained that the sport of competitive shooting instills confidence in young adults. It also provides opportunities for college scholarships that would not be available otherwise. In the four years that Reiley has coached, several of his team members have been offered full ride or partial scholarships to shoot competitively for schools such as Texas A&M University and the University of Illinois.

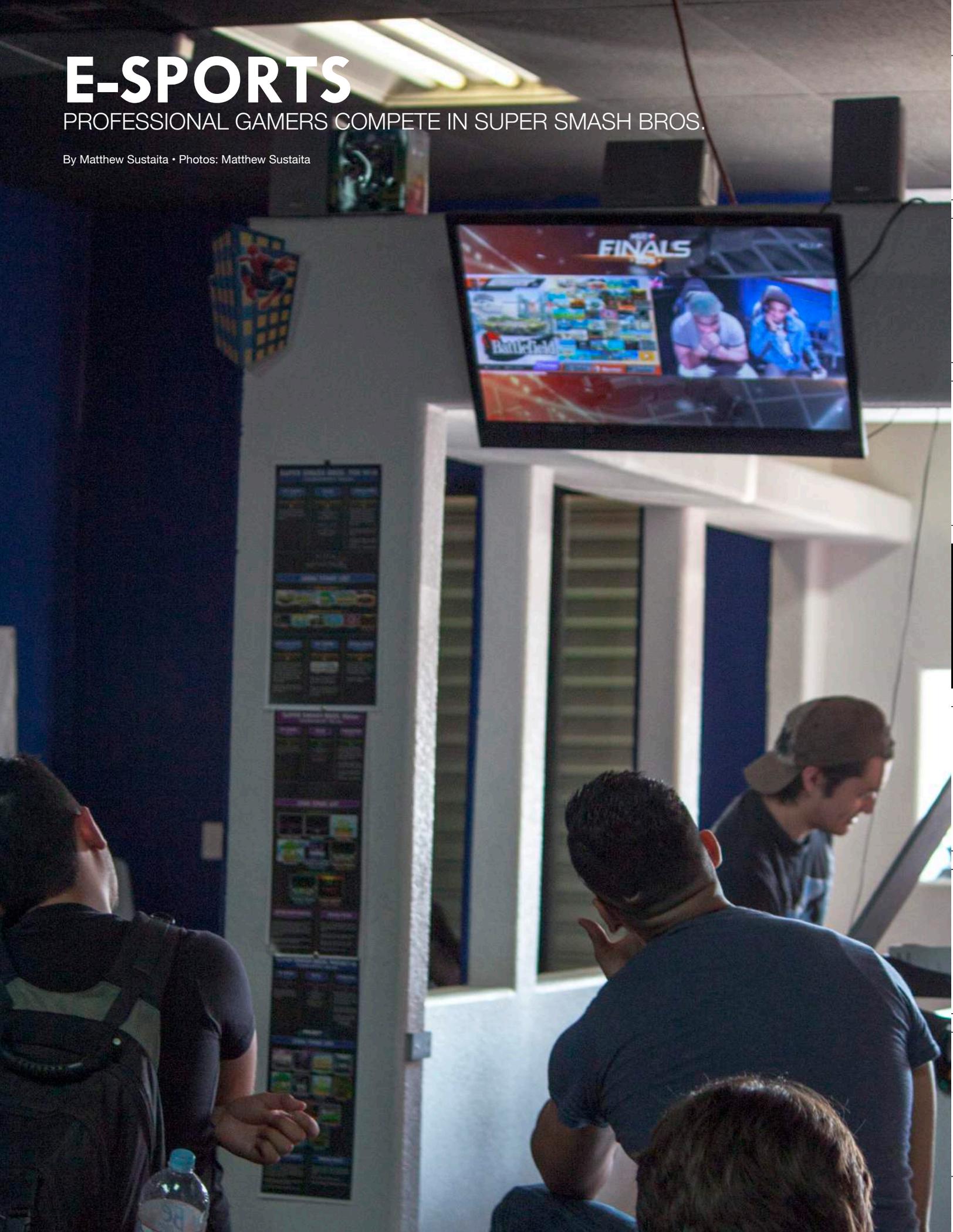
"I am not a Second Amendment supporter," said Reiley. "I am a constitutional supporter. I believe in every last constitutional right, whether I like it or not. It is the groundwork this country was founded on and I respect that."



# E-SPORTS

PROFESSIONAL GAMERS COMPETE IN SUPER SMASH BROS.

By Matthew Sustaita • Photos: Matthew Sustaita



Between a Domino's Pizza and a nightclub called 'Rehab' is a seemingly non-descript building, called The Barracks. If you weren't looking for it you'd probably miss it. I parked my car in front, but was still unsure if I was in the correct place. I confirmed the building, walked in and was greeted with a service window and a door to the left of me. I peeked into the service window, no one was attending it. I saw a crowd of people fixed on rows of television screens, mumbling then abrupt screams of tension and laughter.

I opted to spectate and pay a small cover fee of 2 dollars. Seven television screens were lined up against the wall, groups of players were competing with each other, eyes fixated on the LCD screens. They were in an unflinching state. Spectators were hunched over, they leaned their bodies over chairs, waiting for the next kill. Hungry for an entertaining victor. Between the roars and shouts, there was sound of strained joysticks clicking in tandem with hasty button pressing.

The video game these players were competing in was Super Smash Bros. a 2-D fighting game with a selection of famous Nintendo characters, Mario, Kirby, Link, whatever type of video game character you could possibly think off the top of your head they're probably featured. It was originally viewed as a party game, the equivalent of a fantasy football roster for gamers, but as popularity grew among the game, it created a devoted professional community. No longer was it viewed as something to play with a couple friends on a uneventful Saturday night. It was pushed to a level of competition that was hardly imaginable at its conception, hundreds of devoted players around the world would convene at large conventions and compete for large money pools to see who is the best Smash Bros player. Apex 2015, the tournament known for housing Super Smash Bros competitions in New Jersey, was held during the month of January, officially sponsored by Nintendo. Over 2,700 players entered to compete with a cash pool of 49 thousand dollars. This is hardly the casual romp that was intended. Players competing here in this non-descript building know this well. Players such as Jaime Sierra.

"This guy plays a mean Captain Falcon. He's probably one of the best players in this room right now. He's competed before."

Jaime Sierra had the opportunity and skill to play in a larger competition. For a hobby that is considered for slackers,



***NO LONGER WAS IT VIEWED AS SOMETHING TO PLAY WITH A COUPLE FRIENDS ON A UNEVENTFUL SATURDAY NIGHT. IT WAS PUSHED TO A LEVEL OF COMPETITION THAT WAS HARDLY IMAGINABLE AT ITS CONCEPTION***

he didn't seem to be doing that at all, in fact it sounded like a lot of work. Most of the players here in the local scene of competitive Smash Bros are inspired by the larger competitors who play at the professional, sponsored level. While most of them are skilled and practice often, very few have gone off and actually competed in a larger tournament.

"On a very basic level, to get the hang of the game. all you really do in the beginning is fight against the computer controlled opponents and probably friends. However, that doesn't prepare you at all for what you have to face in competition. You have to play people better than you, that means you often travel to events with other players wanting to get good so you can fight them and become better, and that's only the first step." Aside from just knowing what to do and basic know how, there is fluidity in the

game that is highly nuanced.

"You can't just transfer skill from one character to another, each character's movements and fighting combos are very different, you have to feel for how fast they move, jump, punch, and kick." Sierra began to get into a term called 'frame data', frame data means how fast a character will do a certain action, knowing how many frames a character takes to complete an action is something that not only requires memorization, but research.

"You have to know how many frames your opponent has, along with your own, sometimes you'll have a bad match-up because your character is too slow compared to whom your fighting, you'll have a much harder time winning, and often times it's a plain loss before you even begin to fight if you're not skilled enough."



Gamers watch a live stream of professional players.

Each skill Sierra continued to explain had its own technical term, ‘teching’, ‘reading’, ‘frame data’, fair’s, nair’s, bair’s, anything you could observe in-game had some term associated with it. Observing Sierra’s warm-up routine made me think of what an athlete does to warm up, making sure there are no cold muscles in the body, Sierra began flicking his joystick in all directions, making automated-like patterns on screen, twisting his wrists, flicking his fingers back, and making sure everything is “in tune”. “You often have to do a warm-up run around the screen, make sure nothing is wrong with your controller, make sure everything is calibrated.” He began pressing a combination of buttons on his controller. “This combo resets the calibration on the controller, to make sure nothing is wonky when I start.” This routine is more than a plug n’ play.

This however, is only half the

battle; playing professionally comes with external obstacles that most professionals need to get by in order to become truly successful.

“My parents didn’t understand, they didn’t know how this could be a viable career choice or why I spent so much time putting into these games.” Although Sierra’s parents eventually warmed up to the idea, it wasn’t something they fully accepted at the beginning.

“Most times I’m practicing in my own room, my family thought I was just lazing around in my room playing video games all day.”

While it’s true Sierra locks himself up to play videogames, lazing around isn’t a word that seems to describe what goes on during practice.

“I play for about five to six hours a day, after that I go online, do some research on characters and look up statistics, after that I end up watching live streams of other players to pick up on other strate-

gies.”

This routine ends up being around 8 hours.

“I try to balance my studies and personal life with this, so I make sure to plan these practice times ahead of time so i’m not cutting into anything.”

Sierra is here at The Barracks on Sundays because today is the only time he can devote to practicing.

“It’s definitely something you need to put aside time for. So this type of thing is meant for people who are really into it, if you’re not then don’t expect to get anywhere near where the top players are.” This scene requires uncommon discipline and perseverance.

“Even then, there are always people who are better than you, especially in the bigger cities, I went a competition in Dallas, most professional tournament i’ve been too had a couple 100 players from in and around Texas. Here in this particular area in the Valley, I manage to get top 10 in

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## ***I MEAN YOU HAVE GUYS WHO ARE PAID BY COMPANIES TO DO THIS ALL DAY, THAT'S HOW THEY MAKE THEIR MONEY.***

most tournaments I enter. I barely managed to get into the top 30.”

Competition is much fiercer in bigger cities but ultimately needed because that's where the better payouts and potential sponsorships exist.

“I was fighting for a pot of at least 2,000 dollars. I didn't see any of that but it just showed me that the amount of training I need to do needs to be even higher than I originally anticipated. I mean you have guys who are paid by companies to do this all day, that's how they make their money. When time comes to actually play is when they see if their return was a success or not. But to even reach that peak is crazy and needs laser precision and dedication.”

“Sierra, you're up next on the bracket.” Sierra gets up from where he was sitting and approaches his opponent, he shakes hands and begins their game. While the community comprised of this group is mostly young people, the age

disparities between groups seemed varied, some look as young as 12 years old, practicing with two men who look in their earlier 20's.

“No, you need to make sure you jump first before you send out the kick. Otherwise you'll miss your chance to hit him again. Does that make sense to you?” the younger kid seemed to nod in agreement and continued on in his game.

The atmosphere reminded me of a boxing gym. some were there just to have fun and spend some free time with a hobby they enjoyed, others were there for a reason more than just fun, they were there to win. But unlike say a gym, where some people feel too afraid to go because they feel unshapely or do not compete with the other more physically fit. There is this sort of camaraderie between everyone, even if they're not there to win a money pot.

“How you so good? How do you even keep track of all this stuff on this

screen?! This is crazy you can't play with me anymore!” Sierra's opponent laughs and playfully pushes him out of the way. He walks off and turns around to another group of friends, they begin discussing what they learned about their opponents. “Josh picked up some pretty good skills last time I played him, he's better than last time, now I need to play more! hahaha.”

At the end of the day, it's more about the group.

“I'm just glad I have somewhere I can go and have a conversation with people who like the same things, it would probably be harder if I didn't have a place to go or just by myself.” Sierra packed his bag and controller. “Hey I'll see you next week, make sure to bring your controller next time!”

*The Barracks is open  
Monday - Sunday  
3pm to 11pm  
in Mcallen, TX*

# THE LOOK BOOK DIARIES

## *Fashion for Fashion's Sake*

Queen of Kappa Kappa Tau



*“They call us the global generation. We are known for our entitlement and narcissism,”*  
Madison Montgomery

**Photography:** Mariylin Carren

**Fashion Direction and Styling:** Daniel Ymbong

**Beauty:** Daniel Hernandez (hair) and Laura Sofia (makeup)

*\*Special thanks to Lanita and Angeli Ymbong for clothing and accessories.*

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## CATWALK PRINCESS

Cropped rabbit fur chubby **Haute Trash Vintage**  
Snow leopard body con dress **Wet Seal**  
Studded Cross Necklace **A'gaci**  
Floppy hat **Forever21**  
Boston doctor bag **Prada**  
Chunky platform booties **Dolls Kill**  
Clubmaster shades **Rayban**

If there has ever been a print eternally synonymous with fashion it is leopard. Venerated by the grand couturiers of Paris: Saint Laurent, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Dior, leopard equates luxury. Scrumptiously rich in color and texture the print is a brand of sex, the Italian temptress in sync to Versace, Roberto Cavalli, and Dolce and Gabbana. Leopard lives adorned by icons like Eddie Sedgwick, muse of Andy Warhol and street style mavens like Alexa Chung.



## PEPLUM PASSION

3-piece skirt suit Original design by Daniel Ymbong  
Pebble collar necklace YRS

A woman's waist has been the prime emphasis of fashion, high sex silhouette architecture of the body. Such shape, of course, is made possible by the peplum. Peplums first appeared as petticoat overlays with designs by Dior, later revitalized by the excess of the eighties by designers like Christian Lacroix and Gianfranco Ferré. Feminine and structural, once again peplums have made a comeback affirmation by Lanvin and Burberry.



## INTO THE TRENCHES

Trench coat **Banana Republic**  
Two-tone rabbit fur pochette **Michael Kors**  
Fishnets **stylists own**  
Oxblood stiletto booties **Rue 21**  
Studded choker **Charlotte Russe**

First designed by Thomas Burberry for military use, hence the name trench, this is the a classic staple to echo utilitarian lux. A perfect amalgamation of detective, erotic, and preppy venerated by tastemakers and icons like Sienna Miller and Françoise Hardy. The legacy perpetuated by the genius Christopher Baily marrying art-to-art, collective mix of the traditional craftsmanship to urban, nonchalant rebellious anarchy.



# MISTY DAY

Floral maxi dress **Charlotte Russe**

Clogged booties **H&M**

Oversized tassel necklace

**Manila, Philippines**

Assorted cocktail rings **Stylist's own**

Felt hat **Target**

Political movements spotlight: for transgender, for all ethnicities, and greater tolerance for organic utopian earth parallel fashion 70's resurrection. Palm trees, canyons, flower crowns, free sex, free love, free hugs, and kisses. Live and let and live, the fringe tassel capes of Stevie Nicks sway in the wind to the aroma of burned incense. Let your suede high cut boots touch the grass to all the music festivals LA, Austin, Stockholm, Tokyo, and back.



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## THE NEW NEW LOOK

Bra-let **Urban Outfitters**  
Pleated A-line skirt & lace-up pumps **Charlotte Russe**  
Structured handbag **Louis Vuitton**  
Rabbit Fur chubby **Archive Vintage**



In 1947, a man named Christian Dior revolutionized fashion, taking inspiration from the shape of flowers-tight waists like the stem and blossoming A-line skirts. Carmel Snow dubbed it, "the new look," a look that forever defined the 1950's, caricature of the perfect housewife feminine ideal. A woman can just be as equally powerful as man without sacrificing femininity. After all, it was the French who made fun of the American 80's stereotype of the corporate woman and the French who made "the new look."

## WHITE THE CURSE OF MELODY

Chiffon dress with mini draped skirt *vintage reworked by Daniel Ymbong*  
Mary-Jane pumps *Charlotte Russe*

White can evoke clarity, innocence, and peace. A virgin suicide it was, chiffon fabrics and bishop sleeves. A little hippy, free spirit wave-a dress draws bridge draping combining two worlds old and new. Rock the ages, reviving vintage to an amalgamation of conservative and sexy, sugar and spice, naughty and nice. Covered top smart proportion, show some leg for locomotion.



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## MADemoiselle C

Bra-let **Urban Outfitters**

Sequined mini skirt **Stylists' Own**

Leopard fur leather ankle boot **Sam Edeleman**

Assorted pearls, bangles, rings **Stylists' own**

Come the word Paris, come light, come Hilton, come avante garde, come couture- mandatory perpetually synched to Chanel. The unforgettable color combination of black and white, inspired by the austerity of nun habits is definitive to the Chanel vocabulary and Parisian Style. Layer the look with pearls, the oldest gemstone in the world, a woman who never married, betrothed to undying style.





# LACE, BOWS AND PETTICOATS

JAPANESE STREET FASHION WELCOMED TO THE RGV

By Talisa McVea • Photos: Jon Nutt

*South Texas and Japan may be worlds apart, but Japanese fashion can be found right here in the Rio Grande Valley's Lolita community.*

**W**hen you think of Lolita, the first thing that may come to mind is Vladimir Nabokov's controversial novel "Lolita." Many people may misconstrue the book's racy topic of a stepfather's infatuation with his 12-year-old stepdaughter with the Lolita fashion as being a fetish; but it is quite the opposite. With its couture-laced dresses that

drape down to the mid knees, Lolita is a fashion statement that women across the world wear to embrace their femininity.

Melissa Alatorre, moderator of the RGV Lolita community talks about how local girls from all over the valley formed the RGV Lolitas.

"The group started about three years

ago by two girls, Paolette Granja and Kristen Froehner," said Alatorre. "I found out about it later through a friend, and when I joined the group, it wasn't very active."

Alatorre described how she would see active communities from all over the world and cities in Texas such as Houston and San Antonio.



**IT MEANS SHARING INTERESTS,  
YOU GET TO MEET PEOPLE WHO LIKE THE SAME THING YOU DO  
AND IT'S A CELEBRATION OF THE FASHION.**

"I was like man- I wish our community was this active here," said Alatorre. She explained how this inspired her to jumpstart the community back to life again by arranging more meetups, a term Lolitas use for their meetings. "I actually arranged my own meetup because nobody was planning anything," Alatorre said. "The first meetup that I arranged had a really good turn out with 15 people and I was like, 'woah, where did all these people come from!'" She explained that since then, the community has taken off and meetups are now scheduled once a month. The community currently has 8 to 10 active members who continuously show up for monthly meetups. Alatorre also mentioned how it can be hectic from time to time with arranging events, but the passion for Lolita fashion is what drives her to keep the community active. Meetups consist of getting dolled up Lolita style and chatting about current fashion trends. The community also enjoys getting dressed up and going to different places such as the mall, the movies and one of their favorite places to host meetings, Just Between Friends Tea House and Shoppe located at the

Vintage on Main Street in McAllen. The events were described by Alatorre as a fun party where the community gets to express their love for the fashion.

Myrabel Cantu, an art education major at UTRGV and fellow Lolita discusses what attracts her the most to these community meetups.

"It means sharing interests," Cantu said. "You get to meet people who like the same thing you do and it's a celebration of the fashion."

She also explained that Lolita was something that piqued her interest at an early age.

"I had always been into Lolita because I would read the gothic Lolita bible when I was 15 and I would see all the dresses and it was so cute," said Cantu. "But I didn't even know about the community until I found their Facebook group the RGV Lolitas and I just attended a meetup."

Cantu explained how she was nervous prior to her first meetup, but was instantly welcomed by the community.

Lolita stems from a variety of cultures that have collectively branched out into several sub styles over the years. The most prominent fashion characteris-

tic that stands out in Lolita is from the Rococo period in the late 18th century. Think 18th century Polonaise gown meets Alice in Wonderland.

Due to this fashion having a specialized form, there are a number of fashion guidelines that Lolitas must follow.

"We're always supposed to be wearing sleeves," Alatorre said. "Because if you're not wearing sleeves, it's just the dress and it looks wrong, it's breaking the rules per se."

Though these Lolita laws sound repressing, this fashion has resonated as a form of escapism from the Rococo period until now for Lolita communities across the globe.

"It's kind of empowering for women," Alatorre said. "Because we're usually sexualized no matter what we wear."

While many may think this fashion is targeted only toward women, there are also men who are active in the community. They call themselves "brolitas." Gabriel Moreno, an active member in the RGV Lolita community, talks about what inspired him to become a brolita.

"I became a part of this community because it is something so unique and interesting," said Moreno. "It's a branch of fashion that has its own look and is



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easy to access.”

Moreno also mentioned that it's the fashion's openness to all ages, race and gender that enthruses his interest in being a part of this one-of-a-kind community.

Mariana Zapata, a UTRGV graphic design major who can normally be seen sporting jeans and a T-shirt, explains what the community means to her.

“I get days to express the girliness that I don't usually do,” Zapata said. “I'm not really into makeup but I'll make the effort to learn or to do my makeup for these outfits.” Zapata went on to explain how it was intimidating at first to wear Lolita dresses, but being a part of this community makes her feel confident and proud to be a Lolita.

A big event that the RGV community held this year was an Easter meetup that took place at the Vintage on Main in McAllen. The event consisted of frilly dresses, deli cuisine and discussions on current Lolita fashion trends. Neighboring Lolita communities from Laredo and Corpus Christi were also in attendance at this meetup. One quality that the RGV Lolita Community impressively exudes is their unconditional support for one another.

*If you are ready to dive into the Lolita lifestyle, you can visit their Facebook page at*

*<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rgvlolita>*

*request to join the group for a visual of what the fashion looks like, flip to the next page to view a variety of brands and prices.*

# LOLITA STYLES

Brands • Prices • Collections

## *Angelic Pretty*

Skirt Name: **Happy Garden**  
Release Date: **2010**  
Original Price: **\$ 150.00**  
Blouse: **Baby the Stars Shine Bright**  
Purse: **Sanrio**  
Accessories: **Offbrand**  
Shoes: **Bodyline**



## *Angelic Pretty*

Dress Name: **Berry Garden Tiered**  
Release Date: **2014**  
Original Price: **\$ 1260.00**  
Stockings: **Angelic Pretty**  
Accessories: **Offbrand**  
Shoes: **Offbrand**



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# Alice & The Pirates

Main Piece: **Clock Rabbit Salopette**

Release Date: **2013**

Original Price: **\$ 222.00**

Blouse: **Thrifted**

Accessories: **Offbrand**

Stockings: **Putumayo**

Shoes: **Bodyline**



# Krad Lanrete

Dress Name: **Lost in Sea**

Release Date: **2013**

Original Price: **\$ 130.00**

Headbow: **Angelic Pretty**

Purse: **Thrifted**

Tights: **Target**

Shoes: **Offbrand**



# Bodyline

Dress Name: **Plaid Cake**

Release Date: **2007**

Original Price: **\$ 35.00**

Blouse: **Thrifted**

Accessories: **Offbrand**

Shoes: **Bodyline**



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# *Metamorphose Temps de Fille*

Dress Name: **Strawberry Cream**

Release Date: **2009**

Original Price: **\$ 195.00**

Blouse: **Baby the Stars Shine Bright**

Accessories: **Offbrand**

Purse: **Angelic Pretty**

Tights: **TaoBao**

Shoes: **Bodyline**



# FASHION ISLAND

SPRING AND SUMMER STYLES

By Angelica Clarice Cantu • Photos Adrián Castillo Lara & Michael Angelo Medina

take a dip into the season as vivid island inspiration meets an off-duty street style flair. Fashion Island is the place to be.





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Rohelle wears black skinny jeans, WILDFOX sweater, all, RENEE'S OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND.

Embroidered JOHNNY WAS draped sweater, black romper, layered necklaces, all, RENEE'S OF SHARYLAND, call 956-519-9595. Gold strapped sandals, model's own.



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Cianna wears a graphic tee, black palazzo pants, necklace, all, RENEE'S OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, call 956-761-9600. Bracelets, model's own.

# AN ECONOMIC CONUNDRUM

MILLENNIALS BAFFLE THE ECONOMIC MARKET

By Mariela Cedillo • Illustrations: Melissa Altorre & Matthew Sustaita

While millennials -- the generation born between 1980 and 2000 -- are known for being open minded and accepting or entitled depending on who you ask. Research has also found that they aren't big on making significant financial commitments. They've strayed away from committing to purchasing homes and cars, two of the expected economic commitments every generation experiences.

## THE MILLENNIAL HOME

In 2014 Reid Cramer, director for the Asset Building Program for New America, along with Elliot Schreur, a policy analyst for the program, wrote an article about millennials and their relationship with homeownership. Millennials, they said, have shied away from buying homes because they think that owning a home doesn't offer them the benefits it once did. According to Cramer and Schreur 62 percent of millennials today believe that it is less likely families will be able to build equity and wealth by owning a home the way they did 20 or 30 years ago.

Many millennials are renters, Cramer and Schreur say that two thirds of millennials think that being a renter is a better choice than being a homeowner. However owning a home is still a lifetime goal, it has just been delayed according to their findings.

The Federal Reserve Board found in 2013 that millennials were held back from buying homes by their concern over the financial viability of homeownership rather than prejudices about homeownership.

However, in April 2015 Forbes published an article stating millennials were buying more homes than anticipated. According to the information from the 2015 TD Bank Mort-



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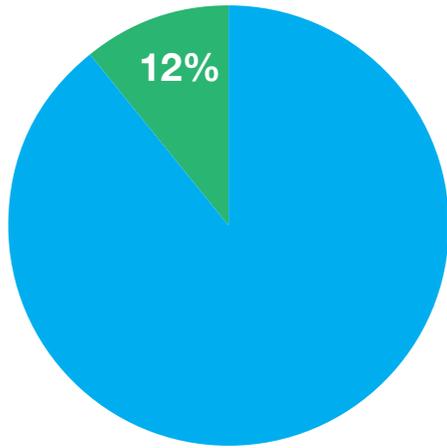
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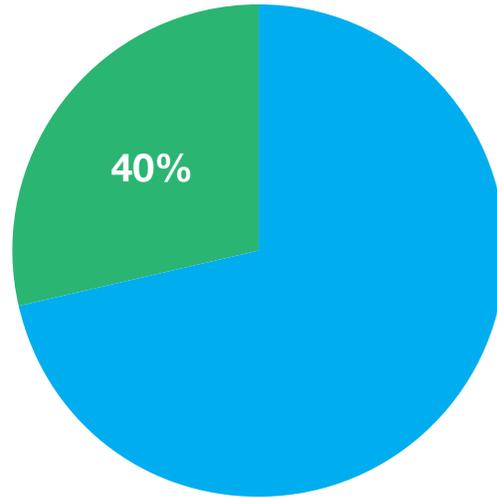
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number of millennial car owners in 2014



number of projected millennial car owners in 2020

## MILLENNIALS ONLY ACCOUNT FOR 12 PERCENT OF CAR OWNERS IN 2014, BY 2020 THEY WOULD MAKE UP 40 PERCENT.

gage Service Index, a national survey of more than 1,500 consumers found that 50 percent of millennials said they were “extremely” or “very likely” to buy a house in the next year.

Karen Villarreal, a senior at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, discussed her plan to become a homeowner in the next two to five years and why she believed it was the next step in her life.

“I was doing some research, just looking at what’s listed online, like the houses on Zillow. I saw that it’s so much cheaper for a four bedroom, where the mortgage is like \$600 a month. That’s about \$200 per room,” Villarreal said. “If you have a room to yourself, and rent out the other three, you’re actually making money instead of losing it.”

Buying a bigger home is a bigger investment to Villarreal. Not only would she have her home to live in, but she would be profiting off of the rooms rented out to roommates. It would also allow her to grow with her home without looking at any major restorations in the near future.

“Because right now who needs a four bedroom house?” the 24-year-old said. “And buying a two-bedroom house is dumb also because what if you want to have a family soon enough?”

She was sure of what she was looking for, price and space-wise. As an employ-

### **BECAUSE RIGHT NOW WHO NEEDS A FOUR BED-ROOM HOUSE?**

ee at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley’s Sustainability Office she strongly believes that the Rio Grande Valley has the potential to be an environmentally friendly area that could limit the use of cars.

“I work for the Office for Sustainability and I’ve learned a lot about how we shouldn’t worry about reducing carbon emissions and how we can make a better cars. We should focus on using [cars] less,” Villarreal said. “So I’m all about walking where we can and biking, alternative transportation and public transportation. I think if the city and the region made more efforts to improve pedestrian safety then we’ll see less of a need for cars.”

Villarreal lives walking distance from the UTRGV campus and while she has a vehicle, she only uses it when she has to.

The April 2015 Forbes article, said millennials are looking at more metropolitan areas -- neighborhoods that provide them with what they need without straying too far. Martin and Villarreal, being

millennials, were examples of those findings.

Amanda Falcone, a writer for US NEWS Money wrote that the best investment a millennial could make for their future is to buy a home. Many millennials have been reluctant to make such economic commitments due to student debt, an unstable job market and a delay in life choices. These factors have held millennials back, but Falcone argued that buying a home would allow millennials to build a future.

Millennials, whether they are living with their parents or alone, are looking for homes in denser suburbs around a walkable town center, simultaneously reducing the need for a car. Millennials like their homes the way they like their cars: smaller and cheaper.

### **CARS ON THE DECLINE**

According to a September 2012 article by “The Atlantic”, in 2010 adults between the ages of 21 and 34 bought only 27 percent of all new vehicles sold in America. This was 11 percent less than it had been at the 38 percent purchase peak in 1985. “The Atlantic” article claimed that this is due to a rise in gas and a “sharing economy.”

A sharing economy includes services that use the internet to let companies and families share otherwise idle goods.

Millennials currently use services like ZIPCAR, which allows people to use a car without owning one. Membership can be purchased for as low as \$7 a month. Another popular service is Uber, where members sign up to be drivers and users can request a ride easily from their smartphone. Uber is used in over 375 cities worldwide according to their website. The use of these services made David Thompson and Jordan Weissmann, the authors of “The Atlantic’s” article, believe that millennials prefer access over ownership and that the demand for owning a vehicle would continue to decrease.

31-year-old Finance Professor Terrance Martin at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley College of Business and Entrepreneurship agreed that a service like ZIPCAR is one of the reasons millennials are not purchasing cars.

Martin said that millennials were not buying cars out of disinterest, rather than a change in their surrounding economy. In 2007 the United States entered into a stage of financial crisis known as the The Great Recession. The recession lasted until 2009 and greatly impacted the sale and purchasing of vehicles. The economy adjusted to accommodate the financial changes and so did the way millennials approached buying a car.

During the Great Recession the nation faced an unemployment rate as high as 10 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The only other time it had experienced a rate that high was in the period of September 1982 through June 1983 when it peaked at 10.8 percent.

“[After the financial crisis] as the economy was being rebuilt, it was being rebuilt in different ways. Being green was a big thing – a lot of people buying bicycles because being green was tied into being healthy,” Martin said. “The combination also spurred other forms of transport, like the mopeds and the motorized scooters. People drew away from cars. It also didn’t help that gas prices were so high.”

While many believe that millennials are not buying vehicles, a 2014 article from CNBC written by Paul A. Einstein said, “The American love affair with cars isn’t dead – it’s just being reshaped by millennials.”

The CNBC article quoted Isabelle Helms who said while millennials only account for 12 percent of car owners in 2014, by 2020 they would make up 40 percent. Millennials are looking for smaller, environmentally and economically friendly cars instead of luxury vehicles, the article concluded.

“I think in previous generations, college was a lot cheaper. You were able to graduate on time, go into the job market, build some savings and start buying big stuff,” Villarreal said. “For our generation, that’s our education. We’re behind and trying to catch up.”



# ***WE’RE BEHIND AND TRYING TO CATCH UP.***

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# WE ARE LOOKING FOR

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# THE DIGITAL STOCK MARKET

## INVESTMENT ADVICE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

A. Zamorano • Illustration: Matthew Sustaita



During their college years, most students look for a way to earn some money or start saving for their future. The easiest way would be to get a job, and many do. Some students, however, take too many classes or are swamped with assignments, which won't allow them to have the time to work or even search for a job. Luckily for students in this predicament, there are ways to earn money by investing in financial markets through a variety of methods.

Investing was previously seen as something only people with access to the traditional investing platforms such as financial managers and advisors or brokers could do. Although these platforms still exist, technology has disrupted the financial world and has made investing accessible to more people.

Terrance Martin, assistant professor of the Economics and Finance department at UTRGV, highlighted this trend.

"Technology has made it so investing in the stock market is no longer complicated [with] as many barriers as it used to in the past," Terrance said. "Students now have tons of technological...investment platforms that they can jump on to and start investing."

The development of online and mobile investment platforms has opened up the financial world to those that are technologically savvy. College students, who spend most of their time online and on their mobile devices, greatly benefit from this trend. Unlike traditional brokerage firms or financial institutions, these websites and mobile apps charge small fees, making it accessible to those who have small sums available to invest.

For example, websites like [betterment.com](http://betterment.com) and [motifinvesting.com](http://motifinvesting.com) are cheap, they charge a fee that is a percentage of the total assets invested. These websites are also able to manage the investment on the user's behalf. Experts hired by these companies create premade portfolios that adjust to the goals of the different types of investors. Martin even uses Motif Investing in one of his classes to familiarize his students with the technology.

"Motif investing allows you to ... invest in a premade portfolio done by professionals," said Martin. "You can create your own portfolio based on stocks that you are interested in or maybe mutual funds."

These portfolios range from conservative investing, made up by the least risky financial instruments but with low returns, to aggressive investing, made up of risky financial instruments but with high returns.

Mobile platforms have made investing even more accessible, giving the users the ability to manage their funds anywhere and at any time. Mobile apps allow users to invest their money right from their mobile device, charging very low or no commissions at all. Robinhood, one of the most popular apps, provides users with a platform where they can trade stocks easily and quickly, and does not charge any fees on its

basic accounts. Acorns, another popular app, uses the spare change from your daily purchases using your bank account and charges \$1 a month for accounts with less than \$5,000 and 0.25% a year for accounts with assets over that amount.

Martin, however, does warn students who are interested in investing to be cautious with their money.

"They need to understand about investing," the professor said. "There's a lot of risk, you can't start investing unless you're able to lose that money. What's safe for student A might not be safe for student B."

He suggests that students should first assess how much they can invest, that is, how much they could afford to lose.

Adding to that, the recent volatility in financial markets could jeopardize the chances any investor, including conservative ones, have at making a profit, and may even make them lose money.

On the bright side, other safer alternatives exist. Lauran Schmid, associate professor in practice for the College of Business and Entrepreneurship, provided some safer, much more conservative investing alternatives.

"Investing in the stock market is very risky," Schmid said. "The safest investment is to invest in an FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) insured savings account at a US bank."

The qualifying accounts opened in participating banks are insured by the FDIC up to \$250,000, protecting the account holder from any incident in which their savings may be lost or jeopardized.

For students who are employed, there are some long-term alternatives that will make their money not only safe, but also grow. Students who are employed may qualify to invest in a retirement account through their employer or by starting an IRA.

"The money invested in a retirement account is not readily available without having to pay a penalty for early withdrawal," Schmid said. "But you are usually able to select how you want your money invested. Depending upon the student's age, this money may be invested for a long time. For example, if invested in a savings/retirement account with a specified interest rate (the interest rate will be low), through compound interest, the interest earned each year will be earned not only on the principle investment, but also on the interest earned in previous periods."

With all of these options available to college students, professor Martin made sure to stress the fact that greater accessibility doesn't necessarily mean less difficulty.

"[You] still need to understand what you're investing in," Martin said. "You need to understand what's going on."

# MARITIME EXPLORATION

INTEGRATIVE EDUCATION OF EARTH, ENVIRONMENTAL AND MARINE SCIENCES

By Betzaida Rivera • Photos: Seth Patterson

The importance of acres of seagrass and oyster reefs are among the many mysteries to be solved by students in the new School of Earth, Environmental and Marine Science.

“The students are going to get a very broad view of the marine and coastal environments,” Director of Multidisciplinary Sciences David W. Hicks said. “Being able to see how the marine environment affects the whole socio-economics of the Valley in terms of tourism.”







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The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is a unique location for this school and its programs because of its temperate, tropical and climatic divides.

“We’re kind of on the edge of this temperate fauna and Caribbean fauna in the marine environment, so that’s why we have all these neat things like mangroves,” Hicks said. “We have lots of tropical reef fish if you were to ever go diving, or even on our jetties and offshore.”

The south Texas Gulf of Mexico also has Laguna Madre, one of five hypersaline lagoons in the world, and the only one in the United States.

“[The lagoon] is completely covered with seagrasses on the bottom,” Hicks said. “You can snorkel out and I can show you some places that you could go in Laguna Madre, like behind the convention center, where you can go snorkel and you could see 100 feet in the water—it’s just that clear.”



**YOU COULD  
SEE 100  
FEET IN THE  
WATER—IT’S  
JUST THAT  
CLEAR.**

he continental shelf is closest to the RGV shoreline compared to any other shoreline along the Gulf of Mexico, making it easy to see clear blue waters just a couple miles out into the ocean.

The School of Earth, Environmental and Marine Sciences also aims to educate its students in a way that helps them adapt the information they learn into policy in a way that will protect the marine environment.

The courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs have a lot of skill-oriented hands-on activities for its students.

Samantha Silvestri, a graduate student and teaching assistant, is pleased with the opportunities she has gotten while attending UTRGV.

“Being down here, so close to the ocean, South Padre Island is right there—I feel like it’s about time that [the university] had a marine science program,” the Long Island, New York native said. “There’s so much opportunity out here to get your feet wet, to dive into the field.”

Sergio Gonzalez, a junior studying biology and assisting with research, likes the experience and freedom that this school has given him. He also likes that the program has enabled him to learn outside of the classroom, which he finds refreshing.

“I was feeling a little burnt out and this project has given me an opportunity to recharge my batteries a little bit,” Gonzalez said. “Being able to take part in something that we can possibly see as a career path has definitely been exciting and interesting.”





Students graduating from The School of Earth, Environmental and Marine Sciences can choose to take different routes upon graduation. Some graduates can go on to pursue a master's or doctor of philosophy in similar fields. Others can work for federal or state agencies such as Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas General Land Office or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. There are even law degrees related to ocean and environmental policy.

However, the options to go into medical school or dental school are also possibilities as the coursework for all degrees have a strong scientific foundation.

Students interested in this school should contact Dr. David Hicks at [david.hicks@utrgv.edu](mailto:david.hicks@utrgv.edu) or Marine Biology Coordinator Kristen Kline at [kristen.kline@utrgv.edu](mailto:kristen.kline@utrgv.edu). Students seeking more information can also call their office at 956-882-5055.

**THERE'S SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY OUT HERE TO GET YOUR FEET WET, TO DIVE INTO THE FIELD.**

# THE YOUTH VOTE

MILLENNIALS FED UP WITH THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

By Jacqueline Arias



#FeelTheBern



#DUMPTRUMP2K16

There's a new presidential election cycle this year, and arguably, it's one of the most intriguing. We've seen billionaire Donald Trump surge in polls and tap into the anger of many Americans. We've seen Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders exciting voters by making economic inequality the focal point of his campaign. We've seen Jeb Bush (who suspended his campaign in February) and Hillary Clinton struggle to gain momentum though pundits predicted their dominance. The predictable has become the unpredictable in this election.

It's no secret that youth voter turnout is generally low, but it's tricky to use the term voter apathy, which implies that voters are not interested in the political process. Yet millennials (between ages 18 to 34) are perceived in exactly that way; disengaged from the political system.

There's always emphasis that the youth don't vote; that they're simply not interested in the political process. It doesn't help that youth voter turnout in the 2012 presidential election was at 38 percent, which had declined from 44.3 percent in 2008, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

No matter which generation you look at, people under the age of 30 have been proven to be less likely to vote, and millennials are no different. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Michael Win-erip, a reporter from the New York Times, found that millennials are currently voting at the same rate as the Baby Boomers when they were between the ages of 18 and 30.

Paul Jorgensen, a political science professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, said the problem isn't millennials not voting, rather it's the political system that implements barriers preventing participation.

"Using the term like apathy, would mean that you're blaming the victim so to speak," Jorgensen said. "So you're blaming

the people for not taking part of the political system or for being disengaged."

However, we fail to acknowledge, in some cases, the barriers that might affect the youth turnout. There are early voter registration deadlines, voter ID laws, difficult voting locations, and information not being accessible for voters.

Jorgensen explains how we've seen this throughout history; how barriers hindered people from voting.

"Conventionalism says if you decrease the barriers to voting, you'll increase voting," Jorgensen said. "One of the major test case for this is the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. In that you decrease the barriers to voting by ethnic minorities and they turn out. You saw that in the 60's, 70's, and then you have a constellation of policies that make it very difficult for ethnic minorities and poor whites to vote starting in the 80's. That's part of the War on Drugs, the criminalization of life, the 'three strikes you're out' law, and then what we call felony voting laws. When you're convicted of a felony or in some cases if you went to jail, your voting rights are removed. In some states, they never allow you to get those rights back... you'll find that it disenfranchises disproportionately blacks. So you start to see these other policies that you wouldn't think would affect voting that much and that it wouldn't be driven by political motivation like the War on Drugs, but it shows how it has disproportionately impacted political activity in the United States."

These barriers for minorities haven't banished and we could see it here at the Lone Star State.

Texas passed a strict voter ID law in 2011, and the U.S. Supreme Court approved the law two days before early voting began in the 2014 midterm elections. This voter ID law only allows a Texas driver's licence, a passport, a military ID or a

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gun licence to cast a ballot. This law does not allow university identification cards. If a person does not have any of the correct forms of identification, then they can get an election identification certificate issued by the state of Texas, but has anyone seen that advertised?

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote a dissent for this law claiming that it could prevent more than 600,000 registered voters from voting in Texas, specifically Hispanics and African Americans, according to the evidence presented in trial. These are the sort of barriers that may disengage people from the voting process because of its complexity and lack of information.

What we're seeing in elections is the inconvenience to be politically active. The 2014 midterm elections had the lowest turnout in over 70 years, but this presidential election cycle might change the course on how active millennials could be.

### **MILLENNIALS SHAPING THE 2016 ELECTION**

In 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau released population projections that millennials outnumbered Baby Boomers 75.3 million to 74.9 million. Although that may not seem significant, we're starting to see a shift in political discourse on a range of issues that millennials are concerned about.

In recent years, there's been a rise in awareness about student loan debt surpassing credit card debt, income and wealth inequality, and climate change. To gauge millennial opinions about these and other issues I conducted a survey in December 2015 at UTRGV's Edinburg campus. Exactly 100 students were asked about their political stances and which candidate they plan on voting for in the presidential election.

87 percent of students said climate change is real, 91 percent said there should be gender pay equity, 80 percent said college tuition should be free, 58 percent said they support the legalization of marijuana, 75 percent said undocumented immigrants should be offered a pathway to citizenship, and 55 percent support increasing the minimum wage.

Of course, this may not be an accurate representation of all millennials across the country, but Jorgensen believes it follows current trends of what this generation is worried about.

"The two most prominent [issues] are social security and campaign finance," the professor said. "From my perspective, a lot of people care about campaign finance because they see it as one of the major causes of economic inequality, and one of the major impediments to every other issue, and I haven't even brought up climate change which is another huge concern for younger folks."

The political stances of millennials seem to have taken a hard left turn. In the survey, when asked about their political ideology 35 percent of students considered themselves liberal, 21 percent conservative, and another 21 percent used Bernie Sander's label "Democratic Socialist."

The Pew Research Center found that millennials "are the first in the modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations had at the same age." This could help explain their left

leaning stances and the success of the Bernie Sanders campaign in this election.

52 percent of students said they planned on voting for Bernie Sanders. Hillary Clinton came in second place with 16 percent. Only 7 percent supported Donald Trump, with support for all other candidates no higher than 4 percent. Nine percent of those surveyed did not support any of the candidates running.

This begs the question: are millennials feeling the Bern?

According to exit poll data at the Iowa caucus, youth turnout for the Democratic party showed an overwhelming support for Senator Sanders over Hillary Clinton 84 to 14 percent. The same trend continued in the New Hampshire primary, where Sanders not only beat Secretary Clinton by 22 percent, but won the vote of people under 30 by 83 percent. Compare that with Clinton, who only received 16 percent of the under 30 vote and her struggle to appeal to millennials is clear. Record turnouts in the Democratic caucuses of Maine and Kansas also showed the momentum the Sanders campaign is building.

Although in some state primaries, turnout has not reached the same capacity as the 2008 presidential election, Sanders is still breaking more records with the youth vote than President Obama did.

Cathryn Torres, the Co-President of the Young Democrats student organization at UTRGV, thinks college students will largely be supporting the Vermont Senator.

"Every time I speak to students about Bernie Sanders and about politics in general, they seem to be concerned about tuition," Torres said. "I think higher education in general needs to be something addressed at the federal level."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, college tuition has skyrocketed by 1,225 percent since 1978. That's more than medical care at 643 percent.

"Students want change, and it's usually among this age where we're starting to utilize social media to learn more things and to spread more things," the 19 year old said. "Bernie Sanders has been doing very well stressing that we care about these issues and that he's really passionate about free college. I think education is a right and so does Bernie Sanders."

Bernie Sanders appeal to millennials could be his secret weapon to the nomination. It's ultimately up to his supporters and his crucial coalition of younger folks to carry him to the White House.

As we've seen so far, Sanders still has a shot at the nomination even with Clinton building a lead in delegates, and millennials are eager to have a candidate that speaks to their concerns. Only time will tell as this election cycle continues if millennials can really cause the biggest political upset in American history.

"Younger people aren't stupid. They listen like everybody else listens," Jorgensen said.

# ON IMMIGRATION

## ADDRESSING THE STIGMA OF UNDOCUMENTED CITIZENS

By Andy De Llano

"The American people will not support doing anything about people that are in this country illegally until the law is enforced first," Florida Sen. Rubio said in February at a Republican debate.

Rubio was being questioned about a bill he had supported in 2013 which advocated a path to citizenship for immigrants who had already entered the country illegally. The bill was never passed, but it was being brought up at the debate as a way of defining Rubio's stance on immigration. It was also being used as an example of Rubio being inept at fighting for his own legislation, which Jeb Bush and Chris Christie were claiming.

All three of these candidates have long since dropped out of the presidential election, yet the issue of immigration that they brought up is still relevant. Would the American people prefer to see border enforcement, and other law enforcement to prevent undocumented immigrants from entering the country before allowing a path to citizenship for immigrants that are already here?

Politifact rated Rubio's statement as Mostly False, saying "Multiple polls have showed that the majority of Americans support some type of status to allow illegal immigrants to remain in the United States -- and some extend that to citizenship."

Sergio Barrera, a UTRGV graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies is frustrated with the United States' attitude toward immigration.

"I believe that immigration, as a form of illegality, is a colonized mechanism to keep those that do not fit the norms and [who are] marginalized in economy, education, politics, and other aspects of the dominant society," Barrera said. "Immigration has always been the core nature of human beings however our ancestors had an understanding that we were all part of the land, which has changed when countries and powers were disputed."

For his Interdisciplinary Studies degree, Barrera focuses on Mexican-American Studies and Hispanic Literature. Himself a first generation Chicano, Barrera is hyper aware of America's need for immigration reform.

"My parents were here paying taxes with their hard-earned money," the 23-year-old said. "Yet they never received any type of benefits nor will they receive [benefits] until their status changes and they are legalized."

However, Marco Rubio and politicians like Ted Cruz and Donald Trump continue to make statements that stigmatise the Mexicans who attempt to live in the United States. They perpetuate stereotypes of immigrants as criminals, who have a negative effect on our society.

**IMMIGRATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CORE NATURE OF HUMAN BEINGS ... OUR ANCESTORS HAD AN UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WERE ALL PART OF THE LAND, WHICH CHANGED WHEN COUNTRIES AND POWERS WERE DISPUTED.**

"The Republican Party ... has dedicated their efforts to create an anti-immigrant rhetoric that many of us, who are culturally conscious, deem absurd," Barrera said. "Especially when we understand that historically, the U.S. has benefited from exploiting and dehumanizing immigrant laborers from Mexico. ... immigration has helped the U.S. economy when the demand for workers was high. Unfortunately many people, typically many whom are privileged, are buying into their rhetoric and creating a hateful America that only eliminates the efforts of many people of color, specifically the millions of Latinos/Chicanos that have contributed to creating what we know now as the United States of America."

Barrera places his trust in the democratic party, specifically Senator Bernie Sanders.

"Despite him being a white man, [Sanders] is historically conscious enough to know what affects the lower and middle class populations of the United States," the Pharr resident said. "The fact that he agrees on the legalization of immigrant workers versus their deportation creates a conversation that ignites fear in racist America. He acknowledges that immigration reform needs to occur and has logical solutions."

### TAXES

Many illegal immigrants pay taxes with ITINs (Individual Tax Identification Numbers) and the American Immigration Council calculated that ITINs allowed the state of Texas, alone, to receive \$1 billion in taxes from immigrants. The ITINs are also used for legal aliens and residents who are allowed to study and work in the country and do not have citizenship.

"This system sets up the possibility for financial inequality between immigrants (documented or undocumented, or residents) and citizens," said Rolando R Longoria II, a sociology professor at UTRGV. "This is very important to note because in our society, whether we like it or not, inequalities are used for the advantage of capitalistic gain."

According to immigrantpolicy.org the ITINs also "cannot be used to prove work authorization on an I-9 form" which severely limits the jobs immigrants can apply for. All while still expecting them to pay taxes.

"The fact that this ITIN cannot be used to prove work status yet allows immigrants to pay taxes from work indicates that it is of capitalistic benefit to the nation-state," Longoria said. "It creates inequality in that it does not bestow "employable status" on the individual, yet sets up a system that expects them to pay taxes for living in the country."

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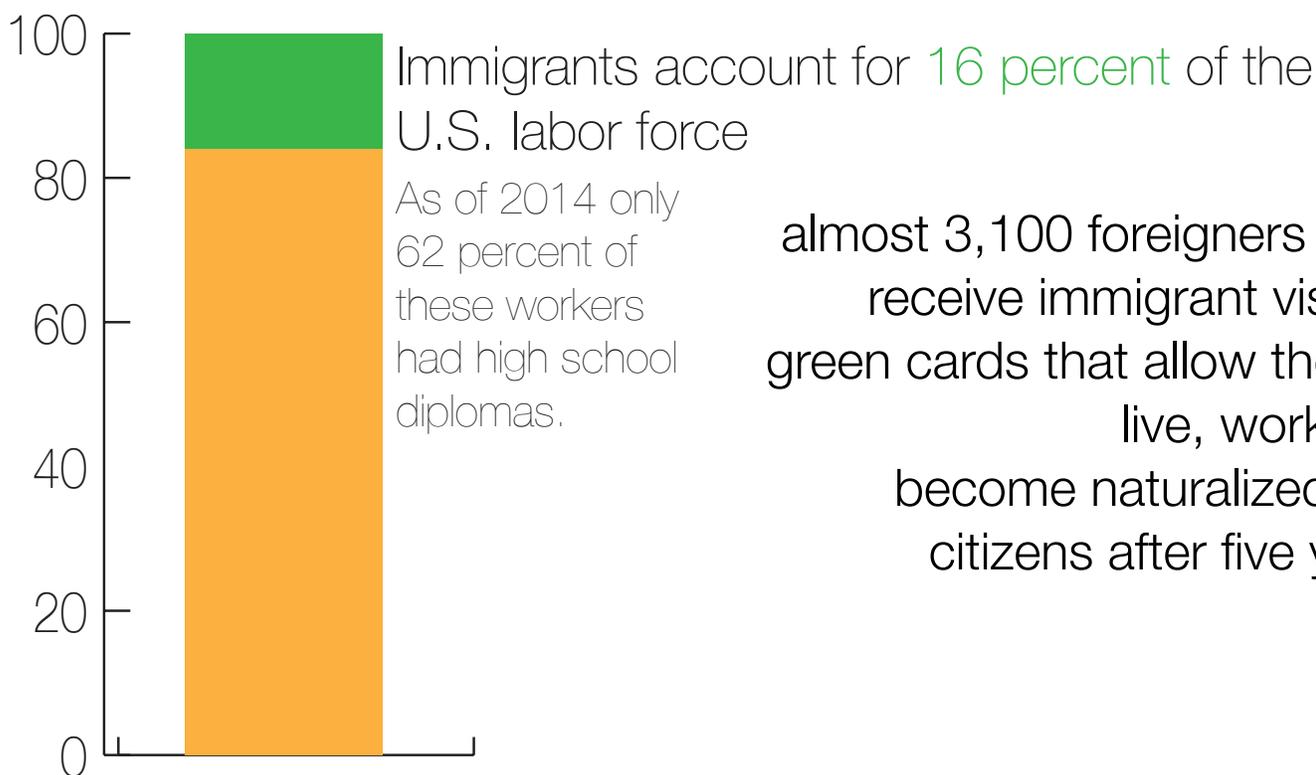
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**Many illegal immigrants pay taxes with ITINs (Individual Tax Identification Numbers) and the American Immigration Council calculated that ITINs allowed the state of Texas, alone, to receive \$1 billion in taxes from immigrants.**



almost 3,100 foreigners a day receive immigrant visas or green cards that allow them to live, work, and become naturalized U.S. citizens after five years.

These legal barriers limit the job opportunities for undocumented workers and traps many Hispanics in poverty. Longoria emphasises the fact that the United States as a country continues to benefit from these workers despite the restrictions.

“What kinds of jobs can an immigrant get without a Social Security Number, and with an ITIN?” the McAllen resident said. “A low-wage job that is mostly undesirable in mainstream US society - field worker, janitor, menial labor, etc - that does not provide for the aging of the worker. In essence, the ITIN is asking people to pay taxes into a system that will not look toward their retirement. These people are being worked hard, they are paying taxes, yet they do not receive health benefits, retirement, or social security. They are literally enriching the welfare net the rest of US citizens have access too while being cut off from it.”

Barrera is frustrated with this taxing system, as well as the negative stereotypes that blame immigrants for their own poverty, portraying them as lazy individuals who deplete the United State's welfare system.

“Many citizens believe that immigrants

and undocumented people come to exploit the system,” the graduate student said. “When in reality they are working harder than most, earning fewer than all and are not recognized for their contributions.”

**POPULATION**

In an article by The Fiscal Times it is noted that “immigrants account for 16 percent of the U.S. labor force... these immigrants work in the agriculture and leisure and hospitality sectors” largely providing low-skilled labor. As of 2014 only 62 percent of these workers had high school diplomas.

The United States would prefer to accept immigrants with training in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and other high-skill fields. However, professor Longoria would like to point out the disadvantages these high-skill immigrants face.

“Some immigrants are seen as ‘desirable’ due to both skill sets and stereotypes, and others are seen as ‘undesirable’ for the same reasons,” the sociology professor said. “[But] many immigrants are never able to apply their knowledge due to multiple barriers: language, training, certification. I once

heard a story of a Latin American professor who moved to the states and became a waiter because he did not have the money to apply for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) tests.”

The Population Reference Bureau stated in 2014 that “almost 3,100 foreigners a day receive immigrant visas or green cards that allow them to live, work, and become naturalized U.S. citizens after five years.” These people have a larger set of job opportunities compared with undocumented immigrants because their visas allow them to bypass problems with social security and citizenship. However Longoria is concerned for those whose temporary education and work visas run out because their jobs are then placed at risk.

“When we think about the jobs ‘legal versus illegal’ immigrants can attain, we have to think about the systems that allow them or hinder them from advancing,” the El Paso native said. “Immigration sets up a series of systems that disempower the immigrant from whatever knowledge they have gained by phrasing them as a ‘non-citizen’ and therefore a ‘non-person.’”

The Population Reference Bureau also found that, at the end of 2015 America's

population was “aging rapidly as the large cohort of Baby Boomers reaches retirement age.” This would have led the country’s population to decline if not for the three states which the Population Reference Bureau has dubbed “Fountains of Youth.” Texas is one of those states, along with California and Florida, which combined “accounted for 48 percent of U.S. population growth between 2014 and 2015,” even though these three states only make up 27 percent of America’s population.

“The outnumbering of citizens that are capable of working versus [those] who are not could result in a demand for workers, many of which could be immigrant workers,” Barrera said. “This... is why immigrant work should be valued more in those states, especially because demographically speaking, Texas, California and Florida have a dense population of Latinos and many other states do not.”

Their population increase is thanks to the relatively younger populations in these states, which have thrived on immigration. “Between 2014 and 2015, California, Florida and Texas had a net (combined) increase of 412,000 international migrants, mostly from Latin America.” These young immigrants have added to the U.S population growth and to the country’s workforce, all of which help sustain the otherwise aging population. As a Texas native and a millennial, Barrera considered the advantages and disadvantages of living in such youthful state.

“The surplus of immigrants in Texas ... is a disadvantage because the large amounts of undocumented workers have historically resulted in the lowering of wages and in humiliating conditions for these communities,” the McAllen native said. “Not only this, but they are also subject to living below poverty line while not receiving compensation for their contributions to the economy. It can result in an advantage because there will always be a supply of workers, however this is from the capitalistic standpoint and could result in a catastrophe.”

The United States Census Bureau found that in 2014 Americans below the age of 5 “became majority-minority for the first time, with 50.2 percent being part of a minority race or ethnic group.” Barrera feels that this growing trend of outnumbering ethnic minorities is a factor in heated anti-immigration rhetoric.

“The birth rates of people of color versus whites is changing exponentially,” Barrera said. “Those in power are afraid that the U.S. will also change into becoming a more diverse society and country, which is why they continue to instill fear by speaking about anti-immigration legislations.”

Professor Longoria feels that the United State’s shifting demographic is inevitable, but he knows that even if Anglo American’s officially become a minority they won’t necessarily act like one.

“We have seen this in the case of South African Apartheid, where white minorities maintained the oppression of black majorities for decades,” the Stanford University graduate said. “We are seeing a large rise in actions created by White Supremacists, White Nationals, and White Separatists. Our country is sorely in need of a new racial dialogue that dismantles new forms of hate. To some degree this exists in race-oriented movements; to some degree it needs to reach a wider audience.”

## POLICY

In 2012 President Obama attempted to protect “up to 5 million people - including young immigrants known as “Dreamers” – from deportation” with the Deferred Action for Children Arrivals program, which he tried to expand in 2014 with the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Resident program. The Los Angeles Times covered the legal pandemonium that followed as “Twenty-six states, led by Texas, had sued to stop the programs.”

Obama continues to push for these programs, which would allow undocumented individuals brought to the country as children to avoid deportation by implementing two year work permits, with DACA, and would grant the undocumented parents of legal children to likewise post-pone deportation with DAPA.

“Children are [often] the center of attention when it comes to immigration issues,” Barrera said. “This is because their parents are subject of deportation and a child will not be left behind even if he/she is born in the U.S. The deportation of his/her parents means the deterioration of what could be a bright future for that child.”

The LA Times reported that the states attempting to halt the immigration programs argued “that the president had overstepped his constitutional authority.” The federal appeals court ruled in favor of the lawsuit. The Supreme Court announced in January 2016 their intentions to review the Fifth Circuit’s decision in Texas vs United States according to the American Immigration Council who fear a potential ruling in Texas’s favor, stating “Giving a single state the power to upend a nationwide federal program that is supported by many other states is a dangerous precedent.”

While looking at all these issues Barrera was reminded of a quote from Gloria Anzaldua, where she describes the experience of being a woman of mixed racial ancestry, or mestiza, often considered an outsider in much the same way as many immigrants.

“It is like Gloria Anzaldua states, we must embody in the journey of creating a mestiza consciousness,” Barrera said. “The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle culture. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode- nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned.’ It is only through the acceptance of all aspects of ourselves and our people that America will be great again!”

**THESE PEOPLE ARE BEING WORKED HARD, THEY ARE PAYING TAXES, YET THEY DO NOT RECEIVE HEALTH BENEFITS, RETIREMENT, OR SOCIAL SECURITY.**

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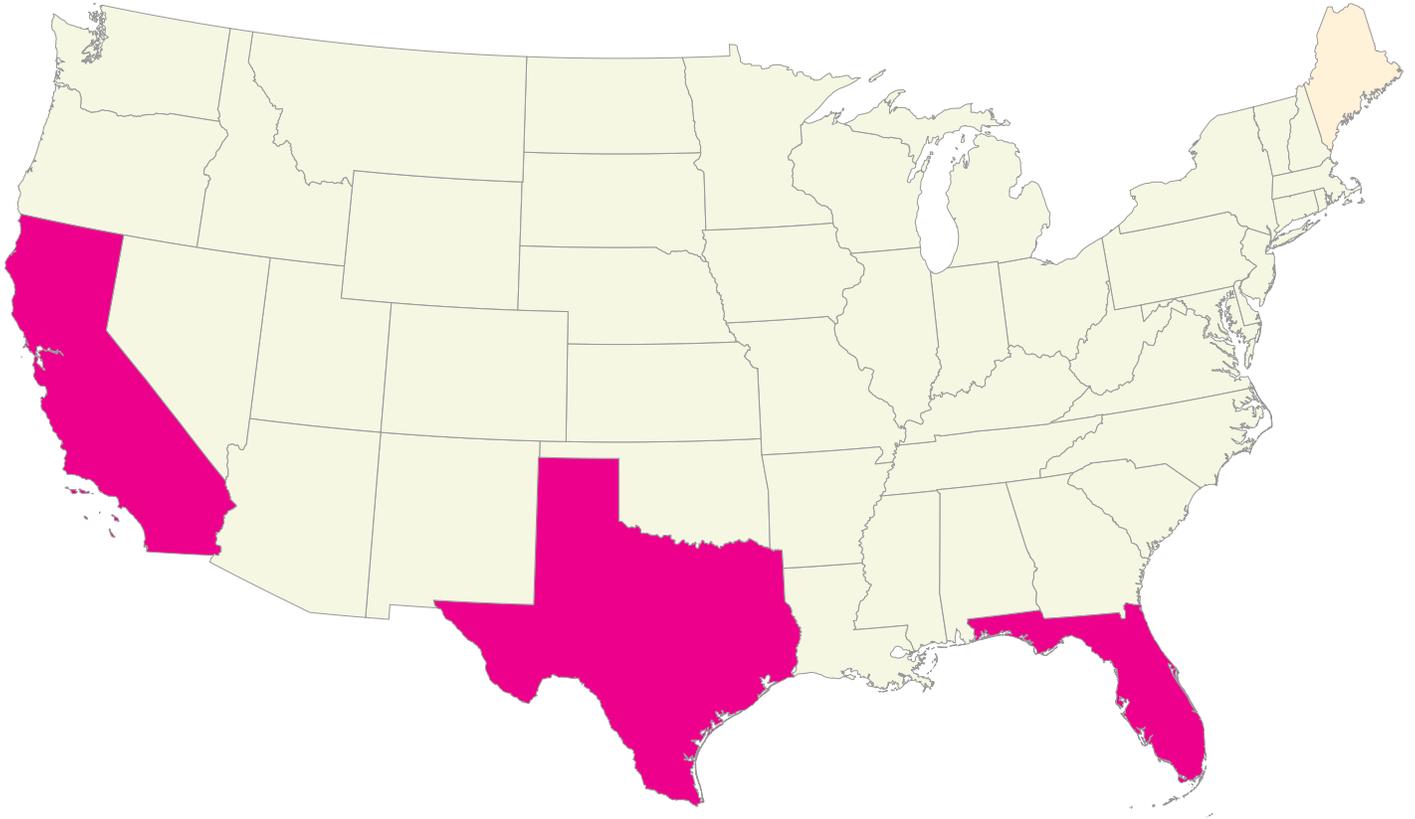
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## TEXAS, CALIFORNIA, & FLORIDA ACCOUNT FOR 48 PERCENT OF THE US POPULATION GROWN BETWEEN 2014 & 2015



The Population Reference Bureau also found that, at the end of 2015 America's population was "aging rapidly as the large cohort of Baby Boomers reaches retirement age." This would have led the country's population to decline if not for these three states.

California, Florida and Texas had a net (combined) increase of 412,000 international migrants, mostly from Latin America.

# GRIM OLD PARTY

THE ELECTABILITY OF THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

By Mark Maynard • Photo: unsplash.com



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# ***TO MAKE THE DECISION EASIER FOR THE VOTER, THE MEDIA SEEMS TO HAVE TURNED THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE INTO SOME SORT OF REALITY TV SHOW.***

**F**or Aline Prevost, the upcoming presidential election is a grim decision.

“Deciding which candidate to vote for is like asking yourself, ‘Which electrical socket would I like to stick my fork in[to] for the next four years,’” the UTRGV junior said.

Many people feel overwhelmed with the idea of voting. There are many potential nominees in the Republican Party, such as Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and John Kasich. To make the decision easier for the voter, the media seems to have turned the presidential race into some sort of reality TV show. Sadly enough, Trump is the only one with experience in that area. This leaves Rubio, Cruz and Kasich scrambling to meet his level of showmanship. All of this culminates into general ideas and grand promises that sound wonderful. The problem with this is that there are no actual policies or plans being discussed, leaving the decision to be made solely on smiles and wishful interpretation.

## ***IT IS MY FIRST YEAR VOTING AND I’M CHOOSING WHICH CANDIDATE SUCKS LESS, BECAUSE THEY’RE ALL POOR CHOICES.***

“You know, when deciding who to vote for, you should look at their policies,” said Noah Degollado, UTRGV sophomore. “You should fall in love with the policies that the candidate is proposing, not the candidate themselves.”

Conservative students would not be considering Hillary Clinton, who has a track record of lying and deception, or Bernie Sanders, who promises marijuana legalization and free education just to snag the youth vote. Leaving them to decide which of the Republican candidates stink the least.

### **WHY EVERYONE IS A BAD CHOICE**

The first candidate under review is Donald Trump. If you do not know who this man is by now, you must be living under a rock. He has earned “\$2 billion worth of media attention” according to the New York Times. More air time than any other candidate by his use of outlandish statements that attract headlines. His statements are often aggressive and biased against one group or another.

The New York Times also said Trump “is strongest among Republicans who are less affluent, less educated and less likely to turn out to vote.”

This would mean that even though Trump may be high in the polls, his true voter turnout would be very low, limiting his ability to win in an actual election. In my opinion, if Trump were to be elected, it would divide the Republican party.

Next, there is John Kasich, a very capable candidate, just not in this race. Kasich gives a nice speech, has a nice smile and even fires back at Trump from time to time. What most voters want to hear from Kasich is not his policies, but instead, why he is still in the race. He is dead last in the polls and doing terribly in the primaries. Yet Kasich announced high hopes for his candidacy despite “pressure from members of the Republican establishment who are calling on him to drop out of the presidential race” according to CBS.

Last is presidential candidate Sen. Ted Cruz. Cruz is what one refers to as a conservative. He tends to hold traditional values, which really clash with those of the younger voters. His traditional views on marriage and religious background do force a certain voter out and to the ballots, though. He will listen to opposing points of view, but if he has made up his mind on an issue, he is set in stone. Over the years he has shown consistency in the Senate, indicating he would make a good president. To most, his largest downside is his perpetual frown, which leads people to believe he is insincere in his statements. However Sen. Cruz has very straightforward policies, such as an even 10 percent tax.

“It is a tough decision to make,” said Jaime Castillo, a freshman at UTRGV. “It is my first year voting and I’m choosing which candidate sucks less, because they’re all poor choices.” With all of this information at hand, I will be backing Ted Cruz in this election. I feel that he has the best chance at defeating Trump.

## ***THERE ARE NO ACTUAL POLICIES OR PLANS BEING DISCUSSED, LEAVING THE DECISION TO BE MADE SOLELY ON SMILES AND WISHFUL INTERPRETATION.***



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