

PULSE







STAFF

20

20

-

20

21

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Steven Hughes

GRAPHIC EDITOR

Michel Flores Tavizón

GRAPHIC DESIGNER+ PHOTOGRAPHER

Manuel Gámez

COPY EDITORS

Faith Chua
Kaylee Hensley

SPANISH EDITOR

Karla Cavazos

WRITERS

Gabriela Gonzalez
Hania Rocio

PHOTO EDITORS

Amanda Vela
Joe Castillo

ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Michael Gonzalez

ON THE COVER

Alejandro Macias

FACULTY ADVISER

Dr. Aje-Ori Agbese

STUDENT MEDIA DIRECTOR

Azenett Cornejo

PROGRAM ADVISER

Jesús Sánchez

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Ana Sánchez
Maggie Castillo

PULSE

006

WRITING CONTRIBUTORS

America Garcia
Dwayne Vega
Karla Lozano
Lexi Kintigh
Priscylla Guzman

GRAPHIC CONTRIBUTORS

Aaliyah Garza
Almendra Saenz
Ángela García
Cecilia Sierra
Jocelyn Torres
Sara Ortiz
Valeria Peña



[UTRGV.PULSEMAGAZINE](https://www.facebook.com/UTRGV.PULSEMAGAZINE)



[@UTRGVPULSE](https://www.instagram.com/UTRGVPULSE)



[@UTRCVPULSE](https://twitter.com/UTRCVPULSE)

The opinions of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of UTRGV Pulse magazine. UTRGV Pulse magazine bears no responsibility for the opinions expressed. - Pulse magazine 006

LETTER FROM

THE

E DI TOR

It's crazy to believe that I'm writing this. Growing up, I never had an interest in writing. Now, I'm the editor-in-chief for a magazine. My story is an example of what you'll find in Pulse 006. The team picked "change" as the theme for the sixth edition of the magazine at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Each member identified terms that represent the message. 2020 was definitely a year that we experienced changes and we wanted our stories to reflect what happened, is happening, will happen, the injustices and justices, resilience, collectivism, and self-improvement.

The theme is also fitting for Pulse because this year, we wanted to improve how we create content for print and online. It took a lot of trial, error and stress. But we are proud of how things turned out. For example, our website, utrgvpulse.com, now has sections. We picked these sections because we believe they represent what's around the RGV. The sections are: Campus and Community, where local people and events are profiled; Border, which reflects the impact the border has; Arts and Entertainment, which shows that the arts exist here; World, because what happens outside our home still influences it; and Lifestyle, where we explore and discuss trends and social issues. Also, we published bi-weekly content online. We've been able to maintain that frequency and I'm happy that we were able to put out as many stories we did. This team created the foundation the magazine needed.

Now, I would like to take a moment and express my gratitude—this is a letter from the editor after all. I'd like to thank everyone who contributed stories and graphics to this edition of Pulse. I hope that once you have a copy in your hands, it'll be surreal. Thank you to my staff. Michel Flores Tavizón, the graphics editor; Amanda Vela, the photography editor during the Fall semester; Joe Castillo, the photography editor during the Spring semester; Michael Gonzalez, the online and social media editor; Faith Chua, a section editor; Kaylee Hensley, a section

PULSE MAGAZINE...

editor; Karla Cavazos, the Spanish editor; Gabriela Gonzalez, a writer; Hania Rocio, a writer; and Manuel Gámez, the photographer/graphic designer. These folks are the most talented magazine journalists I had the honor of working with. I'll miss our weekly budget meetings about stories, graphics and other projects. Next, a big thank you to the amazing staff at the Student Media department. Dr. Aje-Ori Agbese, Pulse faculty adviser; Jesús Sánchez, student program adviser; and Azenett Cornejo, director of Student Media. These folks have played an integral part in my undergraduate career. They gave me the privilege to make memories with my friends at The Rider, Vaquero Radio and KVAQ-TV. Also, they gave me the opportunity to start and grow my portfolio and résumé. This department is the highlight of journalism education at UTRGV and this school needs to appreciate it more. Also, thank you so much to my family for supporting me emotionally and economically during my four years.

Last, but not least, thank you, the reader. Picking up a copy or reading stories on the website means more than you know. Please continue supporting local journalism by following Pulse on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Also, feel free to suggest story ideas to the magazine via our email.

This is my last year as an undergraduate student, also as a employee for Student Media. Some of the people listed above saw me as a lost freshman who dreamt of being a musician. Now, I am graduating as a confident journalist. I'm not sure where life will take me, but I don't fear change.

With that, I welcome you to Pulse 006.

Love,

Steven Hughes

Editor-in-Chief

THE HEART BEAT OF UT RGV

TABLE

OF

8	UTRGV CONCLUDES INVESTIGATION ON PROFESSOR'S COMMENTS
12	LO QUE SIGNIFICA LA ELECCIÓN 2020 PARA EL RGV Y MÁS ALLÁ
16	WRITTEN EMOTIONS
20	FOUR YEARS WITH TRUMP
28	JACKSON V. WALL
32	TRUMP'S FINAL VISIT TO THE VALLEY
38	LA EDUCACIÓN ES PODER
42	GREG ABBOTT'S VISIT TO THE VALLEY
48	I AM FROM
50	THERE'S MORE TO COFFEE THAN CREAM AND SUGAR

CONTENTS

54 THE CAMPUS ACTIVITIES
BOARD AT UTRGV

58 UN CAMBIO CONTINUO

64 'WOULD YOU LIKE TO
VIDEO CHAT?'

68 I'M JUST A KID

74 SIEMPRE SELENA

78 THE CHANGING FASHION
IN THE RGV

82 ART GALLERY

86 ALEX MACIAS: WHEN ART
IMITATES LIFE

96 THIS IS A LATIN TIME

98 REPORTING THE TRUTH:
ANDERSON COOPER
SHARES JOURNEY WITH
UTRGV CAMPUS

100 NI UNA MENOS

106 ADDICTION SPECIALIST

108 LEICA: MORE THAN
A CAMERA

114 EVENTS ON EARTH
IN 2020

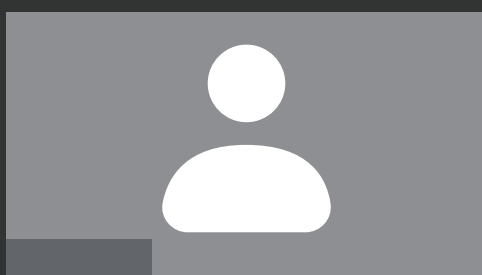
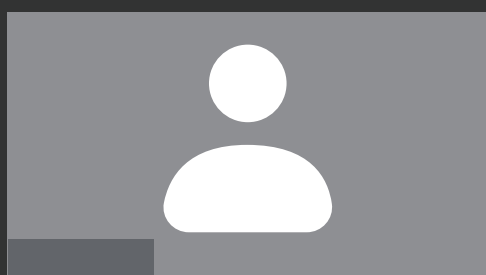
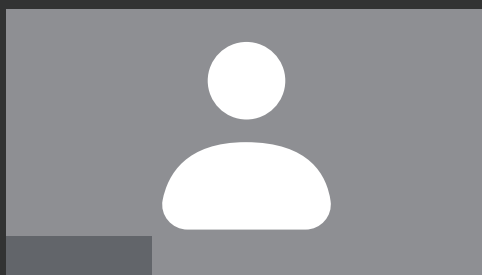
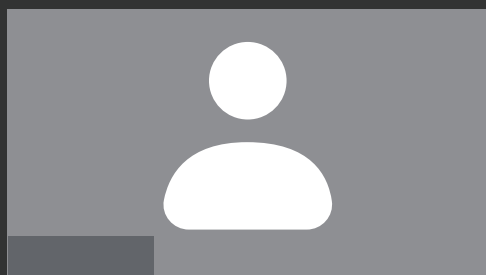
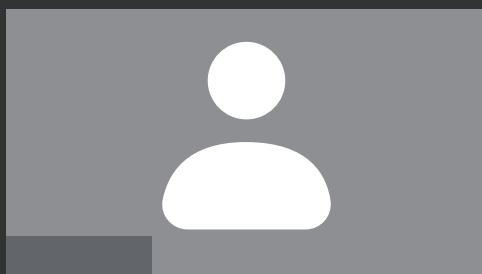
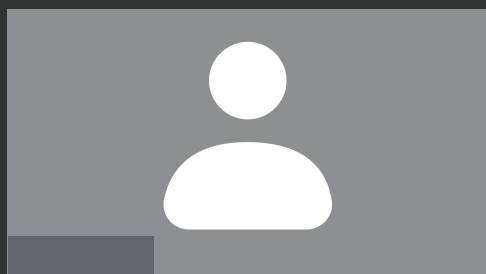
116 COEXISTING
WITH EARTH

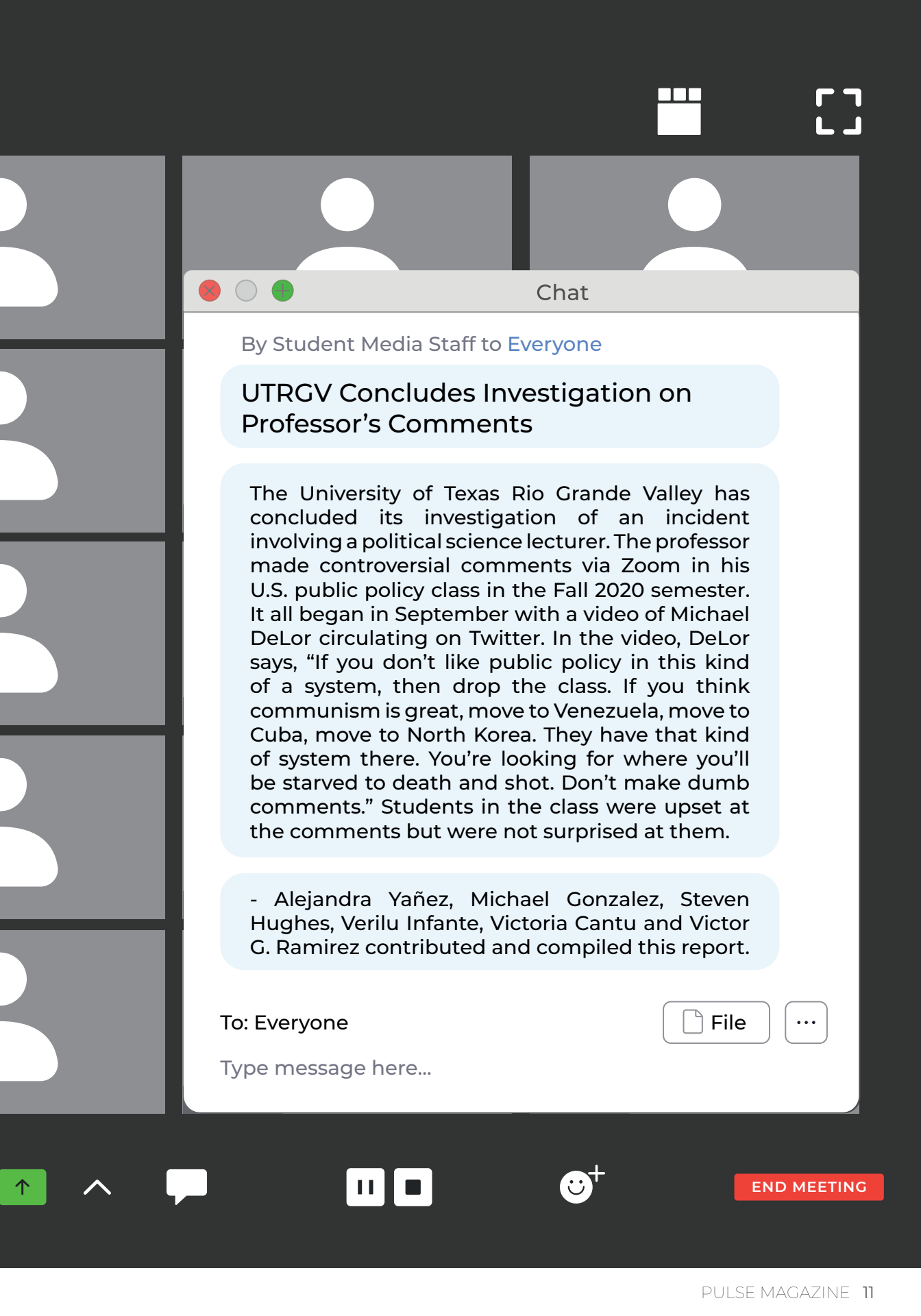
122 ADVANCING MEDICAL
RESEARCH WITH
SNAKE VENOM

126 FIVE FOR A DOLLAR

128 ANSWERS

134 WHERE IT ALL BEGAN





Chat

By Student Media Staff to [Everyone](#)

UTRGV Concludes Investigation on Professor's Comments

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has concluded its investigation of an incident involving a political science lecturer. The professor made controversial comments via Zoom in his U.S. public policy class in the Fall 2020 semester. It all began in September with a video of Michael DeLor circulating on Twitter. In the video, DeLor says, "If you don't like public policy in this kind of a system, then drop the class. If you think communism is great, move to Venezuela, move to Cuba, move to North Korea. They have that kind of system there. You're looking for where you'll be starved to death and shot. Don't make dumb comments." Students in the class were upset at the comments but were not surprised at them.

- Alejandra Yañez, Michael Gonzalez, Steven Hughes, Verilu Infante, Victoria Cantu and Victor G. Ramirez contributed and compiled this report.

To: Everyone



Type message here...



END MEETING

"This type of discourse was not unusual for his class, a sign of the times I suppose," Leo Moody-Garza, a student in the class, said. "However, the level of blatant propaganda he was pushing that day was more than usual."

Screenshots of DeLor's Twitter account, @SafelyAnonym, which is no longer active, also went viral. In a tweet posted on Aug. 24, DeLor described liberal women as "ugly, mean, and most of them smell." Four days later, the account tweeted that Democrats "support pedophilia. They are sick bastards who need serious psychiatric help."

Patrick Gonzales, associate vice president for University Marketing and Communications, confirmed the account belonged to DeLor. The video of DeLor's comments and his tweets also made it to the UTRGV Students Facebook page. A staff member of Student Media contacted DeLor regarding his class comments on Sept. 25, 2020, but the lecturer told the reporter to contact Clyde Barrow, the political science department chair. Barrow then referred the reporter to Gonzales. The reporter contacted DeLor again in October but was unsuccessful reaching him.

"ONE THING I WOULD LIKE TO SAY IS... HIS OPINIONS IN NO WAY REPRESENT THE OPINIONS OF UTRGV AND, YOU KNOW, THAT'S ONE THING I WANTED TO MAKE," GONZALES SAID.

Students in and out of the course had varying opinions on the situation.

Moody-Garza, a political science senior, was in the Zoom lecture when DeLor made the comments. He said that the comments were directed at him. Moody-Garza said the topic of the lecture was federalism, but DeLor "kept switching" to other topics, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and defunding the police. Moody-Garza added that he and his peers tried to refute and offer context

to those subjects. He said that the incident happened on a Wednesday and by the weekend, everything was public.

"So that Monday, we didn't really have a class," the political science student said. "He just addressed the class and you know, expressed his apologies to me personally, which I appreciated, and to the class which I thought was appropriate for the situation. I don't think it was enough that he should be off the hook, but that was the only time he had addressed it. He hasn't really addressed it in his lectures."

A member of Student Media filed a Freedom of Information Act request to Karen Adams, UTRGV's public information officer, on Nov. 13 for further information on what DeLor said on these topics. According to Adams, the university can not provide the information because it "must be withheld to comply with the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act of 1974." The purpose of the act is to protect the privacy of student education records, according to the U.S. Department of Education's FERPA webpage.

"An educational agency or institution (such as UTRGV) may withhold from public disclosure information protected by FERPA and excepted from required public disclosure without requesting a Texas Attorney General's opinion as to those exceptions," Adam wrote in response to the FOIA request on Dec. 3. Nevertheless, Moody-Garza said the incident allowed him to see his lecturer's true colors.

"So that day, he kind of took his mask off and you saw how he really feels about these things that are happening, and that are actually happening in our country, and, you know, to know that he's out there trying to spread misinformation in a classroom setting is disturbing," he said.

On the other hand, Diego Zarate-Alvizo, an art junior, said that the political science professor did nothing wrong.

“The comments shown in the video has been blown way out of proportion,” Zarate-Alvizo explained. “The attitude and the tone in which this professor stated these comments were definitely unprofessional, but we have to remember that we [saw] only a snippet of the Zoom meeting. We did not see the context which incited this behavior. As far as I can see, based on some information provided, he has not done anything wrong.”

The art student added that it was inappropriate for students to expose DeLor’s “personal life and beliefs” on social media.

“There are people who are arguing that sharing his Twitter handle is justified just because it is a public site and are open for criticism,” he said. “To a degree, I am in favor of this as long as it is not damaging an individual’s career or professional life. It is also justified if it is exposing illegal activities. I also argue that it does not make sense to share [DeLor’s tweets about Democrats because they are] irrelevant to the allegations that [were] made. The sharing of his Twitter posts to a group of left-leaning students was clearly motivated to ‘cancel’ him. It was unnecessary and cowardly to expose a man who simply has different beliefs to a ‘hivemind’ group.”

According to Gonzales, the university concluded its investigation and came to a decision the week of Oct. 19.

“The incident was investigated and upon the conclusion of the investigation, an appropriate action was determined and taken with the faculty member,” Gonzales said. “It’s also important to note that all students who filed a formal complaint have also received a response regarding the conclusion of the investigation.”

According to Gonzales, DeLor is still teaching at UTRGV, as of press time. He did not share what action was taken against DeLor.

On his part, Barrow said, “I can’t get into the substantive final result of all of this because it’s confidential personnel action and I’m prohibited by state law from conveying that information.”

The department chair said he talked to DeLor about the incident.

“ALL I CAN REALLY TELL YOU IS THAT WE HAVE FOLLOWED THE ESTABLISHED UNIVERSITY PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATING THESE TYPES OF INCIDENTS. A REPORT HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND A FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN MADE.”

Since the official investigation, Moody-Garza said DeLor’s teaching changed.

“We don’t have in-person live streaming sessions anymore,” he said. “He just records his lecture, uploads it and we all absorb it when we can and take the tests. It’s just interesting to me that he hasn’t softened his rhetoric at all. You can still tell that, at least from a public policy perspective, he still views idea on the left of the political spectrum as wrong. It’s very rare you’ll see him give any kind of fair credit to anybody who’s a progressive. I think he’s much more problematic than I initially gave him credit for.”

Consequently, Gonzales said he encourages students who “feel like they are being mistreated in the classroom setting, whether it’s from a fellow student or a faculty member, that they report it right away to the university through a Vaqueros Report It, or directly through our Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity; that they report any type of, you know, discrimination or equity issues with the appropriate offices, and trust the process.”



LO QUE SIGNIFICA LA ELECCIÓN 2020 PARA EL RGV Y MÁS ALLÁ

Por Faith Chua

Ilustraciones por Michel Flores Tavizón

El año 2020 ha sido un año muy tumultuoso lleno de disturbios civiles, una crisis económica que rivalizó con la Gran Depresión y una enfermedad que devastó el mundo. Y esto fue solo en los Estados Unidos. En todo el mundo, los países estaban experimentando sus propias dificultades y luchas. El evento más reciente que ha captado la atención del mundo es la elección presidencial de Estados Unidos 2020.

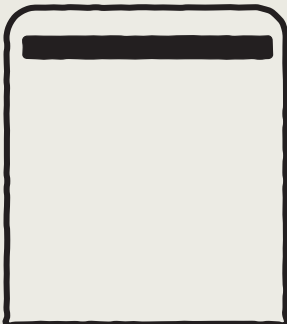
Siendo uno de los países más influyentes del mundo, personas de todas partes contuvieron la respiración mientras observaban la carrera por la presidencia. Muchos creían que el candidato demócrata Joe Biden había ganado una gran ventaja y ganaría las elecciones por mucho, mientras que otros advirtieron sobre el “espejismo rojo”. Esto significaba que parecería como si el presidente Donald Trump estuviera liderando, pero eventualmente los votos de la votación anticipada y las boletas por correo se

activarían y le darían a Biden la victoria. Lo que sucedió, sin embargo, fue un juego de espera. Los resultados de las elecciones tomaron más tiempo de lo que nadie esperaba.

Al final, todos observaron Pennsylvania, Nevada y Georgia porque serían el factor decisivo de quién ganó las elecciones. Entonces, en noviembre 7, todas las redes de noticias de NBC a FOX News, declararon Biden como el ganador. Millones en el país dieron un suspiro de alivio mientras muchos otros lloraban de angustia. A partir de hoy, Biden obtuvo 306 votos electorales y el presidente Trump recibió 232 votos electorales, según 270towin.com.

En general, la totalidad de la semana electoral, o más exactamente los meses previos a la elección, fueron estresantes y abrumadoras para muchos. Si bien la atención de todos puede haber estado en las elecciones presidenciales, vemos significativo para los miembros de la Cámara de Representantes y el Senado. Atrás queda la imagen de una habitación llena de ancianos, hombres blancos y llega el amanecer de una nueva era. Donde hay inclusión de género y racial, y comenzamos a ver al gobierno convirtiéndose lentamente en un reflejo más preciso de las personas que representa.

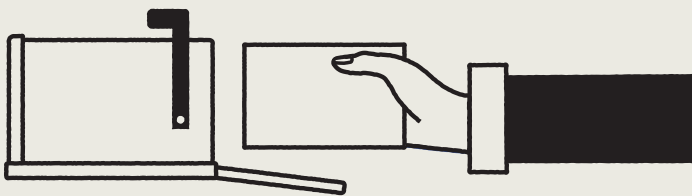
Entonces, ¿qué significan estos nuevos resultados electorales para nosotros en el Valle del Río Grande? Bueno, aquí hay un breve perfil de aquellos que ganaron las elecciones tanto a nivel federal, estatal y local.



PRESIDENTE Y VICEPRESIDENTE

Entonces, la elección que todos vieron. Si aún no lo sabe, algunos de los puntos clave de la campaña incluyen aumentar el salario mínimo a \$15 y revertir los recortes de impuestos que Trump hizo durante 2017. Este plan afecta principalmente a los estadounidenses en el rango de ingresos más altos al aumentar los impuestos para aquellos que ganan más de \$1 millón al año, restaurando la tasa máxima de 39.6%.

En medio de una pandemia donde más de 398,948 estadounidenses han muerto, la atención médica fue un tema muy crucial durante las campañas. Biden planea proporcionar pruebas y tratamiento gratuitos de COVID-19. Además de eso, tiene un enfoque importante en la atención médica asequible, apoya Obamacare (también conocida como la Ley de Cuidado de Salud Asequible), pero no tiene un plan claro sobre cómo expandirse. Manteniendo el tema, también quiere ampliar el acceso a la atención de salud mental y mejorar el tratamiento por uso de sustancias. Mientras avanza haciendo que la atención médica sea más accesible y asequible, es un firme defensor de la protección de los derechos de atención médica de las mujeres y las personas de la comunidad LGBTQ +.



La Plataforma del Partido Demócrata también incluye planes para abordar la desigualdad racial, de género y sexualidad que ha estado plagando al país durante generaciones con soluciones como la reforma policial y la reforma de la ley de armas. A medida que los bosques se quemaban y la contaminación del aire dificultaba la respiración, muchas personas también estaban preocupadas por la creciente crisis climática. En la plataforma, Biden tiene planes de reincorporarse al Acuerdo Climático de París desde que Estados Unidos lo abandonó durante el mandato de Trump en 2017. También hay planes para aumentar el gasto federal en investigación y desarrollo de energía limpia.

Estos son solo algunos de los principales puntos clave enumerados en la plataforma del partido. El documento de 92 páginas también incluye planes para reformar el sistema educativo, mejorar las relaciones exteriores y proteger y hacer cumplir los derechos de voto.

SENADOR DE TEXAS

Desde las elecciones de 1980, Texas ha sido un estado principalmente rojo, y fiel a sus colores, el senador John Coryn ganó con una ventaja de ocho puntos contra MJ Hegar, quien era la candidata demócrata para el puesto. Ahora en su cuarto mandato, Sen. Coryn ha sido el senador de Texas desde 2002. Siendo senador republicano, Coryn comparte muchas de las opiniones del partido que entran en conflicto con las opiniones del partido demócrata.

Votó a favor de confirmar a la Justicia Asociada Amy Coney Barrett en la Corte

Suprema. La justicia Barrett es conocida por sus puntos de vista de derecha, como creer que la Constitución debe interpretarse como estaba escrita en 1781, desafiando a *Roe v. Wade*, y escribió

una disidencia sobre cómo la ley que prohibía a las personas con condena por delitos graves poseer armas de fuego no debería aplicar el crimen era no violento.

Su postura sobre la atención médica se vio conocer durante la pandemia, Sen. Coryn votó la Ley de Ayuda, Alivio y Seguridad Económica por Coronavirus (CARES). En su sitio web, afirmó que creía que “con la salud física y económica de nuestro país en crisis, esta audaz legislación es nuestro mejor camino a seguir. La ley proporcionó fondos adicionales para hospitales, vacunas y apoyó a las agencias de salud pública en todos los niveles. También proporcionó alivio financiero a todo Texas al asignar cheques de \$ 1,200 a aquellos que ganan menos de \$ 75,000 por año, expandiendo el seguro de desempleo y ofreciendo alivio para las empresas de Texas. La Universidad de Texas Rio Grande Valley utilizó la ley para proporcionar subvenciones de ayuda de emergencia a los estudiantes para el semestre de otoño 2020 y el semestre de primavera 2021. Hay más detalles sobre cómo la universidad planea implementar el acto CARES en sus programas en su sitio web oficial.

PRESIDENTE DEL TRIBUNAL SUPREMO DE TEXAS

El Juez Principal Nathan Hecht es juez de Place 1, Jefe de Justicia de la Corte Suprema de Texas. Su mandato inicial iba a terminar este año, pero se postuló nuevamente para la reelección. Representó al partido republicano para este puesto y su oponente fue la jueza Amy Clark Meachum, quien representó al partido demócrata.

Al igual que Sen. Coryn, apoya la mayoría de las posturas en la Plataforma del Partido Republicano. Apoya la interpretación inicial de la Constitución y generalmente tiene muchos puntos de vista conservadores. El Texas Tribune escribió el pasado febrero. 8, 2019, que Hecht abogó por un cambio a un sistema que esté más basado en el mérito en lugar de uno impulsado por la política partidista. El juez jefe Hecht dijo que “cuando la política partidista es la fuerza motriz y el clima político es tan duro como el nuestro, las elecciones judiciales hacen que los jueces sean más políticos, y la independencia judicial es la víctima.”

RESULTADOS DE LAS ELECCIONES DEL CONDADO DE HIDALGO Y CAMERON

El Valle del Río Grande es conocido por ser áreas azules dentro del estado rojo y los resultados recientes de las elecciones reflejan que de acuerdo con los sitios web oficiales del condado de Hidalgo y Cameron.

En el condado de Hidalgo, el representante Vicente Gonazalez ganó las elecciones para el Representante de los Estados Unidos para el Distrito 15 con 86,729 votos, el Senador Juan ‘Chuy’ Hinojosa ganó el puesto de Senador Estatal para el Distrito 20 con 81, 574 votos, y J.E. ‘Eddie’ Guerra fue elegido nuevo sheriff con 139,277 votos a su favor.

En el condado de Cameron, el representante Filemon B. Vela fue elegido como el Representante de los Estados Unidos para el Distrito 15 con 68, 501 votos, el Senador Eddie Lucio Jr. se convirtió en el Senador Estatal para el Distrito 27 con 69, 485 votos, y Eric Garza es ahora el sheriff, con 66, 566 votos.

Todos ellos eran candidatos que representaban al partido demócrata y apoyan muchos de los problemas de la plataforma. A menudo, las elecciones locales tienden a pasarse

por alto en el zumbido de las elecciones presidenciales, pero no deben olvidarse. Sí, el presidente dirige el país y tiene una cantidad significativa de poder, pero el sistema está construido para que los representantes de todos los niveles tengan el poder para gobernar y representar adecuadamente al pueblo. Es a través del gobierno local donde muchos pueden encontrar formas de cambiarenfluirenlasociedadinmediata que los rodea. La implementación de iniciativas que apoyen a las empresas locales, que fomenten un estilo de vida más sostenible desde el punto de vista ambiental y la prevención de cualquier forma de discriminación sucede a nivel local. Así que sí, estas posiciones pueden no ser tan ampliamente conocidas o publicitadas como la presidencia o como senador estatal, pero tienen una influencia significativa para los residentes, no obstante.


Al final, las cosas acaban de comenzar. Estamos viendo un cambio en el poder que deja a muchos con esperanza pero también aterrorizados. Las elecciones ya han terminado y no importa qué partido político apoyes, es importante saber quién te está representando. ¿En qué creen estas personas y qué políticas apoyan? Como los que están siendo gobernados, siempre debemos recordar que fue a través del poder de la gente que permitió que las personas que ahora están dirigiendo nuestro gobierno estén donde están. Entonces, debemos entender para qué sirven estas personas y recordarles las promesas que hicieron la temporada de campaña. Debemos hacer que estas personas rindan cuentas de las palabras que dijeron y asegurarnos de que estén a la altura de sus títulos.



WRIT- TEN

By Priscylla Guzman

A protester holds a sign during a Black Lives Matter protest stating surviving the pandemic just to live in a hateful world.



WHAT GOOD IS SURVIVING
A PANDEMIC IF THE WORLD
IS FULL OF HATE?

EMO- TIONS



Protesters in Edinburg, Texas raise their fists during an eight minute and 46 second moment of silence as a symbol of solidarity for George Floyd.



**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**

A poster is held up towards the street in Edinburg, Texas for passing cars to see.

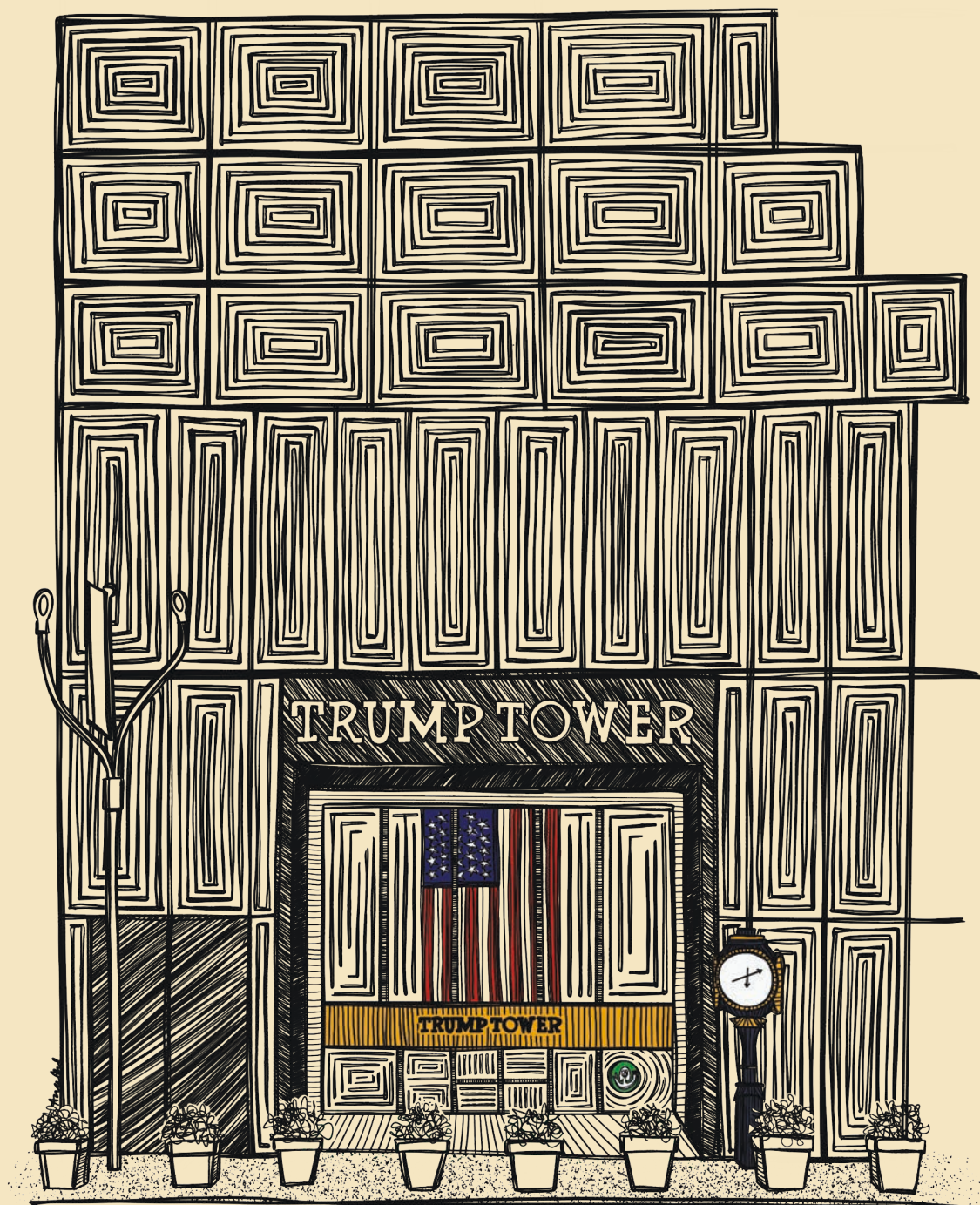


RGV protesters gather for a moment of silence for the Black Lives Matter Movement on June 6, 2020 at the Edinburg City Hall.

RGV community members display a variation of posters at the Edinburg City Hall to voice their concerns.



FOUR YEARS WITH TRUMP



By Faith Chua

Illustration by Sara Ortiz

Donald Trump. There are a plethora of thoughts that come to mind; from running a real estate empire, hosting “The Apprentice,” having a cameo in “Home Alone Two: Lost in New York,” to being one of America’s most memorable presidents. Why is he memorable? Perhaps it was his loud and overly confident demeanor both in person and online. Maybe it was the way his hair looked like it could be blown off any second while his skin rivaled that of an orange. For some, it was his platform and what he stood for. He built a wall to keep out immigrants, he withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2018 because he believed in “America First.” He said people should inject disinfectant into their veins during a pandemic, he told Bob Woodward he “wanted to always play down” in an interview with the journalist. Perhaps the highlight of his presidency among the many things he did and said was promoting and inciting an insurrection on Capitol Hill on Jan 6.

“We love you, you’re very special,” Trump told his rioting supporters who were invading and raiding Capitol Hill.

It was at that moment that millions across the country took a stand against Trump. He lost most of his Republican supporters and one of his biggest platforms of communication: Twitter. Media outlets all over the nation removed the video of him addressing the rioters for inciting violence and the blatant lies he spewed about election results. Shortly after, we saw his rapid descent from power. A figure that seemed untouchable and above the law for most of his presidency finally flew too close to the sun and fell among us mere mortals. Yet, if we review his presidency, maybe his sudden fall will not seem so sudden after all.

So, let us take a trip back down memory lane and review the last four years of utter chaos, also known as, former president Trump’s term.

2017

How can we talk about his first year as president without looking at his inauguration? His inauguration speech was ripe with criticisms of the former government while promising to bring America back to its “glorious destiny.” The speech itself was mostly targeted at middle-class Americans, and emphasized the promises he made during his campaign, which were to bring back focus on the nation’s own industry stating that the “the wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world.”

The Council of Foreign Relations has recorded all his actions regarding foreign relations on its website. He immediately fulfilled his promise by removing the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an Asia-focused trade agreement, only three days after his inauguration. This was

shortly followed by a travel ban. The ban focused on six Muslim-majority countries and banned nationals of these countries from entering the United States. for 90 days. The countries were Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania. That year, he visited Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank, Italy, Vatican City, Belgium and Italy in May. Later that year, he also visited Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines in November. Between those visits he did not let up on his mission to reinvent America as he withdrew the country from the Paris Agreement in June and rolled back an agreement with Cuba a few weeks later. He also winded down the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in September, which left more than 8,000 Americans vulnerable to deportation. He further strained relations with the Latin American community when he signed a bill to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and even promised that Mexico would pay for it.

As for relations with foreign leaders, he addressed the United Nations General Assembly for the first time on Sept. 19. Prior to that he met with Russia's president, Vladamir Putin. This was highly anticipated because during the 2016 elections, allegations circulated that Trump had received help from Russia. He also exchanged very heated words with North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong-un, even promising that if the foreign nation continued its nuclear threats, it would be met with "fire and fury."

At home he also fired his acting First Attorney General Sally Yates when she refused to defend his travel ban. He briefly replaced her with Dana J. Boente, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, until Congress confirmed Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. This was the beginning of his redesign of his new council as he also added chief strategist Steve Bannon. This was another testament to him proving how different he was to past presidents because a political strategist had not served on the National Security Council's Principals Committee prior.

He continued to add to his legacy when he nominated conservative federal appeals court judge Neil Gorsuch to fill Antonin Scalia's seat on the U.S. Supreme Court after his death. Even after his presidency, his choices will continue to influence the government and the upcoming cases the Supreme Court will face.

2018

The president of the United States has many duties, which include representing the nation to foreign leaders, overseeing the country's military power and making many life-changing choices the millions of citizens. Being in a position of power, a leader's personal life is often under the scrutiny of the public eye. This applied to Trump as well. Now, amorous scandals are not new among past U.S. presidents. Bill Clinton had the Monica Lewinsky scandal, but despite this, Trump continued

to break the mold by how he decided to deal with rumors. In February 2018, Michael D. Cohen, Trump's longtime personal lawyer, said he paid \$130,000 out of his own pocket to Stormy Daniels. Stormy Daniels is a pornographic-film actress who allegedly had sex with Trump in 2006. Shortly after, Cohen released a statement, Daniels had an interview with 60 Minutes and confirmed the allegation stating that despite not wanting to or being attracted to Trump, the sex was consensual and she did not consider herself a victim. Trump, on the other hand, repeatedly denied these allegations. Later in April, Cohen was arrested for several crimes, including paying two women--including Daniels--hush money during the 2016 election. He pleaded guilty in August and federal prosecutors later confirmed his statement that Trump did, in fact, tell him to pay off the two women.

"We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world... but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first," Trump stated during his inauguration. "We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone but rather to let it shine as an example. We will shine for everyone to follow."

On May 8, Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It was a program that was started in 2015 during the Obama Administration. It caused a more strained relationship not only between Iran and the United States, but also between the United States and its Western allies. Trump did improve his relations with Kim Jong-un when he met with North Korea's supreme leader in Singapore to discuss decreasing the threat of a nuclear attack from the nation. The president made some concessions, including suspending joint military exercises with South Korea.

Once again, the president made a mighty show of "friendship and goodwill" as he enacted the "zero tolerance" immigration policy that separated thousands of children from their families. More than 500 migrant children are still separated from their parents.

2019

Trump's third year started off with the longest government shutdown in history. The government was already undergoing a partial shutdown. But because Congress did not appropriate funding for the construction of Trump's U.S.-Mexico border wall, he initiated a full shutdown. The shutdown lasted 35 days, ending on Jan. 25. But 800,000 workers were furloughed or forced to work without pay. In February, Trump declared a national emergency and tried to redirect \$8 billion in funding, more than the initial \$5 billion to \$7 billion he asked from Congress.

As the year progressed, Trump continued to rock the world by making high-risks and very questionable decisions. During his presidency, the

United States had rising tensions with Iran and on June 20, Trump called off military action he authorized during the downing of a U.S. drone by the Iranian military. The following month, Trump changed asylum rules causing several asylum seekers from Guatemala to stay in Mexico. This came from the “safe third country” agreement Trump made with the Guatemalan government. Soon after, he made similar agreements with El Salvador and Honduras. This led to thousands of asylum seekers staying in shelters or even at the edge of the border.

In typical Trump fashion, he ended the year with a bang. Well, more like a ring, as Trump was impeached due to a phone conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. In the call, transcripts showed Trump pressuring Zelensky into helping him boost his chances at re-election. The impeachment trials lasted into the beginning of 2020.

2020

Trump’s entire term had been eventful as he continued to set precedents, rock America’s relations with foreign leaders, rearrange and rebuild Congress to better fit his ideologies, and plummet America’s economy for thousands of people.

The year started off with the continuation of Trump’s impeachment trial with Chief Justice Roberts presiding over the trial. But because the majority of the Senate was Republican, Trump eventually got acquitted. During the entire time his trial was being conducted, a U.S drone strike killed Gen. Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ elite Quds Force, Jan. 3 in Baghdad. Later that month, however, Trump experienced one of the rare high points in his presidency when he helped broker a new peace agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He used this to reduce hostilities between the United States and the Taliban. The agreement allowed open communications between the Taliban and the Afghan government while preventing terrorist groups from attacking the United States and its allies.

Then, the event that shocked the world, coronavirus. Trump, the entire year, handled the pandemic poorly, from the first occurrence in China to the first case in the United States back in Jan 21. When Trump first heard of the virus, he continued to downplay it.

First recorded case outside China was Jan. 13 in Thailand.

“We have it totally under control,” Trump said. “It’s one person coming in from China. It’s going to be just fine.”

He continued this behavior throughout the year with false claims that the cases were decreasing or that the nation did not need to have a

lockdown or be quarantined. He refused to wear a mask for the majority of the year and often did not practice social distancing, which set an example for many of his ardent followers.

On May 25, George Floyd's death reignited a longstanding issue in American society. The blatant act of police brutality sparked the rise in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. This also became a catalyst that sparked several other social movements and a call for overall reform within the current government.

This was also the year of the presidential elections. The first presidential debate made history as Trump and Biden had heated arguments about immigration, health care, the pandemic and recent rise in the BLM movement. Soon after the first debate, the president, first lady Melania Trump and several people close to them tested positive for COVID-19.

Following the vice-president debate and the second presidential debate, Election Day arrived Nov. 3. Due to the unique circumstances of 2020, the voting process was different and took longer than anyone expected but finally, on Nov. 7, Biden was projected to win. Trump did not take this lightly, however, and spent the rest of his presidency claiming that the election had been "stolen."

2021

With only a few more weeks left in office, Trump kickstarted 2021 with several scandals. Just a day after New Year's, Trump had a phone conversation with Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, to talk about election results. The audio showed Trump's blatant harassment of Raffensperger, with thinly veiled threats and blatant begging.

Then, on Jan. 6, Biden's victory was made official in Congress. Earlier that morning, Trump spoke at a rally near the White House in front of his supporters, repeating his claims that the election was stolen and they should make their complaints heard. This created a riled up and excited audience, that later translated into several hundred people storming Capitol Hill. The Capitol was looted and vandalized, causing members of Congress to either evacuate or hide in to empty spaces. The riot led to several people being injured and, ultimately, five deaths. When asked to speak to his supporters to stop the riot, Trump half-heartedly told his supporters to go home, while still repeating lies about election results. At the end of his speech, he told rioters, "Go home. We love you." A sentence that angered many as he openly disapproved of the BLM protests that happened only months before.

After this incident, the U.S. Senate debated on what course of action it should take to deal with Trump's actions. It voted to hold an impeachment trial to show that despite being at the end of his term and no longer serving after Jan. 20, Trump would still be held accountable for his actions.

Trump's second impeachment trial began on Feb. 9 and ended on Feb. 13. Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont served as the presiding officer of the trial and the jury consisted of all 100 senators. Rudy Giuliani, Trump's former lawyer, was no longer representing him after the Capitol Hill riots. Instead, Trump's legal team included: Bruce L. Castor, Jr., David Schoen, and Michael T. van der Veen. Castor and van der Veen work together in the same firm in Pennsylvania while Schoen has history with Trump as he was one of the lawyers who represented Roger Stone in his appeal. Roger Stone is a longtime friend and the former advisor who eventually received a full presidential pardon for his crimes, that included lying to Congress for Trump.

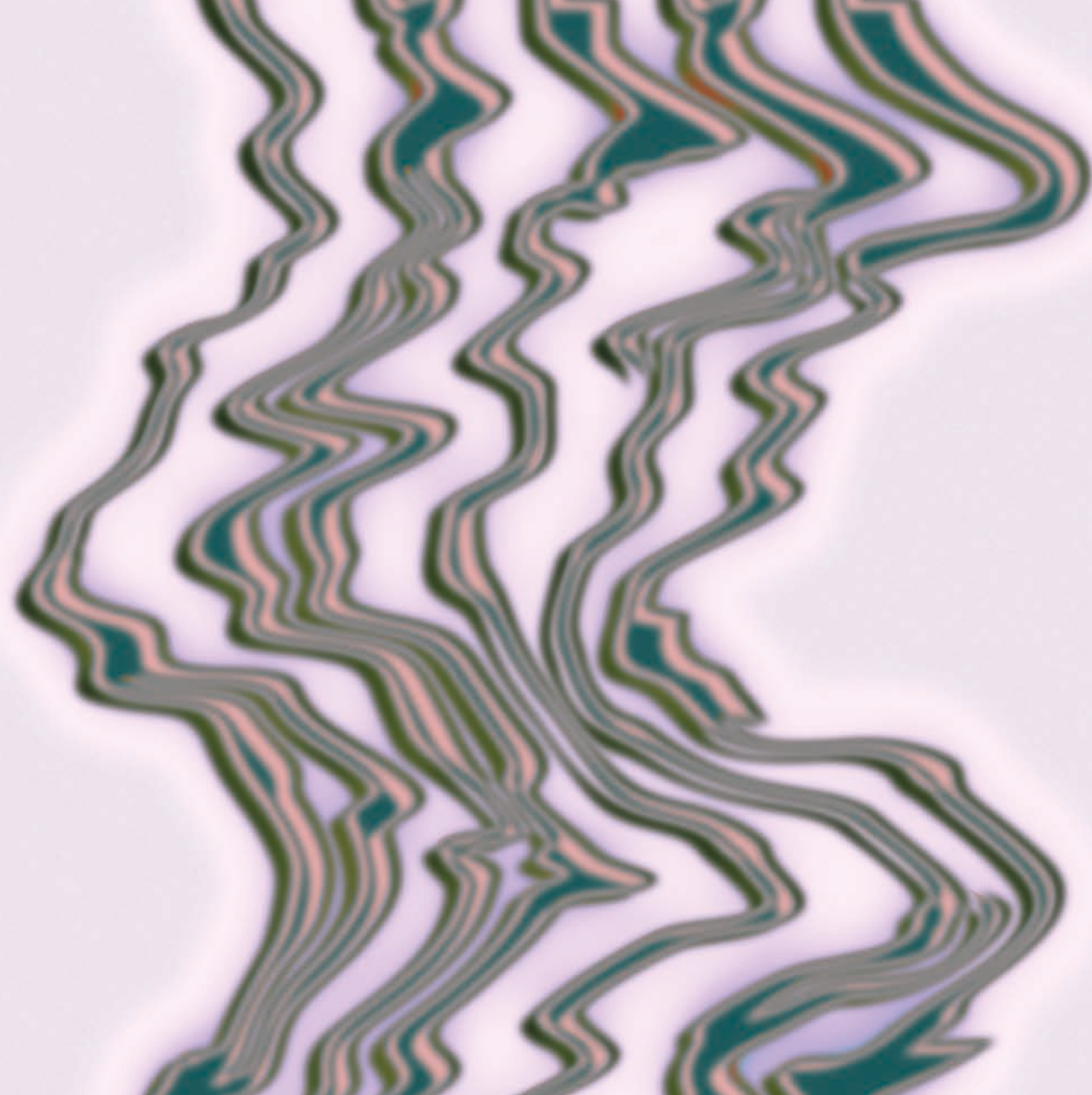
On Feb. 13, Trump got acquitted. All 50 Democrats voted "guilty" but only seven Republicans followed suit. The votes being 57-43 were short 10 votes to meet the necessary two-thirds majority vote needed for conviction. Many senators felt injustice and outrage at the results, many who experienced the attack firsthand. Sen. Mitch McConnell himself gave a very passionate speech about Trump, saying he was "practically and morally responsible" despite voting in favor of his acquittal.

These last four years have been a lot. It has divided the country in ways we have not seen for a while and the time for change, whether one agrees on it or not, is coming. Newly elected President Joe Biden has been working furiously to reverse Trump's presidency. He has already signed a record number of executive orders within his first few weeks compared to what some presidents have signed during their entire term.

Asked why he signed so many executive orders already, Biden replied, "I am not making new laws, I am eliminating bad policy."

But what do we have in store for us in the next upcoming years? Well, that remains to be seen. But massive changes have already occurred. The United States has rejoined the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement, Biden removed the Muslim ban and Congress has been working on approving for a \$1,400 stimulus check. The future is looking bright and though it would be naïve to think that nothing bad will happen, we can definitely see that change is coming and that America will never be the same.

PULSE



JACK

THE LOOMING WORRIES OF
THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS THE
WALL WILL BRING SEEM
CLOSER THAN EVER.

SON V. WALL

Story and photography by Manuel Gámez

Among the seemingly endless list of controversies surrounding the Trump Administration, we have an issue that hits close to home. This issue was relevant way before his election. In line with his problematic views on immigration, Trump brought the border wall to the table. This wall brings several issues to border cities and its people. Within these problems lies the fact that Trump's wall would be built over historical land.

Digging further into this topic, we examine a bill passed by Congress in December, which includes approximately \$1.3 billion for building the wall. This money is just a portion of the \$15 billion from federal funds. As the November election neared, we saw continued pressure from Trump to get this wall done. Other than the enormous amount of funds needed to complete this project, we saw a roadblock that can cause greater struggles in the completion of this wall. One clause within the bill passed by Congress states the term of protection for historic cemeteries. This clause protects at least 10 cemeteries that lie within 500 feet of the Rio Grande. This puts them directly in the path of the border wall.

One of the cemeteries that recently gained notoriety is the Jackson Ranch Church cemetery. This church cemetery is comprised of a small church and cemetery. This historical land is right up against the levy, leaving it at an

increased risk of being disturbed by the border wall construction. The looming worries of the negative effects the wall will bring seem closer than ever. Sylvia Ramirez, a descendent of the land owners of the Jackson Ranch, shared the importance of the land as well as the struggles to keep it safe from the border wall.

Ramirez has deep roots embedded in the grounds of Jackson Ranch knowing the deep history of the area as well as her ancestral connections to the land. With local media coverage on Native Americans who once lived in the area to the history of the family's involvement with the underground railroad, Ramirez shared that continued historical research has brought newfound interest to the land and its history. Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jackson Ranch has visitors who hope to learn about the history of the area. Going into the direct roots of the Jackson Ranch, Ramirez explained how her ancestor Nathaniel came with others from Alabama. Nathaniel came with several of his grown children. One of them was Martin Jackson, Ramirez's great-great-grandfather, as well as remained buried in the cemetery.

In reference to the previously mentioned clause, Ramirez explained that even with the new regulations, the border wall is being built behind the surrounding areas and homes.

"We have been fighting this since August," Ramirez said.

She added that the most encouraging part of the process is spreading the message of the issue on the border wall. "From the media, from congressman and congresswoman and senators" there is a need to spread the message of their concerns. Going even further, Ramirez and her family sought to pursue legal action after seeing the continued progress of the border wall. With no signs of slowing down, there is no time to waste. Ramirez said that the construction companies are putting large amounts of pressure to get the wall done.

Moreover, the wall will cause disastrous issues to the surrounding area and natural sites in the Rio Grande Valley. The first of many concerns is the production of concrete, which is a method that negatively affects the environment through the emission of greenhouse gas. Following this, there are little to no insight and protections in place for the surrounding environments. The increase in erosion and flooding caused by the construction of the wall will also affect the church cemetery directly. This would cause irreversible damage that would destroy the environment that already experiences large amounts of flooding and natural erosion. This means that

the wildlife of the area would also be blocked from their natural habitats and migration patterns.

Ramirez said the fear of many is that the wall would bring disaster to historic land. This fear has been transformed into work and progress toward change in order to protect the RGV from the border wall.

"We felt hopeful when we got word from our justice attorney that the 2020 bill language was included that excepted historic cemeteries," Ramirez said.

Even with an adjusted area of protection, Ramirez added that many parts of land are protected, but others are more vulnerable. Unfortunately, Jackson Ranch would not be included in this exception. This pushed her into fighting even more. Although the fate of this historic land seems to be floating in the air, Ramirez has not halted in pushing the fact that many areas in the RGV need to be protected from the evil that is the border wall.





TRUMP'S FINAL VISIT TO THE VALLEY

By Michael Gonzalez

Photography by Michael Gonzalez and Gabriela Gonzalez

Jan. 12, 2021, taught me the importance of documenting experiences in our backyard. An opportunity for me to document came knocking on my door when the White House announced President Trump's final planned visit to the Rio Grande Valley. It would be his second visit to the area. The goal of the visit, nine days to the end of his presidency, was to highlight sections of the border wall constructed during his time in the Oval Office. It was an important day for me and, as it always happens with significant events, I began my day before the sun peeked through the horizon.

I spent a sleepless night contemplating what would happen on this significant day. Covering a presidential visit was thought-provoking to say the least. But I was ready. I unboxed a fresh pair of combat boots, tossed on an outfit, snatched my denim jacket and headed out the door. As the sun gently rose and the bleak blue light filled the sky, I walked into my favorite coffee shop, Bandera, for my daily dose of caffeine. The first event I covered was a Trump rally and prayer gathering outside a church in Harlingen. The day was riddled with overcast skies

and temperatures in the 40s. The dreary weather was symbolic of the soon to-be former president's visit to our corner of the country. When I arrived at the church, I parked my car and sat in it for a moment, sipping my golden-brown beverage. A few dozen cars surrounded me and I mentally prepared myself for the activity I was about to see. I put on two masks and readied my Fuji and Canon cameras. My self-inflicted directive when covering any political event is to never stay in one place and keep moving. This serves me well because I can keep up with the action while keeping my head on a swivel. As I walked, I noticed cars were blaring patriotic country music and peddlers were advertising tacky Trump gear. A small group of women were also praying for Trump, extending their hands up high. Without a second thought, I rushed into the circle and snapped a few photos. All I could think about was how I could translate what I was seeing digitally. I took a lap around the parking lot, away from the crowds, as I needed room to breathe and think about my next move. Interestingly, most people had no masks, despite the high COVID-19 rates in the Valley.





I also saw a young photographer strolling around, observing the scene just as I had. He was dressed in all-black, wielding two Fuji X-Pro2 cameras and smoking a cigarette. I approached him and we spoke briefly. He was a French-Canadian who traveled from Canada to cover the former president's visit. That's when I truly realized how significant this visit was to the Valley. This strengthened my motivation to photograph everything and witness firsthand the community's reactions.

I looked around at the crowd and noticed a large group gathered in a circle and hurried over. They began with yet another prayer for the 45th president. Some were wearing masks and some were bare faced. Some individuals even shouted at wearing masks to pull them off because "COVID is a liberal hoax." As everyone bowed their heads, I lifted my camera to my eye to compose and capture my images. The clear sky served as a blank canvas to use to my advantage in composing my shots and adding negative space. Standing in the circle, an older woman sported a ludicrous t-shirt that depicted Trump standing among a bald eagle, fireworks and a tattered American flag. Suddenly, someone in the crowd broke into a horrifying coughing fit. I swiftly slipped away in fear of them having COVID-19. I spent the majority of 2020 burying my head in my textbooks as I braved through my classes. I had been concerned about the virus since it first made headlines in the U.S. and was rightfully fearful of catching it.

Afterward, I made my way to McAllen where larger crowds gathered, awaiting the twice impeached president. Again, I donned two masks, readied my camera gear and threw my head on a swivel as I headed into the thick of it. Droplets of saliva spewed from loud-mouthed persons as they yelled indecipherable phrases ahead of Trump's arrival. Hundreds of people, mostly without masks, lined the streets where the

presidential motorcade would pass. I noticed two women guzzling cans of Michelob Ultra as if they were tailgating at a football game. Moments later I saw one of them, shouting at a crowd of perplexed onlookers. She said Trump would be inaugurated for a second term and Joe Biden was going straight to jail. She was stumbling and slurring her speech. She also said she would "eat her shoe on live TV if Trump didn't remain in office." All around, extreme conservatives were professing their beliefs that Trump had "come to save us" and "will be in office for four more years." I lost count of how many times I rolled my eyes as I heard the insane claims people were preaching. I wondered how we arrived at the point where most Trump supporters believe ridiculous conspiracy theories. Trump's visit came six days after far-right groups, like the Proud Boys, sought to disrupt the certification of Biden's victory at the United States Capitol. Even here, several far-right individuals were present. I continued moving along the masses that congregated outside the McAllen airport hopeful to catch a glimpse of "the orange man."

A military aircraft swooped into view and created an atmosphere at par with the countless action movies I've watched. The anticipation grew as the cheering and loud voices intensified. An older woman wearing a mask and clutching a crucifix blessed Trump as Marine One landed. Her movements were erratic. I followed her for a few moments until the time was right. Through camera's rangefinder I preserved that moment forever. The presidential motorcade's procession only increased the onlookers' exhilaration as they struggled to catch a glimpse of their idol. He waved as they praised him and was out of sight within seconds. Just like that, the excitement was over. Yet, my pictures will keep these moments alive long after my memory of the day has faded.

In the end, January 12, 2021, taught me that a camera is an influential tool and I, a photographer, can use it to connect people to something important. With a camera, one can record, define and interpret moments in time. A beautiful photograph is not simply nice to look at. It contains emotions, feelings, bits of reality. My role as a photographer is to capture significant moments in my lifetime and provide perspective through images for my audience. A photograph exhibiting social context will forever provide satisfaction.



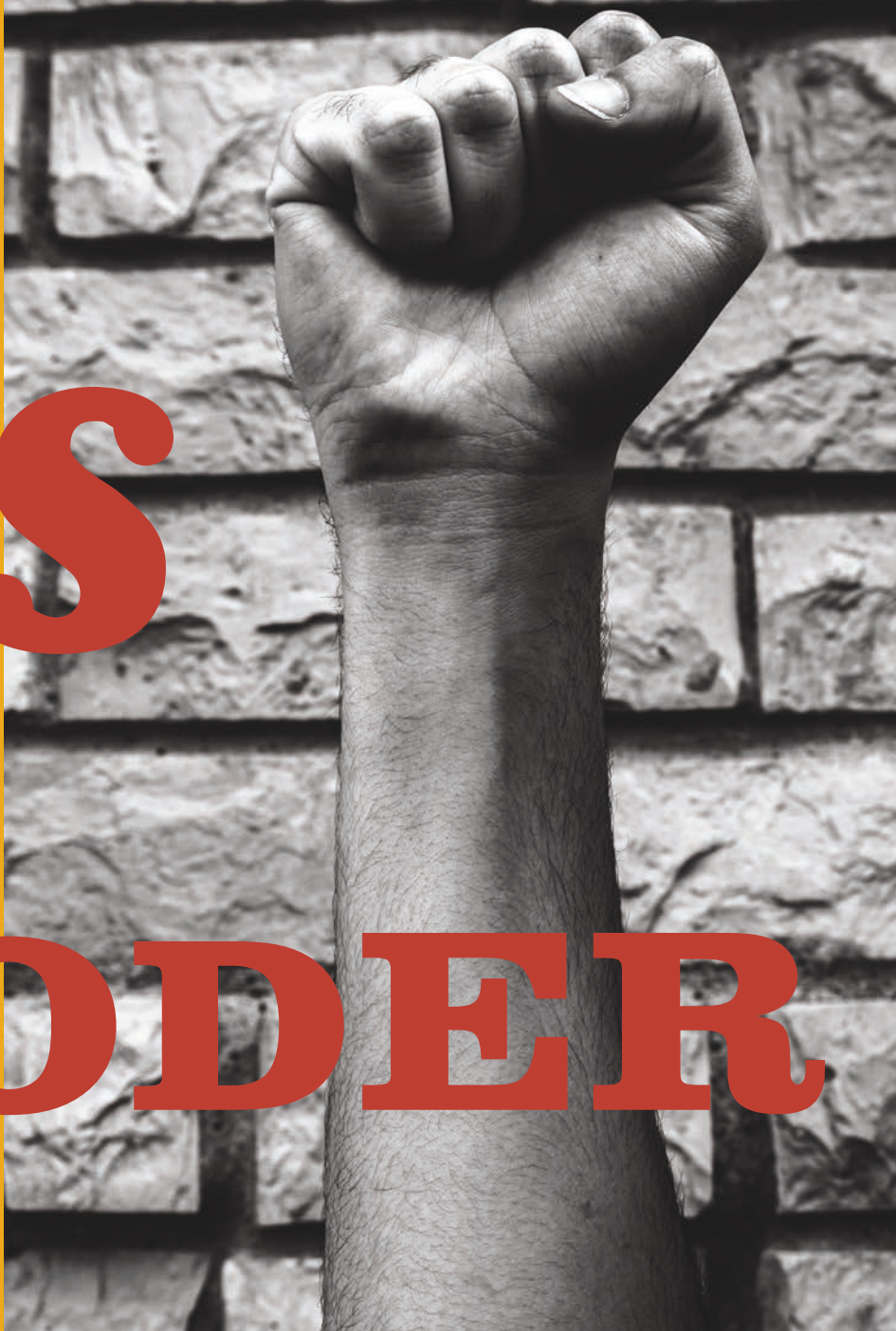


LA EDU- CACIÓN

ES

PODER

Por Gabriela Gonzalez
Fotografía por
Manuel Gámez



Los gritos de frustración y el anhelo de un nuevo despertar han causado un alboroto en toda la nación. A raíz de frecuentes incidentes de brutalidad policial contra los Afroamericanos, las protestas por la justicia racial continúan estallando en las calles y las comunidades continúan uniéndose al movimiento para dismantelar el racismo sistémico. Un grupo de seis alumnos del Distrito Escolar Independiente de McAllen crearon la Narrativa Grande para luchar por la justicia racial a través de la educación de historia negra. La narrativa tiene la misión de crear conversaciones positivas en la carrera circundante a través del Valle del Río Grande y las escuelas de Texas.

Incluir la historia negra en el plan de estudios de una escuela no es un requisito nacional. Sólo unos pocos estados reconocen el papel de la historia negra y su papel fundamental en el desarrollo de América. La mayoría de los estándares estatales solo enseñarán a los estudiantes los puntos de vuelta críticos en la historia de Estados Unidos, como las superficialidades de la esclavitud, la violencia y el movimiento por los derechos civiles. La Gran Narrativa se esfuerza por institucionalizar un énfasis más profundo de la historia negra en los currículos básicos de las escuelas, demostrando su importancia en el descubrimiento y crecimiento de los Estados Unidos.

“Queremos poder impactar el plan de estudios”, dijo Frida Retana. Retana es uno de los seis cofundadores de la Gran Narrativa. Se graduó de Nikki Rowe High School y actualmente es una estudiante de tercer año en la Universidad de Texas Rio Grande Valley.

“Muchas veces, no aprendemos sobre las contribuciones negras a la sociedad. Siento que a menudo nos faltan ese tipo de materias en la escuela”, dijo Retana.

En abril, la Junta Estatal de Educación dio su aprobación final para adoptar un curso electivo de Estudios Afroamericanos para estudiantes de secundaria a través de Conocimientos y Habilidades Esenciales de Texas (TEKS), un estándar estatal curriculum que destaca lo que los estudiantes aprenden en cada curso o nivel de grado. Mientras que Texas es el quinto estado en los Estados Unidos para aprobar un curso de Estudios Afroamericanos a nivel estatal, el curso se limita a sólo estudiantes de secundaria y no es requerido. La narrativa enfatiza su objetivo de que las escuelas exijan que sus estudiantes lean de autores negros, no solo dentro de la historia, sino idealmente dentro de todas las materias escolares para mostrar las contribuciones negras y obtener una perspectiva y una visión más amplia.

“Siento que hay mucha ignorancia que podemos cambiar”, dijo Retana.

La narrativa Grande se estableció en julio después de que la gente se estaba volviendo más informada sobre el racismo a través del lente antirracista del movimiento Black Lives Matter.

“Pensamos que la educación sería una manera posible para empezar a efectuar el cambio”, Jessenia Herzberg dijo.

Herzberg es el segundo cofundador de la Gran Narrativa. Se graduó de la Preparatoria de McAllen y actualmente es estudiante de último año en la Universidad St. Edwards. “Nosotros [los seis cofundadores] hablamos de nuestras experiencias educativas”, dijo Herzberg.

Los cofundadores descubrieron que, aunque cada uno se graduó de diferentes preparatorias de MISD, todos compartieron una cosa común: cada uno se perdió un plan de estudios más diverso. Los fundadores de la narrativa iniciaron una petición y se reúnen regularmente con los miembros de la junta escolar de

McAllen ISD para desarrollar la narrativa a lo largo del camino.

En junio, durante la ruptura de protestas en todo el país, Daniel Pena del Valle del Río Grande, enfureció e intimidó a los manifestantes de Black Lives Matter con una motosierra en el centro de McAllen. El incidente local hizo noticias nacionales y empujó la narrativa para hacer algo para evitar que ocurriera otro incidente.

“Nadie nace racista”, esto es algo que la gente aprende”, dijo Herzberg. “La gente realmente no piensa que existe el racismo en el Valle. Incluso si no lo ven, todavía está aquí. Hay un anti-Blackness general dentro de la comunidad Latinx”, dijo Herzberg. “Deberíamos estar haciendo algo al respecto.”

Latifah Khuffash, la tercera cofundadora de la Gran Narrativa, recuerda haber presenciado de primera mano ver anti-Blackness en la escuela. Khuffash también se graduó de la preparatoria Nikki Rowe y actualmente esta en el tercer año en la Universidad de Texas Rio Grande Valley.

“En clase, los insultos raciales se lanzarían mucho”, dijo Khuffash. Ella cree que esto es muy prominente en las escuelas públicas estadounidenses. “Muy pocos maestros detendrían a los estudiantes diciéndolo. Ellos [los maestros] pensaron que era normal”, dijo Khuffash.

Este tipo de ignorancia no es nuevo, pero desafía a la narrativa y a sus cofundadores a sensibilizar a los estudiantes sobre otras culturas, como la cultura negra, a mejorar el aprecio y la compasión por la cultura y prevenir el racismo.

Natalie Glasper, la cuarta cofundadora de la narrativa Grande, se graduó de la preparatoria McAllen Memorial y

actualmente es estudiante de primer año en la Universidad de Baylor. Glasper fue motivada para ser parte de la narrativa después de darse cuenta de que sus propias raíces históricas no estaban siendo enseñadas en las escuelas de todo el valle.

“Sentí que había una falta de representación para la historia negra en el Valle”, dijo Jasper. “Personalmente me hizo sentir excluido.” Según Glasper, McAllen ISD tiene una comunidad diversa. Ella tiene un interés en aprender acerca de los negros currícula y cree que otros encontrarían interés en aprender sobre él también.

La Narrativa Grande creó una guía completa de recursos de historia negra para niveles de grado 1° al 12°. La guía incluye planes de lecciones recomendados, actividades, debates, libros, películas y documentales para que los estudiantes y los profesores participen. La lista compilada de recursos de la narrativa proviene de la investigación de lo que otras escuelas están haciendo actualmente para enseñar más historia negra en las escuelas. Algunos de estos planes incluyen mirar la raza y la identidad racial en los libros para niños; representaciones de eventos importantes como el nacimiento del movimiento de poder negro, el movimiento de derechos civiles, el Renacimiento de Harlem, el boicot de autobuses de Montgomery, la Ley de Derechos al Voto; y la Historia Negra en el RGV.

“NADIE NACE

“Acabo de enterarme de que el ferrocarril subterráneo también estaba aquí” [en el RGV dijo Herzberg.

A mediados de la década de 1800, el movimiento abolicionista surgió como un esfuerzo social y radicalizado para poner fin inmediatamente a la esclavitud. Durante este movimiento, el ferrocarril subterráneo sirvió como una ayuda para ayudar a los esclavos a escapar de estados como Kentucky, Maryland y Virginia, y liberar a muchos de los esclavos a los estados hacia el norte o Canadá. Sin embargo, el ferrocarril subterráneo sirvió para ayudar también a los esclavos a huir hacia el sur a México. Los Jacksons y los Webbers, dos familias birraciales de maridos blancos y sus esposas negras emancipadas, ayudaron a muchos esclavos negros a escapar a México. Ambas familias y sus ranchos representan la parte del Valle del Río Grande en el ferrocarril subterráneo. Sus ranchos, ahora conocidos como la Iglesia Metodista Eli Jackson y el cementerio en San Juan, una vez sirvieron como una parada final para los esclavos antes de que pisaran México y esperaban su camino de libertad para toda la vida.

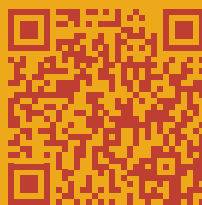
“El ferrocarril subterráneo incorpora la identidad afro-latina. Esto no es algo de lo que se habla mucho en las escuelas”, dijo Herzberg. “Este [el ferrocarril subterráneo] puede relacionarse con nuestra gran comunidad Latinx en el valle.”

La Narrativa Grande frecuentemente se reúne con los miembros de la junta escolar de McAllen ISD para recibir ayuda y asesoramiento sobre cómo avanzar.

“La junta escolar nos ha ayudado a llamar la atención del superintendente”,

dijo Glasper. “Probablemente vamos a tener que llevar esto a un nivel estatal debido a la falta de control que tenemos a nivel local. Esencialmente, esperamos expandirnos a través del Valle y otros distritos en Texas.”

La narrativa está tratando de obtener más apoyo de padres y maestros para continuar cerrando la brecha con la comunidad negra y la educación de historia negra. Para participar, la Narrativa Grande anima a la gente a hablar en una reunión de la junta escolar, enviar por correo electrónico a los maestros o enviar por correo electrónico a los miembros de la junta escolar para obtener apoyo. Para comenzar un capítulo, la Narrativa Grande tiene una hoja de ruta para preparar, lanzar y proceder con una acción continua. Para obtener más información y recursos, la narrativa se puede encontrar en Facebook, Instagram y correo electrónico a thegrandenarrative@gmail.com.



**LEA LA NOTA
EN INGLÉS
EN NUESTRA
PÁGINA WEB**



**VISITE EL
INSTAGRAM
DE GRANDE
NARRATIVE**

RACISTA”

Greg Abbott's Visit to the Valley

By Michael Gonzalez



Republican Gov. Greg Abbott speaks at a press slammed the Biden administration's immigration and the cartel are unwelcome in Texas and must

Two Texas National Guard soldiers watch Gov. Abbott arrive in Mission. Over 500 soldiers have been deployed to the RGV to assist Texas Department of Public Safety troopers along the border.



conference in Mission. Abbott policies and stated that caravans take their activity elsewhere.



The National Border Patrol Council President Brandon Judd says there is “no other governor that provides resources at the border like Abbott.”

A Texas DPS trooper awaits the arrival of Gov. Abbott. More than a dozen state trooper units were lined up where the press conference was held.





Masked DPS troopers watch Gov. Abbott arrive in Mission.

Gov. Abbott with Renae Eze, press secretary and senior communications adviser for the governor, landing in Mission. Moments before, Abbott received an aerial tour of the border where he saw “family units illegally crossing into the [United States].”



I am from

By America Garcia

Illustrations by Jocelyn Torres

I am from tortillas de harina (*flour bread*)

from sopa de fideo (*noodle soup*) and frijolitos de todos tipos (*beans of all kinds*).

I am from the “Rio Grande Valle (Valley)”.

I am from red roses and the mango tree hanging from my grandma’s house whose memories of when I was little come to mind.



I’m from carnitas asadas los fines de semana (*BBQ on the weekends*), and dark brown/black hair from Meghan and Mariano,

I’m from gratitude for the smallest gestures, and spending time with my family and from dancing to old music.

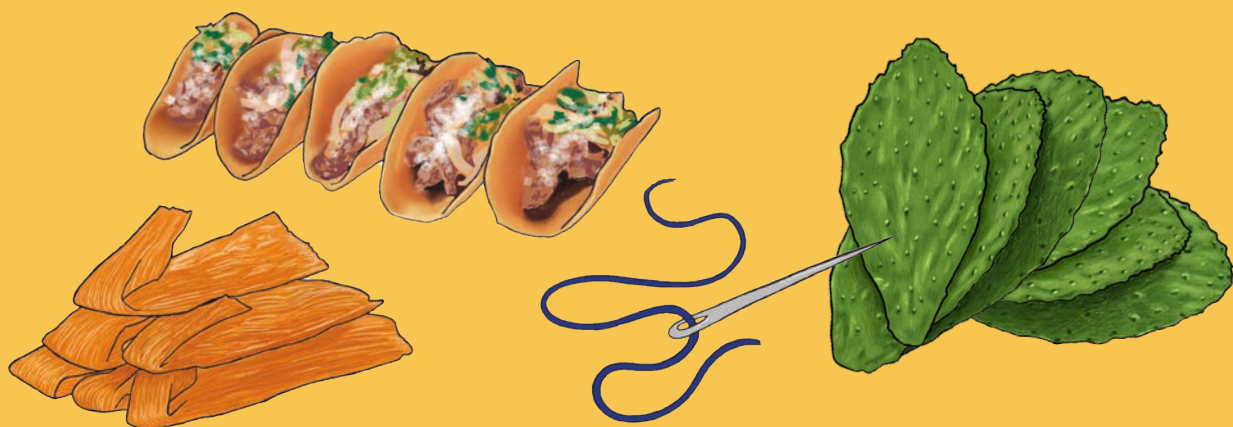
I’m from “Estás muy callada, mijita” (*“You’re so quiet, honey”*) and “Estás muy loquita, Keyka” (*“You’re so crazy, Keyka”*)

and “Limon y Sal” de (*“Lemon and Salt” by*) Julieta Venegas.

I’m from Brownsville and Hispanic culture,

and tamalitos and taquitos.

From Maria,
cosiendo hasta que ya no puede más (*sewing until she no longer can*)
and picture frames of when I was en la guardería (*in the daycare*).
I am from Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas.
I am from thrifting at second-hand shops,
from vibrant prints and beautiful textures.
I am from determination,



from “Keep going” to “Si, se puede” (“*You can do it*”).
I am from the smell of nopalitas
en la casa de mi abuela (*in my grandma's house*)
to the sight of dreamers in history,
to the touch of warm hugs
to mucho, pero mucho amor (*lots, but lots of love*).



There's More to Coffee than Milk and Sugar

By Michael Gonzalez

When you enter a coffee shop, the smell of freshly roasted coffee beans ground into a fluffy powder greets you at the door. Even the restrooms smell like coffee. The espresso machine pumps out a steaming liquid graced with striking gold tones. The gentle rumble of people conversing and the comforting sound of low tempo music follows the sound of machines running and baristas brewing. In the last 20 years, coffee shops like Cultūra Coffee House in McAllen, Bandera in Harlingen and 7th and Park in Brownsville have opened in the Rio Grande Valley and created a popular

coffee culture that has expanded all over the Rio Grande Valley.

Coffee culture in the RGV encompasses a lot more than pretentious espresso concoctions and latte art. Rather, meeting up at a local coffee joint has replaced the typical dining out for a business meeting, romantic date or socializing with friends. A coffee shop is the primary foundation in the community and emphasizes local networking, exploring the flavor notes of black coffee, obtaining resources locally and supporting likeminded individuals.

"The origins of third wave coffee [culture] is transparency and esteeming the farmers that grow the coffee by placing their name on the product and forming friendships," Rafa Molina, a local coffee educator, said. "The third wave movement is not a matter of shoving products [in people's faces]. It's being open to answering questions, making [knowledgeable] recommendations and the baristas knowing the terminology to draw in customers."

These third wave shops also focus on slower methods to achieve better tasting products. For example, a pour over is a method of brewing coffee that generally takes three to five minutes to produce a smooth cup. Baristas know the process thoroughly and can explain to customers the different steps of extracting the flavors from the beans into the golden-brown liquid in your mug. Processes such as the pour over method also allow a customer to build a friendship with



**there's more to
coffee than mere
colorful frappes and
drinks loaded with
sugar and milk.**

a barista at a local shop and see past the stigma that craft coffee is pretentious and not for everyone. After all, there's more to coffee than mere colorful frappes and drinks loaded with sugar and milk.

"One of the most interesting things I've observed about coffee culture here in the RGV are the customers that are addicted to the sugary drinks at Starbucks," Molina said. "It's great [for me] to see and help people slowly transition to the craft coffee third wave shops specialize in. Some people I've observed have gone from the sugary drinks to [consuming] straight up espresso and pour over coffee. You don't need all this milk and sugar for coffee to be good."

One of the original third wave coffee spots in the RGV opened its doors in 2003. Gabriel de la Garza, owner of

"Coffee is one of those things that is very consistent yet very different"

Jitterz Coffee Bar in Mission said he fell in love with coffee by frequently visiting MoonBeans; probably the longest running third wave shop in the Valley. "It's great to see the growth here in the Valley. Every coffee shop brings a different flare to our region," de la Garza said. "Many newer shop owners visited Jitterz constantly, fell in love with coffee and are now bringing their interpretation of the third wave experience to the Valley."

In fact, two of de la Garza's former employees started their own coffee shops while working at Jitterz. Serg and Mary Ann opened Grind Coffee Co. in Edinburg in 2011 with de la Garza's full support.

"I don't mind telling people about our recipes in detail," de la Garza said. "Jitterz's place in the coffee community is being a third wave shop that supports like-minded individuals, such as Serg and Mary Ann with their successful shop, Grind Coffee. Supporting one another in general is important since we're all trying to uplift the coffee culture here in the RGV."

De la Garza's initiative to support his community and those willing to contribute to the RGV coffee culture has also attracted customers from all over the state. Several of





them had never visited a locally-owned coffee shop and its offerings. In this case, de la Garza said he believes in slowly transitioning people into a new world of coffee by offering drinks you would find at a Starbucks and moving down the line to the craft coffee that epitomizes the vast realm of third wave products. He said more often than not, an individual experiencing specialty coffee for the first time falls deep in love and will eventually wean off of sugar-loaded frappes and dive into pour overs, cold brew and ultimately, straight espresso.

Another popular store in the Valley that opened in June, with support from other coffee shop owners and the community, is Cultūra Coffee House. The shop introduced a Mexican twist on coffee beverages.

"Coffee is one of those things that is very consistent yet very different regarding

varying ratios of coffee to water for brewing. Here in the Valley, coffee culture is essential to one's life where you take time to chat with your in-laws, you meet up with friends, you go on dates. When I think of coffee I think of family and unity," said Ithiel Hernandez, owner of Cultūra Coffee, which is in McAllen.

Hernandez added that his emphasis on family unity stems from his childhood when he visited relatives. Someone would bust out the coffee pot, signifying that conversations accompanied with sipping coffee would last for hours on end.

"When I was younger my dad took me on a road trip from Tampico to Cancun where I was able to interact with the Mexican culture on an intimate level," Hernandez said. "I remember my dad getting his coffee. He really enjoyed his café de lechero. Beverages such as café de olla come from a time when Mexico wanted independence and the wives would make coffee for their husbands. We wanted to bring some of our culture. We want people to sit down and have some coffee that reminds them of their roots."

The importance of incorporating family and community into coffee culture is something Cultūra can control extensively. Hernandez said he believes that the personalization of a cup of coffee comes down to the roast used and unique traits each barista implements into crafting beverages.

"One of the things I want the community to know about us is to not be intimidated," Hernandez said. "Overall, we want our baristas to slowly introduce the terminology and offer something a new individual can enjoy and come back for more. A customer can start off with a sugary drink for their first time and end up a regular visitor drinking straight espresso."

The Campus Activities Board at UTRGV

By Faith Chua

On Jan. 19, 2021, I sat down with Nicole Mireles, the Pop Culture Committee chair of the Campus Activities Board (CAB) and asked her a few questions about the organization and upcoming events. The Campus Activities Board is a student-run organization that promotes student involvement in the campus and community. CAB organizes events that students can attend to be able to interact with fellow students in hopes of fostering school spirit and a sense of belonging within the community.

Mireles is a student who is majoring in criminal justice and will finish her degree in the summer. During the interview, I could feel her passion for the organization and the community that is UTRGV. In her freshman year of college, she said she mainly attended class and then would go straight home. She soon realized, however, that she cannot let life simply pass her by. She wanted to make the most of her university days, so she set off to find an organization that engaged with the students and helped provide those precious college memories. That is when she found CAB. Since the organization is student-run, they understand what students today need and what they would like. This enticed Mireles into joining the organization as a student assistant until she later became the Pop Culture Committee chair.

1 What made you want to join the organization?

I came to a realization, you know, that “Hey, you’re going to one day regret that you weren’t part of anything during college and you’re going to want to wish that you were part of something.” One day, I was walking into the Union and I saw the Campus

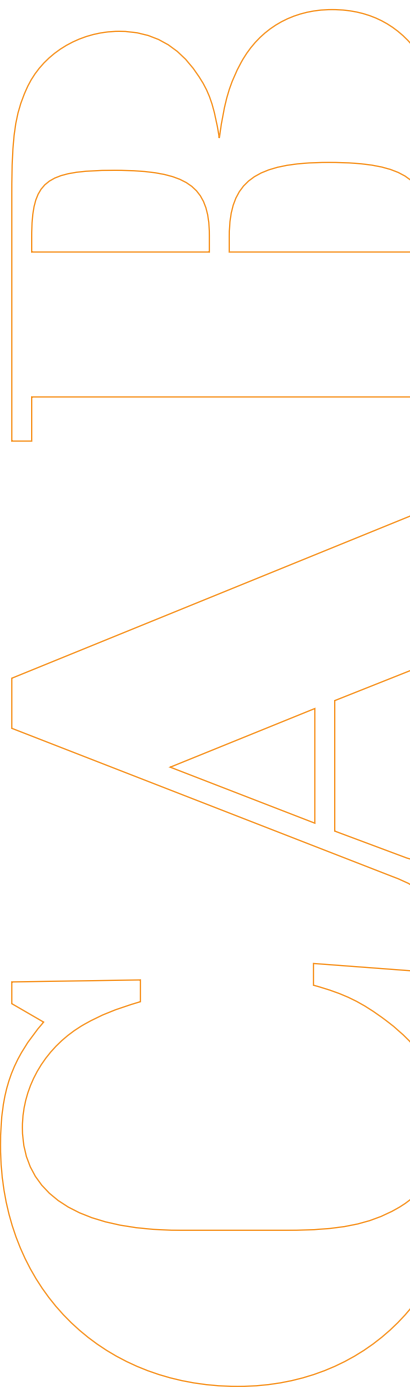
Programming Board, and they had little prizes and stuff by spinning a wheel. I said that I wanted to be a part of this. I asked what this [the organization] was about and what can I do to be a part of it. They just told me to sign up and I applied. It was honestly very good. I know that it was kind of weird because I entered in the moment right when COVID was starting, and I was only there for a few events, but I just really wanted to push myself. To push myself more than what I thought I was capable of.

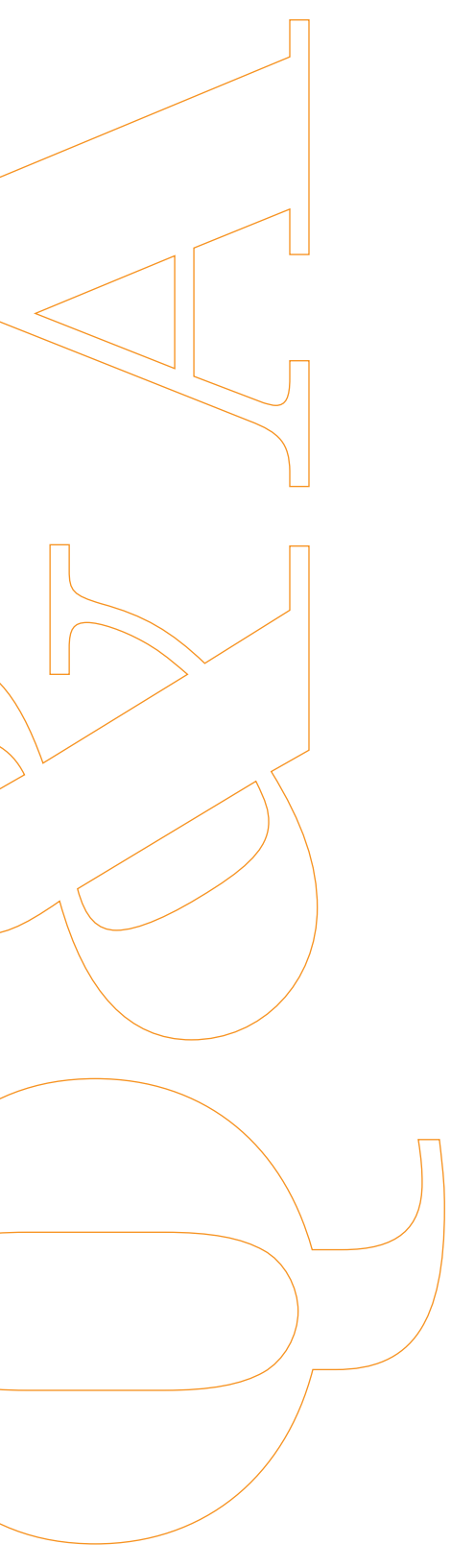
2 How would you describe CAB?

I would describe CAB as a learning and fun experience. I made so many friendships. Within CAB, you make so many friends. Every once in a while, we'll [the committee members] stay up till 2 in the morning just playing Among Us. We already know each other. We know their lying skills. We know everything. Right now, we're transitioning to Minecraft and it's so much fun. I've made so many friends and we text each other separately like "hey, how's your day?" I made a real close friend, the cultural chair, Alejandra Santos. We're just so close now and I let her know of my issues and she lets me know of hers. I just think it is a learning experience because you learn the behind-the-scenes of how events are created, and how we try to bring students together and still try to have that campus experience. CAB is just a really great program to learn things and make new friends.

3 Now during COVID, how do you guys promote events to students, especially with those unfamiliar with the organization?

We really try to bring something we never had before. Although this is my second semester hosting events and bringing those to campus, I really try to bring things that no one has thought of. I'm not sure if they had a magician before, but last semester I brought a magician, and it was very fun. We've been bringing lots of different types of loterías. I know last semester





they [the Cultural Committee] had a Fiestas Patrias (Mexico's Independence Day). We really try to bring different things that has not been done before, for instance, escape rooms. I'm pretty sure they haven't done escape rooms back then but not, virtually, I believe it is a little bit easier to have a lot of students.

4 What was the process in adapting the events to fit COVID-19 regulations?

We go to conferences and we see the type of vendors that are out there. They really have so many things to do. When it comes to a vendor type of events, they really help us out with that type of stuff. They're in control of everything. We just provided them with the students and we're there for assistance. When it comes to the events that we create, for instance, next week I'm going to have a "New Year, New Beginnings." It is a social where we can all share our New Year's resolutions. That way, if I give you a resolution that I have and you have one too, I might have information based on your resolution and help you achieve it. 2020 was a very rough year for so many people and I believe so many people have the chance to turn it around this year. I've seen it lately, through TikTok. Most people have started taking that [mentality] of "I'm going to start being healthy for myself... I'm going to start meditating." For instance, I'm meditating now, I'm eating better, and I'm choosing the good ways for myself.

5 As part of the Pop Culture Committee, how do you guys brainstorm for new events?

I know before we had movie marathons. However, transitioning to the virtual world, not many people enjoy those events because they're like "I can do this in my spare time" or "I can just go hang out with my friends and watch them together." But we're just trying to promote safe distance. I did notice in the summer we had an event that was called "Virtual Playlist Bingo," where instead of hearing the numbers, you would hear the song and mark off the artist. That event, I brought it to the Fall semester and now I'm bringing it back in the Spring semester because it was

one our most attractive events. I still get a lot of people saying that it was very fun.

An event that I really enjoyed last year was playing Among Us. We had it twice last semester and I think that a lot of students made new friends, I even saw it. So, some events we've noticed would bring a lot of attraction are mostly interactive events. The escape rooms, virtual murder mystery, and the playlist bingo... those events are what bring the most students. When the students are not very interactive, like the watch parties, we noticed not a lot of people do join.

6 How do you think CAB has impacted people's view on the Valley and the unique culture of the RGV?

For instance, I really did not care that much before but going into all that stuff, it makes me see that we have so much stuff to do here. You got to really look for it and it is going to be amazing once you look for it. For the culture that we have here, I think that it is very great that we're looking into that and we're also expanding it to other types of cultures, but we're mostly keeping it in here. Especially for the students that are not from the Rio Grande Valley, it is really great for them to know the culture around them, that they're currently living in.

7 How do you get new members to join the organization and what is the process?

Every event that we have, we let them know that we're accepting new people. It closes off at a certain time, but we always let them know to always apply. The process is just an application. We have our Vice President membership who really takes care of that. When we have games, we have a little intermission where we let the students know what future events we are having, any positions that we're open to, and any events that are happening from other organizations. We always let them know there's always something and there's so many opportunities within those programs.

Un cambio continuo

Por Gabriela Gonzalez

Ilustraciones por Cecilia Sierra

En medio de la pandemia mundial, hemos entrado en un ciclo de inmersión en la oscuridad y flotando en círculos, todo con esperanzas de salir de este período de transición limpiado y transformado. A medida que profundizamos en aguas desconocidas, es fácil preguntarse qué sucederá a continuación y cómo vamos a seguir adaptándose a una nueva normalidad.



Las comunidades, las organizaciones y los individuos se enfrentan a sus luchas de incertidumbre, tejiendo en torno a cómo responder mental y emocionalmente al brote COVID-19. La expresión artística es una forma de crear un ambiente de confort y facilidad. Las artes, aunque a menudo se exhiben a través de exposiciones y representaciones de galerías, también se han visto afectadas por la pandemia mundial. Ahora, la forma de escapar de una sociedad cuasi-distópica a través de medios de expresión artística va acompañada de desánimo y consternación.

NuQueer & Co.

NuQueer & Co. es una empresa de arte performance que combina elementos de creación basada en queer con un giro alternativo. Fuertemente influenciada por la actuación de drag queen, la compañía ofrece a los artistas nuevos y próximos la oportunidad de ampliar su creatividad y explorar su talento, mientras que llevan su fantasía al escenario. Una actuación típica de NuQueer irradia un público enérgico e interactivo, música animada de bajo y luces technicolor que atraviesan las paredes del lugar. Debido a las complicaciones aumentadas por COVID-19, NuQueer se enfrenta a un giro de 180 grados, averiguando cómo ser expresivo y atractivo a pesar de los lugares temporalmente cerrados.

Michael Villarreal, copropietario de NuQueer & Co. tenía grandes ideas y planes para organizar eventos aún más grandes en lugares más grandes antes de que la pandemia empeorara.

“Debido a la pandemia, era un poco arriesgado incluso pensar en hacer esas cosas”, dijo Villarreal.

Villarreal ha experimentado un período de transición de actuaciones en persona a actuaciones virtuales como copropietario de NuQueer y como intérprete de drag. Villarreal, bajo la personalidad de drag Lovecraft, reconoce los cambios que rodean el arte performance con motivación.

“Cuando no tienes un horario establecido o eventos a los que ir, tengo que esforzarme para ser más creativo porque terminas siendo tu

propio motivador... pero de una manera positiva”, dijo Villarreal.

Villarreal cree que el arte escénico se trata de crear tu propia ilusión o fantasía, como crear una imagen en tu mente y darle vida. Villarreal ha estado actuando bajo Lovecraft durante cinco años. El nombre de Lovecraft es un homenaje al escritor estadounidense H.P. Lovecraft, conocido por sus obras de ciencia ficción de terror. El nombre también deriva de ser lo opuesto a la brujería, encontrar inspiración de la ciber cultura, la música punk, el feminismo y los extraterrestres.

El artista de Drag crea sus looks personalizados para Lovecraft dibujando diseños, eligiendo el tejido perfecto, trabajando en la máquina de coser, y creando un aspecto orgulloso y fascinante para actuar.

Considerado de los tiempos, NuQueer no tiene planes de tener eventos en persona. La empresa tuvo que pensar en la situación en lugar de alejarse totalmente de ella. En junio, NuQueer quería averiguar cómo celebrar el mes del orgullo. Además, durante este tiempo, Estados Unidos comenzó a ver un aumento en las protestas en homenaje a la muerte de George Floyd.



El impulso inicial para la igualdad racial, NuQueer decidió organizar su primer evento virtual de recaudación de fondos para apoyar la interseccionalidad de Black Lives Matter y la comunidad LGBTQ.

“Fue en un momento en el que todos se enteraron sobre George Floyd, y estaba impactando a Estados Unidos al instante”, dijo Villarreal. El evento de NuQueer titulado O.U.T. se centró en ayudar a recaudar dinero y concienciar a la comunidad queer negra. Sin saber cómo interactuar con una audiencia en línea, NuQueer quería encontrar una manera de imitar drag en persona y mantener la interacción en marcha.

“A través de internet, sólo tienes el teclado, y un chat”, dijo Villarreal. “Es un poco difícil durante este tiempo averiguar exactamente dónde están muchas personas en este momento y cómo mantenerlos interesados.

Una de las razones por las que NuQueer fue creado fue por el amor a la emoción y la pasión por los eventos en vivo. El obstáculo principal a superar ha sido alimentarse de la energía de las personas de la misma manera, pero en un entorno diferente.

“Nos encanta la sensación de tener un grupo de gente alrededor y pasar un buen rato con la música y las luces; ver a la gente en el escenario, anunciar sus nombres, verlos sonreír y luego venir a nosotros después del espectáculo”, dijo Villarreal.

Para O.U.T., Villarreal solo pudo ver números, me gustan, comentarios y reacciones a través de Facebook Live. Esta es la nueva normalidad de compromiso para NuQueer. Desde tener esa energía y adrenalina en persona hasta ahora sentarse en casa y grabarse frente a la pantalla es algo al que no estaban acostumbrados.

**“A
través de
internet,
sólo tienes el
teclado, y
un chat”**

“Es difícil involucrarse como intérprete”, dijo Villarreal. “¿Cómo te expresas frente a una computadora, teléfono o Internet? Yo no diría que no es tan gratificante, pero es una experiencia diferente.”

Involucrarse a través de medios virtuales es solo el comienzo de NuQueer. Su primera producción virtual recaudó más de \$700. Estos fondos fueron donados directamente al Fondo de Mujeres Trans Negras sin Hogar. Encontrar un nicho entre el mundo de las drag y el mundo virtual y construir una plataforma en línea es en lo que los copropietarios de NuQueer quieren centrarse a medida que avanzan.

“Estamos aprovechando al máximo este mundo en línea ahora para cuando podamos volver allí, tengamos esa presencia y la gente pueda venir a nosotros y quiere trabajar con nosotros, dijo Villarreal. “Siento que muchos de nosotros vamos a salir de esto aún más fuerte”.

Ballet Folklorico UTRGV

Reconocido a nivel nacional e internacional, el Ballet Folklórico UTRGV personifica una experiencia visualmente atractiva y cultural para el público a través de una técnica de danza finamente afilada y una intrincada ropa de performance. El Ballet ha estado bajo la dirección de Miguel Pena, una conferencia de danza, desde 2015. Anticipó este año a ser uno de los años más concurrido desde que se hizo cargo del grupo. Debido a COVID-19, la compañía de danza sigue enfrentando desafíos.

“Cancelé todo en marzo”, dijo Peña. “a lo largo del año, tuvimos alrededor de 60-70 actuaciones, en un solo año. Ese número ha ido aumentando.”

Cada año, el Ballet tiene una temporada de grandes espectáculos, que pasan meses de práctica perfeccionando cada conteo, cada paso, cada expresión facial, y cada detalle. Estos espectáculos – Alegría, Ouroboros y Leyendas, son algunos de los espectáculos más grandes del año. Sin darse cuenta de cómo planificar las prácticas para el año escolar 2020-2021, Pena está segura de que todos los eventos planeados para el otoño de 2020 van a ser cancelados cara a cara. Pena planea empezar a practicar con los estudiantes para hacer las grandes actuaciones en el 2021.

“No sabemos qué va a pasar si podemos enfrentarnos cara a cara o con máscaras”, dijo Peña. La distancia es un problema porque casi todo lo

que hacemos en Folklórico es tocando a un compañero”

Para superar estos desafíos, Pena continúa haciendo su investigación. Se puso en contacto con otras grandes compañías de baile para ver cómo están tomando precauciones y prácticas de manejo. La transición a un nuevo año escolar académico, la realización de audiciones también fue una preocupación para el director de Ballet.

El instructor de Ballet dijo que pidió a los que audicionaran que le enviaran videos. Analizar las habilidades de baile a través de medios virtuales no fue lo suficientemente convincente como para anunciar quién llegaría a la compañía o no. La siguiente alternativa fue tener una audición cara a cara con los mismos bailarines para ultimar detalles y llegar a una decisión sobre quién y quién no hizo el equipo. Estas audiciones fueron planeadas cuidadosamente para seguir el protocolo y garantizar la seguridad.

“La primera prioridad es la seguridad de todos, especialmente de los estudiantes”, dijo Pena.

Los bailarines de folklórico tiene piezas específicas para usar, como faldas bellamente diseñadas y zapatos especiales que requieren un piso especial para practicar. De lo contrario, los bailarines pueden causar daños en sus rodillas y potencialmente dañarse a sí mismos.

“Sería muy difícil si recibiera solicitudes [para pedir prestado equipo]. Puedo prestar esas faldas, pero no quiero que sean [intercambiadas] con otros estudiantes”, dijo Pena.

“Todo el mundo está trabajando duro para adaptarse a esta forma de vida”

El Ballet tiene 25-30 bailes femeninos, con limitaciones entre 17-20 vestuarios diferentes para un solo baile. Esto requiere compartir algunos de los trajes.

“Esa es otra razón por la que aún no podemos actuar hasta que encontremos una vacuna o cualquier forma de hacer que esto suceda”, dijo Pena.

Hasta entonces, Pena está aprendiendo a asumir estos obstáculos y le dice a sus estudiantes que tomen esta pandemia como un triunfo del crecimiento.

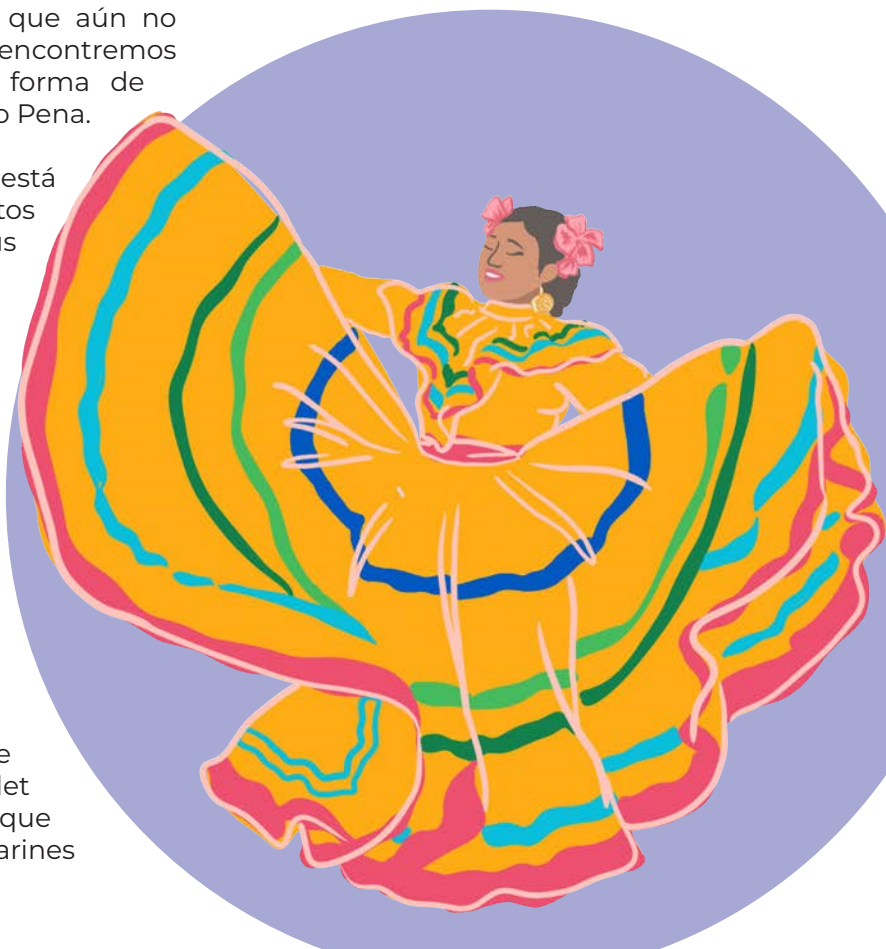
“Siempre les digo a mis estudiantes que podemos aprender algo de todos y de todo. Creo que una de las cosas es que estamos aprendiendo a apreciar el contacto humano, especialmente en la danza”, dijo Pena.

Uno de los objetivos que Pena tiene para el Ballet y sus estudiantes es que sigan produciendo bailarines

profesionales. Además, un paso importante que dio el programa de baile en UTRGV fue agregar una nueva concentración de BFA en la danza con una concentración popular mexicana. Ninguna otra institución en la nación ofrece esta concentración. La concentración popular mexicana se introducirá a partir del otoño de 2020.

“Estamos haciendo todo lo posible para que esto funcione. El otoño de 2020 va a ser un semestre muy difícil para todos. Vamos a adaptarnos a una nueva forma normal de enseñar y actuar. Todo el mundo está trabajando duro para adaptarse a esta forma de vida”.

- Victoria Mena contribuyó al reportaje de esta historia.





submit

**content for next
print issue**

**submit to
pulse.magazine@utrgv.edu**

**non-fiction
fiction
photo series
poetry**



WOULD YOU LIKE TO VIDEO CHAT?

Story and illustrations by Amanda Vela



From online learning to practicing social distancing, to working from home, to wearing a facial covering, every time one ventures out, changes in lifestyles for many came swiftly once lockdowns began. With the extensions and reimplementation of stay-at-home orders, everything has become digital and distant. These orders prompt changes in strategy, which also included finding love and establishing connections with people.

Prior to the development of dating culture, the practice of courtship was more common. The Encyclopedia of Gender and Society by Jodi O'Brien states that "the goal of courting was to find a partner for marriage." Courtship was an unemotional experience, facilitated by the parents of the woman, who would take her pick of several men placing importance on social and economic status. During this period there was no "dating," there were no

“young lovers” and couples, definitely did not see each other alone. However, there was an evolution that would happen to courtship as “changes in women’s gender expectations and industrialization provided a bulk of the movement behind this shift.” Courtship became dating and finding someone suited for marriage became less important. Couples started to go out in public, unsupervised and relationships became less structured with more personal intentions.

Whereas in courtship women were in control of calling upon different suitors to visit them in their homes, the shift to dating also subsequently came with the shift of gender norms, which gave men more control. Men could now ask a woman out and were expected to pay for their outings. “Providing a date with flowers and an exciting evening made men attractive partners for women to go on dates with, since dating was generally understood as a form of leisure,” O’Brien writes. This form of interaction during the early 20th century revolutionized interpersonal relationships and prompted even more change as time went on.

During the 1960s and ’70s, the women’s, civil rights and LGBTQ+ rights movements shifted the previous dating norms and challenged O’Brien’s explanation of those norms. “Dating culture was essentially male controlled: while women may provide some input into what would happen on a date, men were ultimately responsible for putting the date into place.” Gender roles were becoming more loosely defined, as women were able to express and explore their sexuality, and both women and men were taking more of an active role in seeking a partner. Rules surrounding dating culture became non-existent, and so, romantic relationships became

**“THE INTERNET HAS
MADE PHYSICAL
PROXIMITY A LITTLE
LESS CRUCIAL
BECAUSE IT MADE
IT MORE POSSIBLE
FOR US TO ACTUALLY
CONNECT WITH PEOPLE
FAR AWAY”**

even more revolutionized with the rise of hookup culture and dating as we have come to know it today.

The shift from courting to dating to hookup culture, suggest that the ways in which we connect with people are constantly shifting and evolving, as are the rules, gender and societal norms surrounding dating and romantic relationships. The introduction of the internet would cause another transformation within interpersonal relationships, now allowing people to connect from all across the country and the world.

“The internet has made physical proximity a little less crucial because it made it more possible for us to actually connect with people far away,” UTRGV sociology lecturer Billy Ulibarri said. “The internet just kind of broke a lot of barriers of entry to be able to do that.”

Even now, dating and the new norms of connecting with people are changing as we speak. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many to seek alternative ways in which to connect with people. Online dating or dating apps seem to be the route that most people often turn to today, and since the start of the pandemic, usage of these services has risen dramatically. In an interview with

BBC News in May, Eli Seidman, the CEO of Tinder, said the app “users made 3 billion swipes worldwide on Sunday 29 March, the most the app has ever recorded in a single day.” Other platforms, such as eHarmony and Match, have seen an increase in video dates across their sites as well, with Tinder seemingly headed in the same direction.

“I think what has changed is that it is more normalized, and I think ... the kind of the thing that draws them is that it makes it a little easier,” Ulibarri said.

Ulibarri may be onto something. Before the digital trend of finding love and lust online, there were personal ads. People could write a short ad about themselves and what they were seeking in a partner, much like the bios one can fill out on Tinder or Match.com. The thing with online dating is that now instead of picking up a newspaper to read these ads, they are all conveniently located on our smartphones. We get a glimpse of what the person looks like after users add pictures and links to their social media accounts. A UTRGV studio art senior, who used the dating service Tinder before the start of the pandemic, reflected on her motivation to start using the app.

“I got frustrated with those around me, you know,” the student said. “I just didn’t feel like I was meeting people. I don’t know if it’s just ‘cause [in] school, you know, you’re in such big classes or classes are really tight knit and it’s so awkward. So, my friends actually got Tinder and they were having OK results meeting people and most of them just became friends. And I was like, ‘OK. I’ll try it.’”

This normalization and willingness to try finding a partner online only intensified as the pandemic continued. “On Tinder, there’s been an increase in the number

THIS NORMALIZATION AND WILLINGNESS TO TRY FINDING A PARTNER ONLINE ONLY INTENSIFIED AS THE PANDEMIC CONTINUED.

of conversations that people are having, along with the length of these conversations, which are up anywhere from 10% to 30% since the outbreaks started,” according to Match.com in a message to its users. These may be the times where we see a dramatic shift in the way people interact with one another. Lockdowns are forcing people to get to know each other as distance becomes the new norm. Emotional intimacy is taking its hold over physical intimacy as people are finding ways to stay in contact during these times.

“We still manage to dedicate time to face timing or... [a] phone call every night or like every day,” the UTRGV studio art senior said.

Virtual dating seems to be the future for interpersonal connections. As with any major shift in culture, things come and go, and the pandemic has flipped the switch on the way we connect and find love.

“I think it would be problematic to kind of hold on to our old rules of dating and the expectations that we have of each other,” Ulibarri said. “To hold on to pre-pandemic rules and expect them to hold now, we are setting ourselves up if we do that.” At this moment in time, we find ourselves having to reinvent what it means to find our soulmate. ‘Would you like to video chat?’ just might very well replace the phrase, ‘Would you like to get a cup of coffee?’

I'M JUST A

By Karla Lozano

No graduation. No parties or going out. No more to that last memorable summer before we leave for college. No last goodbyes to the friends we knew since we were in Pre-K. All plans vanished. I'm currently a freshman at UTRGV and the thing that has kept me going is photography and taking photos of these isolated times. As we're learning to stay inside for a measurable amount of time and learning how to be by ourselves, we tend to do hobbies and tasks that keep us from going insane. My photos represent our generation, otherwise known as, Generation Z. From all the TikToks and memes you see circulating on the internet, we have come to understand we are a unique generation. We were born in the midst of 9/11 and graduated during a global pandemic. We also overthrow social injustice and throwback tear gas at police officers because we want a better future. My photos show us, as a generation, leaving childhood behind to go through this terrible year of the COVID-19 pandemic. I named this entry "I'm Just a Kid" after the 2002 song from Simple Plan. The angsty teen rebellion song reminds me of not just this generation, but everyone in quarantine. We are desperate to get out of the house and away from our parents to continue having fun with life.

A


ST KID

A young man with dark hair, wearing a dark green zip-up hoodie, light-colored cargo pants, and sneakers, stands against a yellow brick wall. To his left is a dark doorway with an arched window above it. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The large text 'ST KID' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

LAST WEEK OF OUR LIVES

This is my friend, Tomas, and he is standing right outside our high school. The photo was taken a week before the quarantine started and I wanted to add this in because it is so ironic how this photo represents how desperately we wanted to leave high school to start our lives. Little did we know, the virus would strike and put everything on pause including our first year of college.

GOODBYE, CHILDHOOD

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt, blue jeans, and pink sneakers, is performing a gymnastic trick on a set of monkey bars in a park. She is upside down, with her legs tucked and arms gripping the bars. Her eyes are covered with a black cloth. The park is empty, with a large black canopy structure and other playground equipment visible in the background. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

This is my little sister, Sabrina, and currently my only model for these photoshoots because of social distancing. The photo was taken in an empty and abandoned park. Before the quarantine, this park was filled with little soccer leagues and kids just roaming around doing kids' things. When we came to this park, it was grey and had no happy energy like it used to. My sister was trying to play around with the monkey bars and felt nostalgic. It wasn't amusing to her like before. She was reminiscing about how much fun she used to have at this playground and showed me one of her gymnastic tricks, which is shown in this photo. It was her last goodbye to being a kid without the worries of a virus. I covered her eyes to represent that she is just one of many kids who can't be kids anymore due to this pandemic.





GIVE US OUR LIVES BACK

This is my little sister again, staring outside her bedroom window. When I took this photo, I saw the desperation in her eyes as she looked outside. She daydreamed about leaving her room to go see her friends. This photo is relatable to most people when they see the outside world and cling to the imagination that they will soon be able to go outside to see their loved ones without any fear. There is hope and longing for everything to go back to normal.





Siempre Selena

By Gabriela Gonzalez

Illustration by Ángela García

March 31 will mark the 26th year of Selena Quintanilla's murder. Growing up, I saw how Selena's artistry resonated with the borderland community I grew up in. Bidi Bidi Bom Bom is still the song to dance to at family gatherings, and Amor Prohibido is a great karaoke choice when one is consumed with liquid courage. Selena's bicultural identity allowed her Mexican and American fans to unite and celebrate. After all, music has no borders.

I discovered Selena nearly seven years after she was killed. Yet, I felt the wave of emotions her voice projected. I saw a young Mexican-American girl and thought, "Hey, she is like me!" I saw her character fall in love and thought, "I want to experience that!" I saw the way the art of music powered through her and thought, "I can sing! I can dance, too!" I saw and felt the emotion as Selena was killed. I sympathized with her fans and the Quintanilla family. Five-year-old me was in awe, amazed at the vibrancy of Selena's voice and her bold Madonna-

like outfits. One of my first memories of Selena was when her song Como La Flor played at home. Whether my parents played the song or whether it was played when I watched the film, I sang the lyrics as "Como me huele" (Oh how I smell) instead of "Como me duele" (Oh how it hurts me). My mom and dad would tickle my armpits during the song as a joke. This became a silly family inside practice anytime the song played.

I have also watched Selena's posthumous film, Selena (1997), more times than I can count. It was one of the only VHS films I owned that I genuinely admired. I still have it. Even though Selena's life and death occurred before I was born, I recognized her appeal and her dedication. Selena's legacy through a small, televised two-hour film of grainy quality even defined my youth. Now, I am 23 years old. I am the same age Selena was when she was killed. The realization hit me hard. Today, younger American and Mexican generations have a new chance to know Selena. On Dec.

4, Netflix released *Selena: The Series*. The series adds to a number of other works on Selena, including Broadway musicals, books, tribute concerts and collaborations with fashion and makeup brands. While I understand Selena's success and influence, and appreciate that she must be remembered. I cannot seem to work around the feeling that the Quintanilla family is exploiting Selena's legacy. Selena has been dead longer than she was alive. This is a fact. Are they constantly reminded of the wealth and success Selena brought the family? After watching the film, I had mixed feelings about a Netflix series. Would a modern-day Hollywood be true to representing Mexican-American roots? After I watched the series, I compared its production with the movie. Both share Selena's story and heartfelt impact to her fans. However, the series focuses more on the family dynamic than the film. Abraham Quintanilla's controlling complex to form *Selena y Los Dinos*, a band with Selena, her older brother A.B. and older sister Suzette, gave me further insight on the emotional and mental distress Selena and her siblings had growing up. After becoming more successful as a band, Abraham fended for the band's success. The series shows viewers the severe economic recession in the early 1980s and the impact this had on the Quintanilla family. The family went through a period of housing and food insecurity. *Selena y Los Dinos* became the family's source of income. This meant performing at Quinceaneras, fairs, weddings, and other local gigs to get money and to get the band name out there. With time, *Selena y Los Dinos* grew in popularity and soon record labels discovered it. The hard work was starting to pay off.

After *Selena y Los Dinos* was discovered, Abraham continued pushing his aspirations onto the band and soon the family was financially stable again. *Selena y Los Dinos* did not have a normal childhood. They did not have the

freedom or liberation to have a social life. If the band wasn't practicing, they were performing. If the band wasn't performing, they were practicing. After all, practice makes perfect. But at what cost? The band was their entire life until Selena was killed. Abraham's money thirsty tendencies may have continued even after Selena died. She was the family moneymaker in her lifetime. In death, through posthumous honors and achievements, Selena's legacy continues to reel in money, an exploitative theory I constantly wrap my head around. Selena will always be commemorated through fans with memories and her discography. Why continue milking it?

A new wave of younger generations is discovering Selena's story through the Netflix series and social media. Selena's story deserves full recognition, not a wishy-washy version of it. I appreciate the angle showing how outside influences had an impact on the Quintanilla family's upward trajectory, but I would have preferred a less shabby representation from the actors and creators of the show. One fascinating impact film has its ability to break through viewers' emotional barrier, making connections with the characters. Character connection is what really makes people invested, and this is something I did not experience watching *Selena: The Series*. However, it has the power to relay her story in a way that can spark a conversation about Latinx representation in media and music, handing the baton to future shows about people of color. Selena was a woman of dreams and aspirations. She was a woman of bicultural curiosity, eager to understand her roots through her music. She was a woman ready to challenge the status quo of being a female in the spotlight at a time where men dominated the Tejano scene. The Queen of Tejano's reign was a very short-lived 23 years, but her throne will last forever.



UTRGVPULSE.COM

The changing fashion in the RGV

By Hania Rocio

Courtesy photography by Fish Fiorucci



Fashion is a type of art that can impact our everyday life. The fashion scene is a continuously changing in our region as the population in the Rio Grande Valley increases over time and new people are settling here.

Back in the 20th century, fashion signified a person's social status, and the Rio Grande Valley was not different. During the Civil War, the Union established a blockade of Confederate ports designed to stop the export of cotton and the smuggling of military intel. The 'Loophole to the Cotton Blockade' was the illegal smuggling of cotton into territories such as Mexico, the Bahamas and Cuba, according to <https://history.state.gov>. Due to this, Brownsville became a hotspot for people who were looking to become millionaires. Back then, according to valleyventer.com, rich-French families introduced high fashion to the RGV during and after the Civil War.

Today, there are several external and internal factors that play into one's clothing style. Weather, social norms, economic status, politics, health hazards, to name a few.

Sasawan Heingraj, a professor for the fashion design and pop culture marketing course at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, said that fashion in

the RGV changed to satisfy a person's lifestyle, culture, and living conditions.

"I have observed a lot that, people in the RGV tend to dress in a casual way," Heingraj said. "We like comfortable wear, for example, leggings, that kind of stuff ... It's more of the casual informal one."

Heingraj said that the COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionized fashion—especially during this time of the pandemic. People will try to find different ways to express themselves, either to clothing, face masks, or even eye makeup as it the most visual part of the face now.

We have to admit that this pandemic... has impacted the way we dress

"We have to admit that this pandemic... has impacted the way we dress," Heingraj said. "At the moment,

we need to adapt that into our fashion trends ... There are a lot of people who try to portray their personalities, their lifestyle through their facial masks."

Fashion in the RGV is also unique because we tend to mix culture into our clothing. Mexican-American style clothing is well accepted in our community and it's a way to represent our culture. Bags with Lotería cards printed on them, shirts with the face of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, traditional Mexican chanclas made from leather, and many other garments are predominantly used in the Valley.

"Because we live in the border, I can see a mixture of culture between Mexico and the U.S.," Heingraj said. "Some of my friends... they like to include cultural elements in their clothes to represent who they are."

Heingraj also described how culturally and economically, fashion has changed in the Valley. The change is so much that the city of Brownsville has progressed to having a week dedicated to fashion.

Back in May 2019, Brownsville Fashion Week has shown to the community different aspects of the Valley's fashion. Radical, extravagant, and lavish, fashion in the Rio Grande Valley has changed and will continue to improve considerably.

Fish Fiorucci, also known as Nolan Navarro, is the creator and one of the directors for Brownsville Fashion Week. They've traveled across Texas and the

world as models. Fish has seen the importance of fashion in everyday life and how it impacts the Valley. They have also noticed that the Valley focus is fast fashion, which can have a negative impact on the environment and the people producing these garments. According to sustainyourstyle.org, an average of 35 kilograms of textile waste is generated per person each year in the U.S. Ninety-six hours per week is the normal working week for a garment worker and 168 million children in the world are forced to work. As the fashion industry requires low-skilled labour, child labour is common in the fast fashion industry.

"We have a bunch of fashion here in the Valley that's very commercial," Fiorucci said. "The Valley is all about fast fashion... It's unfortunate and it's because that's the only resource we have here."

"With queer visibility and with all the trans people who are coming out and just feeling very liberated and just walking around the streets... That's what really influences the community to want to change their views and how they dress and how they act and how they look in public"

-Fish Fiorucci



**“Because we live in the border,
I can see a mixture of culture
between Mexico and the U.S.”**

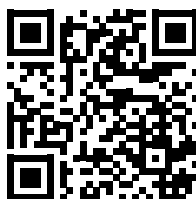
Although they have expressed their discontent with the current fashion situation in the Valley, they noticed a positive change within fashion and the local community.

Fashion also paved the way for the RGV's acceptance for the LGBTQ community. It also holds a power that breaks traditionalism and conservative ideals embedded in the RGV. Fiorucci said that fashion helped the Valley become a safe space for all kinds of people to express themselves, something that wouldn't have happened 10 years.

“For the Valley... it was very conservative for a very long time,” Fiorucci said. “With queer visibility and with all the trans people who are coming out and just feeling very liberated and just walking around the streets... That's what really influences the community to want to change their views and how they dress and how they act and how they look in public.”

Overall, fashion in the Rio Grande Valley has gone through changes during these last decades. From using fashion as a way to show one's wealth to decorating facemasks as a way to express ourselves. It even has become a way to try and change people's ideology of acceptance.

“You see the impact it has on people's lives; you see how it changes life around,” Fiorucci said. “I am very happy that I'm ok walking out the way I dress in public, I would have never been able to do that 10 years ago... In that sense, fashion has definitely evolved.”



**VISIT FISH
FIORUCCI'S
INSTAGRAM
PAGE**



A yearning
for change,



the modest
glimpse

**A YEARNING FOR CHANGE, THE MODEST
GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING NEW**

**FOR THE LAND OF THE FREE AND ITS
PEOPLE, THE RED WHITE AND BLUE**

**RATTLED BY PROTESTS OF SOLIDARITY,
EAGER TO CHALLENGE THE GREAT DIVIDE**

**CALLOUSED HANDS AND RAISED FISTS
OF THE BLACK, BROWN, INDIGENOUS
PEOPLE, CHALLENGED AND POLARIZED**

**A SOCIETY OF STRUGGLES DREAMS AND
STORIES, OUR BELOVED RIO GRANDE
BORDERLAND**

**GOVERNED BY DEMOCRACY, OH TO HELL
WITH THE CORRUPTION AND HYPOCRISY**

**HOPEFUL TO HEAL AND REBUILD, UNITED,
WE STAND.**

**of something
new** 



KNOW JUSTICE, KNOW PEACE

Mixed Media

Caitlin Paige Ausborn

Life is not fair and it never has been. As I struggle to find positivity in the darkest moments of our nation's history, I am drawn again and again to the healing power of art and activism, finding that beauty, justice, and peace can surround us in everyday life, but only when we have the courage to seek it. This piece captures the positivity we can create for ourselves and for our future when we stick together and fight for what is right. When we know justice, we will know peace.

ABYA YALA

Digital Illustration

Sydney Ribera

The colors come from the Wiphala and Patujú indigenous flags and represent unity between camba and colla indigenous peoples against colonization. The words both translate to "love" in the Guarani and Quechua languages.

This is protest art because camba and colla people are very divided, and colonization and recent events like the Bolivian coup further this.



FIGHT LIKE A WOMAN

Digital Illustration

Kathleen Kelley

My work investigates the relationship of women, power, and politics within the realm of today's outlook on social norms. I have recently been fascinated by the traditional understanding of the human, therefore, it was my goal with this piece to represent women in a light that leaves a prospect of new understanding using a traditional gendered campaign image that has been substantially displayed and celebrated. As emerging realities become reenvisioned through past iconography, my hope is that the spectator is left with an insight into the possibilities of our era.



REFUSING MARIANISMO

Digital Illustration

Daniela Ramirez

Refusing Marianismo empowers women to question the traditional ideologies of patriarchal culture that suppresses our identity. Living in the borderlands has defined my identity; my identity protects me, not borderland officers. Middle class American realism salutes me every day, from across the river. I am not letting American exceptionalism see me from above the hill; I fight eloquently through diplomacy. I do not resent my genetics, but I do refuse to be a passive caregiver. I accept the virtues of purity, I refuse passivity.

A L E X M A C I A S

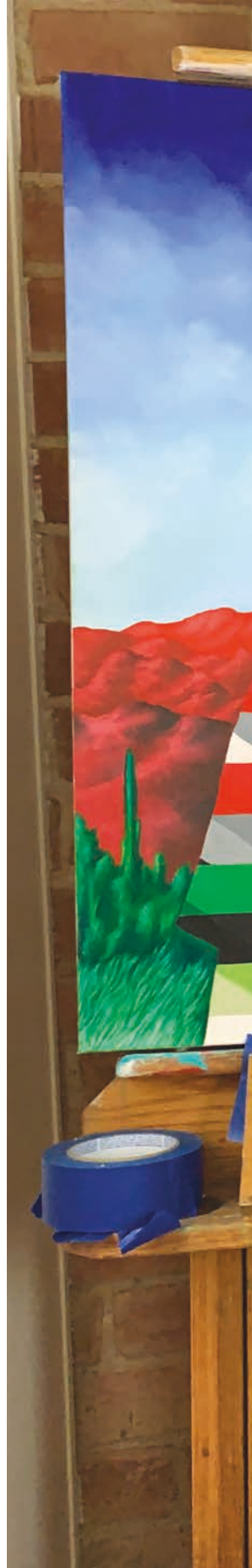
when art imitates life

By Michel Flores Tavizón

Alejandro Macias is a border artist who was born and raised in Brownsville. His Mexican-American identity is his inspiration for his art, which addresses heritage, ethnicity and immigration.

Macias received a Bachelor of Arts in 2008 and a Master of Fine Arts in 2-D studio art in 2012 from legacy-institutions at the University of Texas at Brownsville and the University of Texas-Pan American, respectively.

He worked as a professor and gallery coordinator at the University of Texas Rio Grande until 2019. He now works as an assistant professor at the University of Arizona's School of Art.



Q & A



HOW DID YOU START DOING ART AND WHY?

This is a clichéd answer, but I've been drawing my whole life. I think, when I was in elementary school, it was something I was definitely interested in. But I think even within the Rio Grande Valley culture, I think, even with[in] families, you can be discouraged from pursuing art. And so, for a long time I didn't think much about it. I didn't really think about pursuing it professionally in any capacity. I was minoring in art when I was a student in UT Brownsville and so I still was interested in it. But I wasn't entirely sure if it was going to do anything for me or where I was headed with it professionally and personally. So when I took my first, and I had Palmenez who is an instructor there as well at Hanna High School and then at UT Brownsville for drawing... and so when I finally took my first painting class in 2006, I think I was like 19 years old under Carlos Guillermo Gomez. He was the painting instructor at UT Brownsville and UTRGV for like a combined 30 years and that changed everything for me. I knew that I wanted to pursue visual art for the rest of my life. Before that I was an English major. It wasn't something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life and so I changed majors. I took my first painting class [with Gomez] and even the way he controlled the classroom and was generally interested in students' vision.

Not only just focusing on weaknesses but also focusing on the strengths of those individual artists and, you know, having them pursue something that they wanted. That was something that I wanted to do myself and so, I just started painting all the time. I tried to work on my drawing skills overtime, and I don't think my skills improved until after I graduated, and I became an instructor myself. I was like well, if I'm going to be teaching others, I really should know this stuff, so yeah... I think within the span of 10 years, from 2006 to 2016, I've always felt like a student and I think something happened. There was a switch, and I was like, "okay". I always hesitated on calling myself an artist, then I started to think critically about the work that I was making and the world around me and how do I respond to the world around me? I was always interested in figurative painting and figurative drawing and how do I use the figure as a vessel to kind of talk about the issues that are important to me? So, I think at 26 and beyond, everything started to click and finally things are coming into place and I'm starting to see everything. But for 10 years, I was like, what am I doing? Where am I going? What kind of art do I want to make? What kind of artist do I want to be? You know, it's not an easy pass at all. But I think if you stick with it, things can definitely fall into place and so it's worked out so far.

[COMMENT] I FEEL LIKE I WITNESSED THAT [MACIAS' GROWTH] BECAUSE I STARTED COLLEGE IN 2016 AND I THINK I TOOK YOUR CLASS IN 2017 OR 2018. I FEEL LIKE I SAW WHEN YOU STARTED TO ACTUALLY DO ART [THAT YOU WERE PROUD OF], THAT TRANSITIONING.

You know it's interesting because I never really thought... There are so many factors that go into that kind of transformative experience. As an artist, I think when I first got into Vermont Studio Center, that was a big shift. The fact that I left the Valley for a little bit and was around artists from all over the world. We were doing such exciting things and it was so interesting to [see] the way they responded to the things around them. Being in the valley, you know, being around a lot of border artists is like, "is this something that I really want to pursue?" There are so many artists that are responding to their environment and to border politics and I was like, "why am I not responding?" I think I felt so, not only overwhelmed but I was drawn by my own experience.

"American Mexican (II)"
oil and acrylic on canvas
30" x 30"
2019



Even though 'border artist' is such a generalized term, everyone's experience and perspective are unique. My mind is not like yours, so I started thinking about identity. I spoke Spanish up to the third grade and then there is a shift in my head that told me, "I don't want to speak Spanish anymore and I want to speak English [instead]." I think, "I want to be an American," was something incredibly relatable and wanted to target on. I still suffer from it and I can see students suffer from it [too]. All those things piqued interest in terms of the direction I wanted to go in, and at the end of 2016. In 2017, I started to find the direction that I wanted to go in in terms of aesthetic [and] technique. I was interested in responding to how like artists and even non artists within the Rio Grande Valley were responding to art, like "oh I like art

that's representational," but that wasn't [the] only thing I was personally interested in. I like contemporary and conceptual art and what it mean[s] to me. I was interested in visiting museums outside the Valley [to] know "what is art on this like bubble." What I did was I tried to combine all those elements together, using the division as a representation of the border itself, and how I felt internally. Everything just clicked. Everything was just all happening at once and it's almost like I had some sort of epiphany and everything just became clear to me.

HOW DID GROWING UP BY THE BORDER INFLUENCE OR IMPACT YOUR ART?

Being an artist from the Valley myself, I can see a lot of students in the Valley [respond to that discouragement]. You know, "it's fun to do but it's never going to lead me anywhere and the reality is, people [can't] be any more wrong about that. I think I'm a good example of that. Look at Manny Zamudio, who was in the previous Pulse issue. He is doing things he never probably imagined himself doing. He had that dream, so the fact that he's making these murals in Southern California, people crave it. People crave artwork. People crave a variety of visions. Even the way I've approached artists, is responding to not only the border in the social political environment, but the way people react to art. I'm responding to the people around me. I think if I had done something else, I would have still been in Brownsville and probably very unhappy. The fact is, art opened more doors than I could have possibly envision[ed] or imagine[d]. I'm so grateful that I stuck with it and I didn't back down. Now, I'm doing things that I want to do and exploring things that I want to make, so it's been a very fulfilling journey so far.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO CONVEY IN YOUR ARTWORK?

When I was studying, I was really interested in how artists used the figure and even abstracted it and for a long time I even struggled finding out why I was so interested in the figure. I probably already mentioned this to you before, English painters were artists that I was really interested in when I was an undergrad. Like Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and I think they're all friends, right? I was like, why do I find this so exciting? I stuck with figurative forever. I mean, I never really distanced myself from it and then I was like, I can use the figure as a vessel to talk about issues that I want and the way even I see myself, you know. I think a lot of it comes from stuff like identity, feeling like I'm not Mexican, even though I grew up in a pretty Mexican conservative household, and I see those generations... Like, there's a shift my grandparents crossed. They don't speak English and then my parents can speak English, but they have accents. I can speak English without any kind of obvious accent. I was very interested in that shift of identity and duality and coming from two cultures and how everything seems to shift and change, creating a split. Still, a lot of the work that I do deals with identity and responding to the border, specifically to the Rio Grande Valley. Then I started to branch out after that, and I'm interested in what's happening in a broader contemporary American sense. So, I started responding to society and then the social environments and even responding to mainstream situations. For example, even Charlottesville and the protests happening in Charlottesville when monuments were taken down. Then I started to respond to White supremacy and then I started to respond to what make America great again means to me and what does it mean to a person that isn't White, who is a person of color? And simultaneously, you



"Hidden in Plain Sight"

oil and acrylic on canvas
30" x 30"
2020

have talked about the border wall and keeping migrants out and closing the border. So, that in itself, kind of leads me to think that is what make America great again means. Is it anti-immigration? Anti-color? And then thinking about like, Trump having a huge base of White nationalists and then I was responding to that. You know, the conversations are way more divisive, way more angry and aggressive, and so I'm just honestly

documenting what's happening around me. I'm portraying just a small aspect of my reality. I'm dealing with things that are personal and internal and external. It's just a mixed bag of a few things.



"I love the Mexicans. No one is more Mexican than me."
oil, acrylic, aerosol on canvas
36" x 36"
2017

WHICH ARTWORK OR MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

That's a tough one. I think my work is like a mixture of obviously serious subject matter narratives. But I also, in a sense, want to be humorous about it. In a way, a lot of the work that I make is satirical,

is sometimes strange, funny. But if you scratch beneath the surface, there's something happening that's very serious. I think the work that was pretty clever and tackled things that were happening around the 2016 to 2017 years was "I love the Mexicans. No one is More Mexican than me." In that work, I portray Trump as a Mexican. But I always imagined that work as within a dialogue... him

talking to a Mexican. I see Trump as very egotistical. I imagined going back to the 2016 presidential debate and him saying, “no one is more presidential than me.” I imagined this imaginary conversation of him with a Mexican and him saying, “no one is more Mexican than me” and then putting him in Mexican stereotypical attire like the Mariachi sombrero and a Mexican poncho and having this artificial serape design. That was something I was interested in. Like, how do I talk about things that are so serious in such a comical fashion? I think that was an important shift for me personally, because not only am I working on these issues, but I’m also exploring various techniques like trying to portray his face in some sort of realistic fashion but then exploring various painting techniques. That painting traveled for a little bit. It even went to Chelsea, N.Y. I never really wanted to just do Trump paintings. That wasn’t really something that I was interested in. He’s easy to make fun of. But I think it opened doors in terms of what I wanted to do and what kind of work I wanted to make. I think obviously the work that I appropriated from Carlos Gomez, like even using the serape design and I wasn’t interested in making purely linework. But how do I combine that with representational and realistic aspects of the people that I know and how to respond to identity? So, there is this kind of duality happening within the works.

Another one that I did was “American-Mexican”, the second one, and it has the Mexican cap on and that was a self-portrait and then I had the red, white and blue serape design on the bottom half. I think some of that, aesthetically, was something that I was really interested in. I did another painting recently. I think it was this year, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” which I named my solo show at Presa House (art gallery in San Antonio) after and I was really interested in the tradition from Texas to Arizona and how am I going to adapt and react to not

only this area culturally, politically but also aesthetically, where I want to take my work and how do I respond to my environment? Also, I started thinking about, you know, I’m obviously not close to the river anymore and that is a division. But now I’m here (Arizona), in like the desert, not in itself as a division and it is an obstacle for migrants and people die crossing it all the time. What I thought was interesting about this area was the fact that people disappear and that’s how harsh the environment is here. I started thinking about the migrants’ struggle and... not that I didn’t think about it before, but I think this amplified it. To be able to live in two different cities that had the same similar problem for Mexicans and other migrants and asylum seekers. I think the work that responded to the viral image of El Salvador migrants that were crossing into the Rio Grande River or crossing through it and I believe [their names were] Oscar and Angie Valeria Ramirez and so those are probably some works that I think are... I don’t know how to really describe them, but I think they’re definitely highlights just because they’re important in terms of not only my tackling an identity, but I’m thinking about the struggles of the people around me.

WHAT ADVICE WILL YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING ARTIST?

I think students are just a reflection of myself, because I was there [UTRGV] just a few years ago, right? The age gap [wasn’t] very large. So, I see students struggle about where do I go with this life? Where do I fit art in this picture? I can relate to that situation. I know how difficult it can be. But again, the reality is that I think visual art has opened way more doors for me than I could ever have imagined. I’ll name a few examples outside of myself like Jesus Treviño. [He] is doing incredible things right now and he got a really good offer at UT Austin.



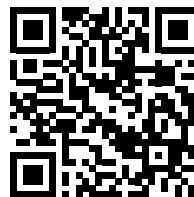
I understand how difficult it can be to even curate an exhibition. But the fact that he curated the exhibition and was accepted through a panel at UT Austin is providing a platform for artists that don't have that platform and that accessibility. Even showing with Ruby [Garza], one of my first students when I started teaching there at UT Brownsville. She was an amazing student and progressed so much in such a little time, to even share the space with Ruby within UT Austin is incredible for me as an instructor and as an artist. I understand the circumstances within Brownsville are not the most ideal for artists but I think once you understand that visual art can provide new doors for you, that if you are willing to open them, [you] can do incredible journeys in. So, I think if you're serious about pursuing art, [even if] start[s] as a hobby, but turns into something more serious, I say you stick with it and see where it takes you. If you [are] fully committed to it and you do the

research and do the work, I think [it] can really do something positive for you. At the end of the day, it's just a matter of being dedicated and committed to doing these things and I think it'll pay off in the end.

ANYTHING YOU WANT TO ADD?

I'm proud of what's happening, although this seems like a huge obstacle with the pandemic and everything, [it is] incredible of what artists are making it. I'm incredibly proud and always looking into what's happening in Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley, about what's happening within the art community and how they respond to their environment. I spent 30+ years in Texas, I will never lose that connection to Brownsville. I was born and raised there, and I lived the majority of my personal and professional life there. I brought the Valley with me and I'll always keep an eye out on what's happening there and only hope for the best for students. Like [what] you, for example, are doing. I'm so proud of what that community is doing despite the difficult circumstances, not only through the pandemic, but even the lack of resources that the community might have. I'm so happy with the perseverance and dedication from so many of you and the fact that I even get to talk to you about this stuff is amazing. Just keep going at it.

**VISIT ALEX
MACIAS'
INSTAGRAM**





"Somewhere"
acrylic, pastel, and graphite on cut panel
24" x 18"
2021



This is a Latin Time

By Steven Hughes and Michael Gonzalez

Illustration by Jocelyn Torres

John Leguizamo, who is known for his role as 'Luigi' from the 1993 American comedy film *Super Mario Bros.*, grew up in the Queens borough of New York City with a poor Latinx representation in mass media.

"It was shocking to me," Leguizamo said during the virtual kick-off for the 17th season of the Distinguished Speaker Series at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley on Sept. 25. "Here's my family. Here are my friends, my community, my neighborhood, the city; and I see Latin people running things and heroes in my community. But they're invisible everywhere else."

This lack of Latinx representation meant Leguizamo did not see himself in the public eye. He and his family moved to

Queens, N.Y., from Bogotá, Colombia, in 1967. He was 3 years old. But, as he grew older, life truly began.

"As I got older, home life grew more difficult," Leguizamo wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* in 2016. "My father was hyper-authoritarian and didn't hesitate to give me a beating if I messed up." In an interview with *The Telegraph*, he also described his neighborhood as "tough. There were lots of fights. I would walk through a park and be attacked, and I had to defend myself all the time. But this helped me become funny so I wouldn't get hit." In high school, Leguizamo wrote comedy and his classmates voted him Most Talkative. As high school came to an end and Leguizamo was working at a Kentucky Fried Chicken, his school sent him to therapy. His therapist told him performing on a stage could be a positive outlet for him. He also had

support from his math teacher. After high school he went to New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where he majored in theatre. He recalled barely scraping by with one to two auditions in college, while his White classmates had auditions seemingly every day. He then dropped out to pursue stand-up comedy. He performed as a stand-up comic for several night clubs in New York. He also



“I see Latin people running things and heroes in my community. But they’re invisible everywhere else.”

played minor roles in film and featured in Madonna’s *Borderline* music video. Then in 1986, he made his television debut in *Miami Vice*.

Leguizamo said in the *WSJ* that when he was hired to do an episode of “*Miami Vice*,” he also “began taking lots of acting roles, which led to “*Carlito’s Way*” in 1992 opposite Al Pacino. That experience pushed me to my limits. I also had begun writing one-man plays about my life.”

In 1991, Leguizamo wrote and performed his one-man play, *Mambo Mouth*, which won him an Obie award and an Outer Critics award. He was also named one of 12 promising new actors of 1991. He also created, wrote and produced a Latino variety show called *House of Buggin’* for Fox Television in 1995. Leguizamo also starred in big movies like *The Crash*, *Ice Age*, *Moulin Rogue*, *John Wick*, and *To Wong Fu, Thanks for Everything!* Julie Newmar. He also starred in television and Broadway.

Despite his successes, Leguizamo said he occasionally encountered racism and rejection. “Where an artist has most power is using your vision. You [got to] put yourself out there and face rejection,” Leguizamo said. He also said he hopes he is not the same person from the 1980s, now that he has more confidence and understanding of his career. One thing he does differently happens during auditions.

Leguizamo’s process for auditions relies heavily on enjoying the time he spends auditioning and not getting hung up on what the outcome will be. In his earlier years, he said he did not think he would find success with acting, so he focused on enjoying what was right in front of him. He delved into his craft and soaked

up every bit of enjoyment possible from acting classes and auditions.

In addition, Leguizamo is socially conscious and engaged with politics, which has followed him well into his career. Most recently, Leguizamo made headlines for boycotting the Emmy Awards because of the lack of Latinx representation in Hollywood.

“The Emmys angered me,” Leguizamo said. “How much longer do we have to put up with this? The problem is not the Emmys, it’s the pipeline. We’re almost 20 percent of the population... Why aren’t they putting us in shows and why aren’t they telling our stories?”

Nevertheless, Leguizamo said he has seen progress concerning Latinx activism in many ways. Recently, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, made ethnic studies a high school graduation requirement throughout the city.

Leguizamo considered this important, given that he advocates for learning about Latinx history. In fact, Leguizamo wrote a play called, “*Latin History for Morons*.” According to *Netflix.com*, “*Latin History for Morons*” spans 3000 years of Latin history, beginning with the Mayans and ending somewhere around Pitbull.

In the end, he urged the UTRGV community to join him in his fight to increase representation in the United States. He said, “This is a Latin time. It’s our time and it’s finally come. It doesn’t matter that you get the best grades. Show up and do your best. My advice to young actors [is to] study the craft, forget about being a big shot, get to work and you decide your self-worth.”

Reporting The Truth: Anderson Cooper Shares Journey with UTRGV Campus Community

By Gabriela Gonzalez and Michael Gonzalez

Illustration by Jocelyn Torres

Rounding up the fall semester, award-winning journalist Anderson Cooper joined UTRGV's Distinguished Speaker Series event to share his story with students, staff, faculty and the public about his path toward becoming a renowned news anchor for CNN.

During the evening, Cooper discussed topics such as reporting during challenging times, experiencing loss and grief, being a target in the spotlight and persevering through these moments in his career. Associate professor for Communication Aje-Ori Agbese moderated the event.

Cooper serves a pivotal role at CNN as both a news anchor and political commentator, breaking stories about the nation's politics, its leaders and people. His work philosophy is immersed in the intensity of emotional survival and documenting the truth.

"You have to stand up for what is true and what is false. For me, that is a sole purpose of my job," Cooper said.

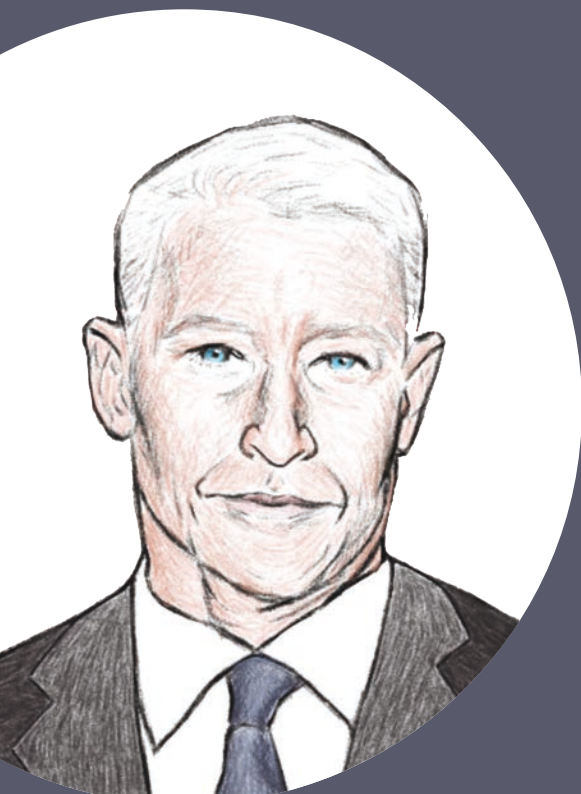
Since the death of his father during an open-heart surgery procedure and the loss of his brother to suicide, Cooper has been fascinated by people and how they survive under dangerous circumstances. Through his realized fear of loneliness and sadness, he began to question his own life, unaware of how he would survive in the world.

"I decided at age 10, after my dad died, that I wanted to prepare myself for whatever disaster is going to come next," Cooper said.

The CNN anchor wanted to see how people survive in different situations and learn how to survive in his own life.

"I call myself a catastrophist," Cooper said. "I always think some catastrophe is going to happen and I want to be prepared for it."

Growing up during the emergence of the LGBTQ rights movement, Cooper's sexuality also made him more empathetic toward people in



“I always think some catastrophe is going to happen and I want to be prepared for it.”

marginalized communities. In 2012, Cooper publicly announced that he identifies as a gay man.

“You suddenly have a unique vantage point on society. It’s very interesting when you feel outside the mainstream to suddenly see things differently,” Cooper said. “For me, it made me more of an observer, which I think helped me as a reporter.”

Through this passionate philosophy, Cooper tries to broadcast his stories in a more humane way.

“You know, humanity happens. That is what is extraordinary about us [humans] and what is incredible about live television,” Cooper said. “Things happen in front of the camera and you just can’t believe you are watching all this and it’s all around you.”

Cooper has largely contributed to the media coverage of the 2020 presidential election, one of the most significant races to be engrained in history books.

“The Trump administration’s time in office has been unlike any other president in modern-day history,” Cooper said. “This was an election like none any of us have ever seen. Whether it’s the lack of campaigning on the part of the Democrats following COVID guidelines, the rallies [U.S. President [Donald] Trump had, the president of the United States becoming infected with COVID, everything about it has been historic.”

Cooper also touched on the the significance of the election by highlighting Trump’s unwillingness to concede after Democratic challenger Joe Biden was voted president-elect on Nov. 7, according to CNN. The Wall Street Journal reported that the Trump campaign filed lawsuits in key states Joe Biden had won: Pennsylvania, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada and Arizona in an attempt to overturn the election results.

Cooper said covering the Trump administration’s four years in office even dealt a blow to journalists because the president and his supporters undermine the accuracy of the media. The award-winning journalist said that Trump labelled him and his colleagues “enemies of the state.” Trump and his followers are no strangers to making claims that CNN is “fake news.”

“Things happen in front of the camera and you just can’t believe you are watching all this and it’s all around you.”

Overall, Cooper said, “It’s been a really challenging four years, the president of the United States has said that I and my colleagues are the ‘enemies of the state,’ which is alarming to have the president of the United States say that about you and your co-workers,” Cooper said. “I would argue that is not the case and it’s a very dangerous thing to say that, but for all the attacks that the president has done against CNN, our attitude is to keep our heads down and just do our jobs, and our job is reporting. The answer to attacks from anybody is more reporting.”

NI UNA MENOS

Por Karla Cavazos

Fotografía por Almendra Saenz

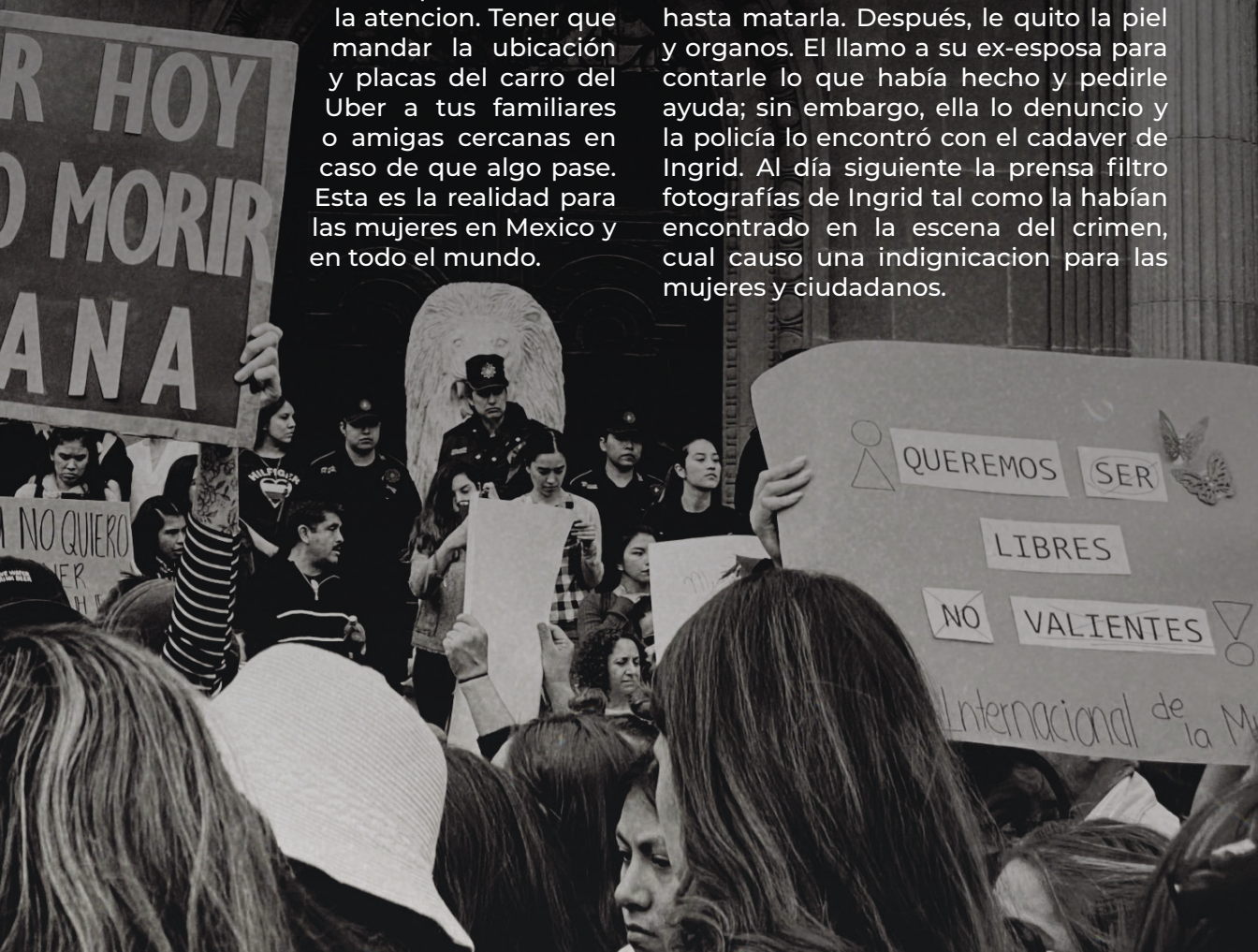


No hay duda que el 2020 fue un año revolucionario y esta no fue una excepción para las mujeres. Ellas decidieron que nadie las iba a callar. Ellas iban a luchar por las mujeres que ya no estaban aquí, porque un hombre acabo con su vida. Ellas iban a contar la historia, porque ellas ya no estaban aquí para contarla. Si, estoy hablando del feminicidio.

El feminicidio es la muerte violenta de las mujeres por razones de genero. Esto ha estado pasando por años. Sin embargo este año las mujeres decidieron ya no quedarse calladas. Desde la infancia, nos enseñan cosas como, "calladita te ves mas bonita," o, "no digas algo que pueda causar problemas." Ser una mujer no es facil, especialmente en Mexico. Tener temor de salir sola y no regresar a tu casa. Tener que vestírte de cierta manera para no llamar la atencion. Tener que mandar la ubicación y placas del carro del Uber a tus familiares o amigas cercanas en caso de que algo pase. Esta es la realidad para las mujeres en Mexico y en todo el mundo.

Sin embargo, muchos de los casos de feminicidio, son cometidos por personas a nuestro alrededor. Personas en la que confiamos, como un novio, amigo, familiares, etc. Ellos las violan, asesinan y las dejan ahí tiradas, como si una mujer no valiera nada. Diez mujeres son asesinadas al día en Mexico. De acuerdo con la Red por los Derechos de la Infancia México (REDIM), una de cada 10 feminicidios se comete contra niñas y adolescentes menores de 17 años. Cada día las mujeres se sienten mas inseguras porque el gobierno no hace nada al respecto.

En Febrero del 2020 en la Ciudad de México, se dio a conocer el caso de Ingrid Escamilla, cual fue víctima del feminicidio. Después de haber tenido una discusión con su pareja, Erick Francisco, el supuestamente la acuchilló en el cuello varias veces hasta matarla. Después, le quito la piel y organos. El llamo a su ex-esposa para contarle lo que había hecho y pedirle ayuda; sin embargo, ella lo denunció y la policía lo encontró con el cadaver de Ingrid. Al día siguiente la prensa filtro fotografías de Ingrid tal como la habían encontrado en la escena del crimen, cual causó una indignación para las mujeres y ciudadanos.



Otro caso que revolucionó en las redes sociales fue el caso de la víctima Fatima Cecilia Aldrighett, una niña de tan solo 7 años. Su mamá se atrasó en tráfico y llegó 20 minutos tarde por ella a la escuela, pero Fatima ya no estaba. Días después ella fue encontrada desnuda en una bolsa de plástico.

“LA FISCALÍA GENERAL DE JUSTICIA DE LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO (FGJCDMX) ACTIVÓ EL PROTOCOLO DE FEMINICIDIO, TRAS EL HALLAZGO DEL CUERPO DE UNA MENOR, ENTRE SIETE Y NUEVE AÑOS DE EDAD, DENTRO DE UNA BOLSA DE PLÁSTICO, EN LA ALCALDÍA TLÁHUAC.”

- @FISCALIACDMX ANUNCIO POR TWITTER.

Y así fue como empezaron las protestas. Estas marchas se hicieron en todo el mundo en lugares como Francia, España, Chile, México, etc., y llevaban letreros cuales decían “la policía no me cuida, mi amiga sí”, “si soy la próxima quiero ser la última”, “vivas y libres nos queremos”. Entre estas marchas, en Chile se realizó una canción “Un violador en tu camino” cual se expandió en todo el mundo y se hizo el himno de las feministas. En este performance las mujeres vendaban sus ojos con pañuelos mientras cantaban y bailaban esta canción.

*“El patriarcado es un juez que nos
juzga por nacer, y nuestro castigo es
la violencia que no ves.
El patriarcado es un juez que nos
juzga por nacer, y nuestro castigo es
la violencia que ya ves.
Es feminicidio.
Impunidad para mi asesino.
Es la desaparición.
Es la violación.”*

Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba
ni cómo vestía.

Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba
ni cómo vestía.

Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba
ni cómo vestía.

Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba
ni cómo vestía.

El violador eras tú.

El violador eres tú.

Son los policías, los jueces, el Estado,
el presidente.

El Estado opresor es un
macho violador.

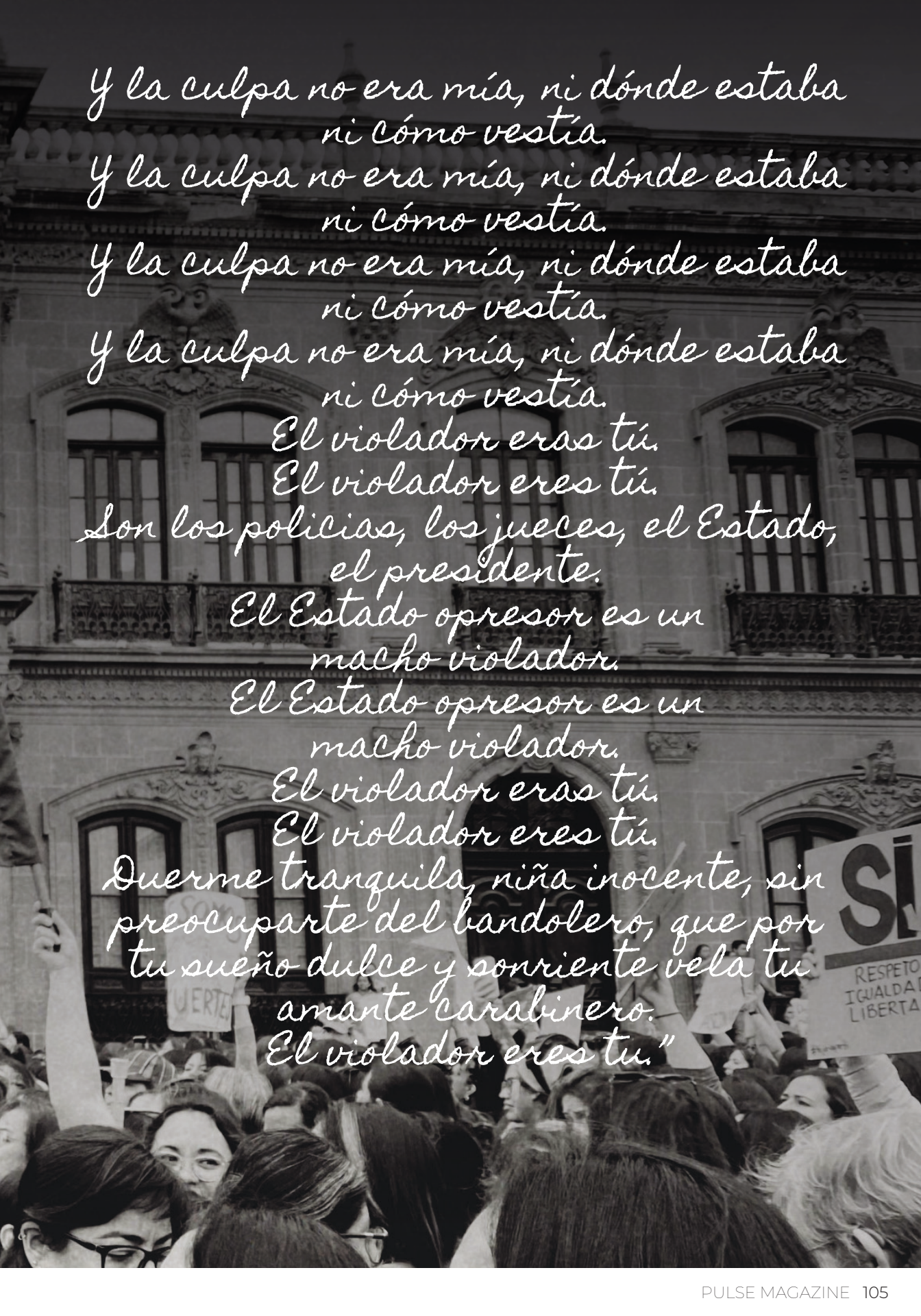
El Estado opresor es un
macho violador.

El violador eras tú.

El violador eres tú.

Quierme tranquila, niña inocente, sin
preocuparte del bandolero, que por
tu sueño dulce y sonriente vela tu
amante carabinero.

El violador eres tú."



SO NEW WAVE MUSIC

SDI



ADDICTION SPECIALIST

By Lexi Kintigh

Illustration by Valeria Peña

I am confined.
As are you.

Chained to a life of
Barred wrists,
A struggle I did not know
I was playing into.

There had been a time without it. That has passed.
I knew the pain,
I welcomed it.

It was a whisper in the night,
Inviting you into my playground.
You captured my all too willing lips
In a dangerous dance.

You played into perfection.
Blowing the magnificent life of influencers
Out of proportion. Telling me
I was not enough for anyone.

You were a constant buzz in my skull.
The Athena to my Zeus.
A headache that lasted forever.
Until the moment I faced reality.

I was not alone. Others were consumed.
Trapped in the repetition of swiping
And tapping into plastic worlds.
I had to find a way out.

Like a dandelion,
I blew through the wind.
Unable to move on
My own free will.

Unless I tried hard enough.
Opening the begrudged device,
Staring at the perfect faces,
I wondered what it would be like.

To not be shackled down
Was a dream I was willing to chase.
Unplug the cord.
Delete the apps.
I cut you out,
Tasting a new existence.

There was one that existed without
Judgement and constant scrutiny.
I could finally be me. No more
Ever-watching birds flying above.

It wasn't until I noticed you
Once more, in another stranger's
Eyes that I dared trying to find my way
Home to you.

We both crawled closer.
Testing the waters to see
Who would let up first.
Would it be me who caves?

No. My petals wilted in fear at what
Needed to be done. I opened the application.
One little peak. That was all it took for me to
Realize what I was searching for.

I want to live.
Not by your standards.
There was a slither of hope
Climbing up a vine nearby.

It was another taste of that
Exalting freedom of being my own
Owner. I was being offered
Roots.

No hesitation to be seen,
I planted myself.
I would no longer be blown away by strangers.
I am born new.

I am liberated.
Are you?



LEICA

MORE THAN A CAMERA

Story and photography by Michael Gonzalez

The Leitz Wetzlar company, better known as Leica, continues to be a relevant camera manufacturer over 152 years after their inception. Its M camera series has defined the work of photographers far and wide and has characterized the aesthetic of the renowned photo agency, Magnum. A journey that began in 1869 when Ernst Leitz Sr. founded the optics manufacturer persevered and developed the world's first compact cameras nearly half a century later in 1913. Such an invention used movie film to conveniently capture photographs instead of using a clunky box camera. This revolutionary device brought massive success to Leitz and established a brand revered as the Lamborghini of photographic equipment.

The success of Leica as it turned towards manufacturing photographic tools also kept money pouring in and rising global fame. But it also faced some challenges. While Leica's success was growing, Nazism and Adolf Hitler also continued to gain popularity going into the 1920s. By the 1930s, Ernst Leitz II and his daughter Elsie Kuhn-Leitz coordinated a challenging effort to station Jewish employees out of Germany in what has become known as "the Leica Freedom Train."

Ernst Leitz Sr. and an employee, Oskar Barnack, being innovators found a way to lure photographers out of

their studios to document what was happening around them. By pairing the remarkable optics from Leitz Wetzlar with a camera body, Leitz Sr. and Barnack revolutionized photography. Photographers would now be able to travel the world and shoot roll film which is more convenient than other processes at the time. From major world events to the everyday mundanities would now have lenses gazing upon the action all around the globe. This development birthed the vital career path known as photojournalism as individuals would be able to capture moments anywhere. The momentum Leica gained in 1913 with the first compact camera prototype paved the way for this brilliant invention to ultimately be released to the public in 1925. With this newly found success in the camera industry, Leica became well-known and prosperous in the United States among other markets. It was around this time that Hitler's appointment to Chancellor of Germany in 1933 caused panic among Jewish associates in Germany as they feared what would happen to them. Leica used their recent success to act swiftly in transferring employees out of Germany to satellite offices anywhere.

Ernst Leitz II took over the company after his father's death in 1920 and held the reigns over Leica during the 1930s. He joined the Nazi party as it was in his best interest doing so because he could carry out the veiled mission that has defined his



life. As referred to in Paul Bartrop's book "Resisting the Holocaust," days after Leitz II became a member of the Nazi party, he gathered Jewish employees and transferred them to Leica offices in other countries. Kurt Rosenberg, one of the employees, is mentioned in Bartrop's book having been sent to New York in 1938 with all expenses covered personally by his boss. Rosenberg was also sent with a sum of cash along with a highly valued Leica rangefinder that could be swiftly peddled if needed. Their cameras were aimed at those with deep pockets and a love for German engineering. The well-known Leica II with a lens would set you back around \$84 in 1932 which is over \$1,500 today when adjusted for inflation. In addition to employees, their families were factored in when considering the game plan for evacuating Germany.

After Hitler got appointed to Chancellor of Germany, the decade only worsened with the introduction of the Nuremberg laws in 1935, which included many effects such as barred marriage between people of Jewish and German descent. Other laws aimed at marginalizing Jewish individuals were severing political affiliations, ripping away businesses, and both physically and verbally harassing Jewish individuals. Habitually referred to as the Oskar Schindler of the camera industry, Ernst Leitz II and Elsie Kuhn-Leitz acted as a saving grace to many Jewish employees when Hitler began ravaging the country. Albeit Schindler's furtive arrangements for his employees wound up saving over 1,000 Jewish persons; Leitz II faced the same risks for the hundreds he saved, and could have been executed for his efforts.

The Leica Freedom Train was most active in the years leading up to the beginning of World War II. Leitz II was able to find success in his labors as Germany required the optics and photographic equipment his company manufactured.

THEIR CAMERAS WERE AIMED AT THOSE WITH DEEP POCKETS AND A LOVE FOR GERMAN ENGINEERING.

According to the Guardian article "Behind the camera – secret life of a man who saved Jews from Nazis," Leica cameras were seen as important contributors to Nazi propaganda. The production of pro-Nazi photographs greatly supported Leica as cameras were sent everywhere to document battles, individuals at concentration camps, and officials such as Hitler.

Cameras were produced for the German Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe among other branches of their armed forces, so it only made sense to allow Leitz II to conduct his business without interference. Once Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the closure of borders and logistical barriers prevented Leitz II from sending additional employees to safe havens.

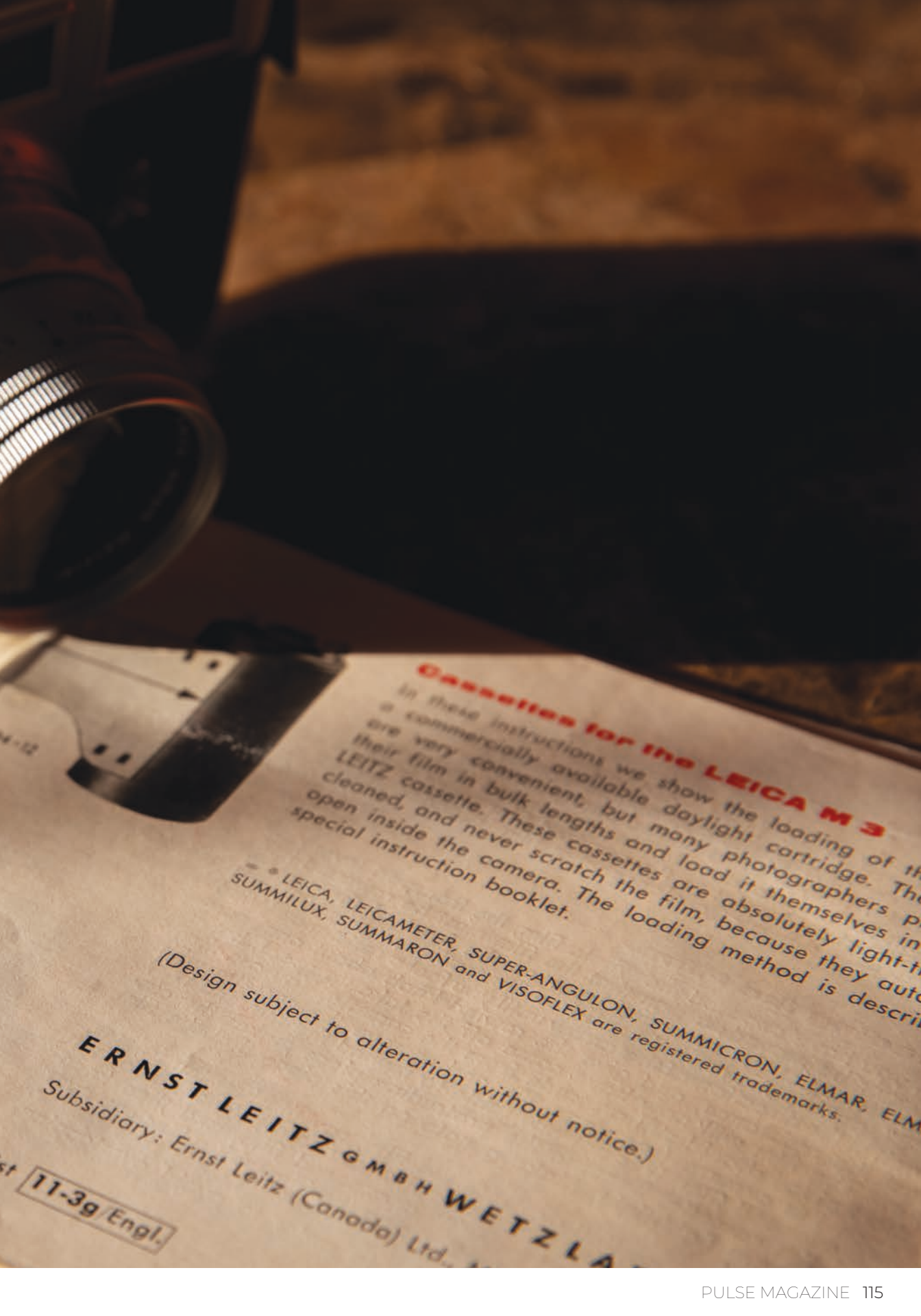




Leitz II was posthumously honored by the Anti-Defamation League in 2007 for his life-defining efforts to save hundreds of Jewish employees. The Leitz family legacy has fostered devoted customers known as “Leicaphiles” consumed by the handmade lenses and hefty camera bodies. Vintage camera bodies and lenses continue to sell for thousands as preferred tools for photographers. Leitz II and Elsie’s clandestine undertakings live on through the countless individuals here today since their grandparents and great grandparents evaded persecution.

**LEICA CAMERAS
WERE SEEN AS
IMPORTANT
CONTRIBUTORS
TO NAZI
PROPAGANDA.**





Cassettes for the LEICA M 3

In these instructions we show the loading of the a commercially available daylight cartridge. These are very convenient, but many photographers prefer their film in bulk lengths and load it themselves in LEITZ cassette. These cassettes are absolutely light-tight, cleaned, and never scratch the film, because they automatically open inside the camera. The loading method is described in a special instruction booklet.

— * LEICA, LEICAMETER, SUPER-ANGULON, SUMMICRON, ELMAR, ELMARIT, SUMMILUX, SUMMARON and VISOFLEX are registered trademarks.

(Design subject to alteration without notice.)

ERNST LEITZ G M B H WETZLAR

Subsidiary: Ernst Leitz (Canada) Ltd.

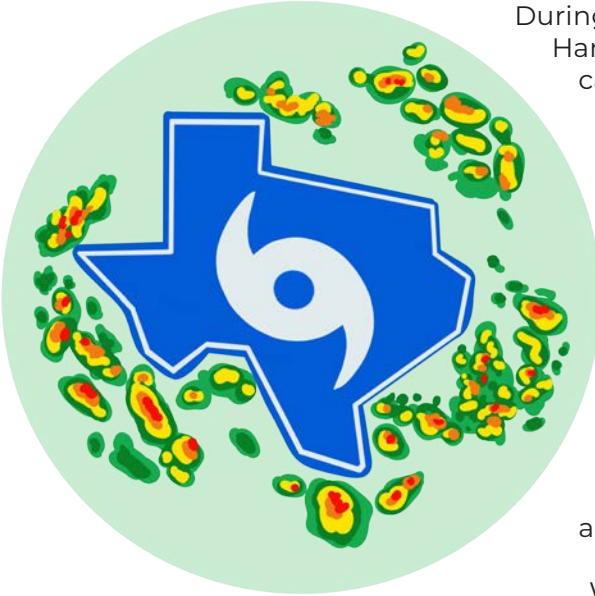
11-3g/Engl.

events on earth in 2020

By Steven Hughes

Illustrations by Cecilia Sierra

texas summer hurricane



During the summer of 2020, hurricane Hanna hit the Rio Grande Valley. The storm caused an estimated \$366 million worth of damage to the region, according to the National Weather Service in Brownsville.

In the height of the event, about 250,000 community members were without power. Some families were in the dark and humid conditions for more than two days.

Several videos on YouTube showed the damage the 90 mph winds caused. In Corpus Christi, an H-E-B truck tipped over and slammed the road. the driver was OK.

What made Hanna problematic was the flooding. Due to pre-existing poor drainage systems, Hidalgo and Cameron county saw 18 inches to 4 feet of water.

"hanna marked the first direct landfall and track of a hurricane across deep south texas and the rio grande valley for the first time since hurricane dolly in 2008"

-national weather service

"Hanna marked the first direct landfall and track of a hurricane across Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley for the first time since Hurricane Dolly in 2008," the NWS wrote on its "Hurricane Hanna Brings Flooding Rains, Damaging Wind to the Rio Grande Valley, July 25-27, 2020" webpage.

united states wildfires

Much of the Western United States fought wildfires from August 2020 into 2021 because of drier than normal conditions and winds stoking the flames.

The states affected by these wildfires include California, Colorado, Oregon, and Montana. Even the United States' northern neighbor, Canada, had wildfires.

"the 2020 [re] season was a record-setting one for the state of california and the [u.s.] as a whole"

-center for disaster philanthropy



According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP), the National Interagency Coordination Center reported 52,113 wildfires burned over 8 million acres last year.

“The 2020 [fire] season was a record-setting one for the state of California and the [U.S.] as a whole,” CDP wrote.

California made headlines as 2.3 million acres burned in 2020.

“You only have to see what’s happening in California this wildfire season to understand climate change is real,” California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a press release on his website.

To assist in recovery efforts, visit the American Red Cross’ Wildfires Relief Information webpage.

mauritius oil spill

A Japanese bulk carrier leaked over 1,000 tons of oil onto a coral reef on the south-eastern coast of Mauritius in July, according to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

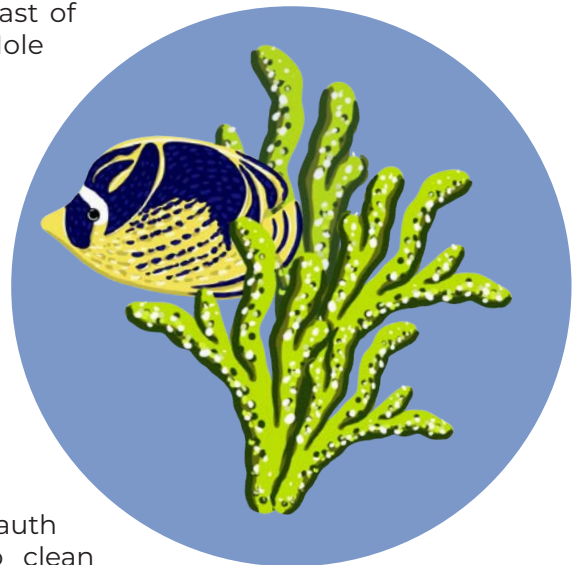
It was discovered that there were cracks the MV Wakashio’s hull, which caused the oil to seep after the ship ran aground on July 25, according to the European Space Agency.

According to the owner of the carrier, Nagashiki Shipping Co. Ltd., the damage occurred when bad weather pounded the carrier’s starboard side, causing the bunker tank to breach.

Mauritius’s Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth and the French government worked to clean approximately 18.6 miles of coastline. Members of the community also assisted in the effort.

Back in 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico damaged the coral community. In a research paper published by the National Academy of Sciences, a non-profit organization that advises the nation on issue related to science and technology, it noted that the oil caused the coral to look “unhealthy” and the organism living in them to leave.

To assist in recovery efforts for the Mauritius oil spill, visit One Green Planet’s petition “demand Nagashiki Shipping Clean Up the Oil Spill in Mauritius.”



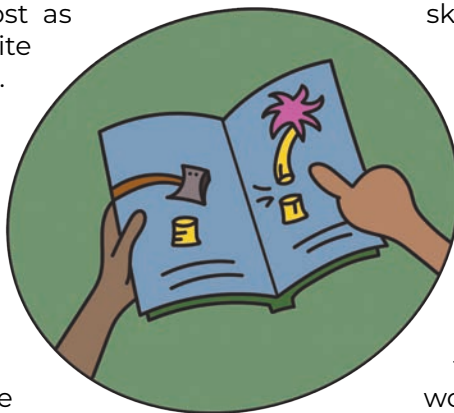
Coexisting with Earth

By Faith Chua

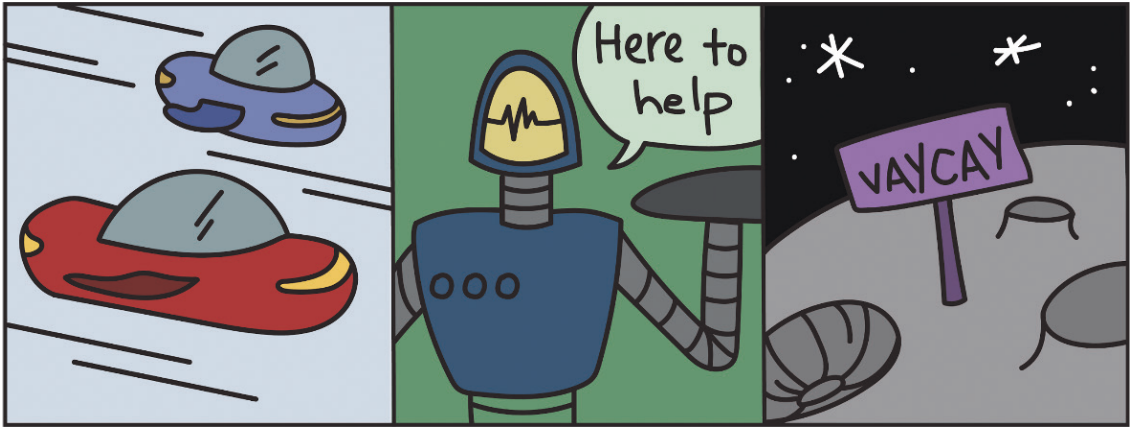
Illustrations by Valeria Peña

Remember that part in Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*? when the Once-ler built his empire of thneeds. We see the factory he has built. The movie depicts it as a large ominous building, with smoke bellowing out the multiple chimneys. The once blue skies are now gray and almost as dark as the night despite being the afternoon. The water is not much different, and the landscape looks like a desolate wasteland. The Bar-ba-loots are starving because all the Truffula Trees are gone, the fish are drowning in polluted water, and all the Swomee Swans can't breathe without coughing up a lung. How did that story end again? Oh, yes... he eventually ran out of the Truffula Trees to make his thneeds and his business fell into ruin. Now he lives alone in the

remnants of his abandoned factory, in the world's darkest and probably most radioactive area, and the only thing in his possession is a single Truffula seed, which he asks someone else to plant. Wasn't it so nice when that was just a story in first-grade? We came home to blue skies and watched some television afterwards.



Now, we find ourselves, perhaps in a worse situation than the Once-ler. In the pursuit of progress and material things in a rapidly growing population, we are now faced with forest fires on either side of the world, random cold fronts in the middle of summer, and even locusts in East Africa. We no longer need to imagine a world where trees are burning all around us and the oceans, once so clear and filled with life, are pitch black and dead silent. A world



where the animals that were once there are now gone. The birds stop chirping, the cicadas stop singing, and the dogs stop barking. We don't need to imagine it anymore because this fantasy has now become a reality.

Flying cars, robots as servants, vacations to the moon, and a world without suffering. This was what many envisioned the future would look like. A utopia built on the latest cutting-edge technology that made dreams come true. Movies like *Back to the Future* and *Tomorrowland* are perfect examples of what people back in the 19th and 20th century thought the future would be. This was brought on by the Industrial Revolution, which led to increased food production, advancements in science and technology, and overall widespread urbanization throughout the world. This fostered hope and new dreams; the ability to create a world that solely lived in our imagination was now a power we held in the palms of our hands. A man landed on the moon, the world's information at the touch of our fingers, and the ability to be connected to anyone, anywhere, at any time. What used to be the dreams of our predecessors are now our realities, but at what price did these dreams come?

Much like *Once-ler* in *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, we've become intoxicated

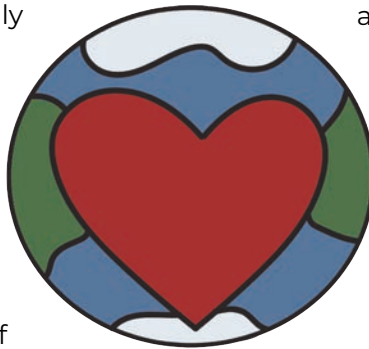
by our own success. Blinded by greed and ambition, as a society at large, we thoughtlessly plowed forward with little regards to the repercussions of what our actions would bring. Today, the society and culture we have created is one that values comfort and convenience, but it was not always like this. We did not always have the power to randomly order whatever we want with the tips of our fingers. Clothes weren't made at breakneck speeds with plastic so thin it feels like cloth. Despite not having the technology we do now, our ancestors managed to find ways to thrive. They lived off the resources they did have, which often was not a lot, and worked hard to produce products such as clothes and certain types of fruits and vegetables. Rather than constantly looking for new things, the majority of the population lived and made the most of what they had. Progress allowed for so many advancements necessary to adapt and thrive rather than to simply survive. Though, by the looks of things, I would argue that what society needs now is not to stop pushing for progress in our personal lives but instead shifting some of the focus to the environment. We advanced agriculture, textiles, healthcare, communication and more. Now it is time to focus on how we can use what we gained from the Earth and pay back that kindness.

In recent years, the world has become more aware of the harmful environmental impacts and slowly but surely, reparations have begun on both a small and large scale. When we hear of environmental sustainability, what do we normally think of? Is it the reusable straw, the bamboo toothbrush, or the tote bags people are now bringing to the supermarkets instead of using plastic bags? Is it the increasing number of people becoming vegan or vegetarian? What about simply going to your city's local recycling center and dropping off your recyclable waste? The truth is, all these things are ways to be environmentally sustainable. Any way that reduces our carbon footprint and ensures that there will be enough resources for future generations is considered environmentally sustainable. In theory, it sounds simple. Use less plastic. Don't always buy things when you don't need to. Don't eat too much red meat. In practice, however, it gets a bit more problematic. Sidney Bartley, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Youth and Culture for Jamaica, was a panelist at the International Congress's "Culture: Key to Sustainable Development" back in May 2013 in Hongzhou, China.

He stated that "economic demands have made vulnerabilities of all of us. In that vulnerability, we act not in accordance with our environment, but in a counter point way with our environment, and the environment becomes a point-counter point to human existence."

He meant that in order to solve the problem of environmental issues, the environment and culture should stop being two separate perspectives. Rather,

"Economic demands have made vulnerabilities of all of us. In that vulnerability, we act not in accordance with our environment, but in a counter point way with our environment, and the environment becomes a point-counter point to human existence."



they must be seen as two spheres that influence each other to some degree. Individual acts of sustainability are good, but to truly make a noticeable impact, most of the population needs to do this. For the sake of clarity, I will be focusing largely on culture in the western hemisphere, most specifically the United States. This is because a large aim of many brands and products from the 19th and 20th century onwards, was primarily focused on comfort, accessibility, and convenience. Think microwave dinners, same-day Amazon deliveries, and single-use products. As long as it was quick and easy, many people tended to gravitate towards that. When occupations and general life became more fast-paced, we needed the things in our lives to match that.

So, let us take a trip down memory lane. Our journey starts with 18th century England. This was when new sources such as steel and iron were used. There were also new sources of power such as coal, petroleum, and electricity. This new variety of resources and fuel naturally led to new inventions. These new inventions led to changes in manufacturing and gave birth to the factory system and division of labor we still use today. Our beloved car was first seen around 1769 as a steam-powered automobile. Many of our trendy crop tops, high-waisted jeans, cable knit sweater vests, and faux-leather jackets that come from brands

like Zara, Forever 21, H&M, and Topshop are thanks to the first powered loom and modernized sewing machine. Many college students' favorite foods include including instant ramen, Takis, and my personal favorite, Stripes' breakfast burritos, are thanks to both agricultural leaps and the complex machines that can mass manufacture and create these delicious treats. These brands and their products solely exist due to the inventions brought about during the Industrial Revolution.

These inventions were undoubtedly useful and allowed for more job opportunities, widespread availability for food and clothing, and quickly met the needs of a rapidly growing population at the turn of the century. The Industrial Revolution also allowed many people to shift their focus from trying to survive to actually thriving. Advancements in physical medicine created room for addressing mental health as more than hysteria and insanity. Canned goods such as fruit cocktails, SPAM, and beans became essential during times of hardship and war. The clothes we buy from fast-fashion brands allow us to express ourselves through another creative outlet without necessarily having to break the bank for new fashion trends such as buying \$800 Balenciaga platform Crocs back in 2018. So, with all these advantages, why is it now a problem?

As much good as the Industrial Revolution has done, it had long-lasting effects that could not have been predicted. When we finally saw the negative impact it had, we relied so heavily on the products that came from it that when we finally saw the negative impact it had, it was hard to stop. Everything comes at a price and this is no exception.



We wanted faster and more efficient labor? We got that through cramming a bunch of the lower-class population, especially women and children, in a poorly ventilated room and told them to do the same repetitive task. The poor ventilation and the combined body heat of everyone in the room made for the term “sweatshops.” They would do their tasks 10 or 12 hours a day and get paid barely enough to afford one of the canned goods they helped package.

These same people would go home to their one-bedroom apartment that they shared with eight other people and split that tin of canned beans nine ways. Advancements in medicine also came about because of disease. The poor living conditions people lived in caused an increase of sicknesses such as smallpox. An abundance of trash, constant proximity to other people, and bad personal hygiene as many did not have the luxury of a good, hot bath, contributed too.

Do you remember when I said there was an increase in resources? Well, with increased food availability and job opportunities, the population in both Europe and the United States skyrocketed. The more people there were, the more resources companies used. Soon, the abundance was no longer abundant. Rather, it was just enough. Then just as quickly, just enough became not enough.

The clothes from these beloved fashion brands use these systems of overusing resources and making use of international sweatshops, primarily based in developing countries. A sweatshop, which violates U.S. labor laws, are poor working conditions that have employees in tight spaces, pays them low wages, but requires them to work long hours, according to dosomething.



org. Fun fact, when you look at your clothes and see that it has some blend of polyester or nylon, those are types of plastic fibers. This means your clothes do not biodegrade so they stay in landfills for decades after the original owner has worn them.

We just have to remember that this is not just a game of monopoly, where we can pack up at the end of the game.

While rocking whatever aesthetic fits your fancy, one might feel a bit peckish. As fast food continues to grow in popularity, it does not come as a shock that the food that tastes finger lickin' good is not the best for our health. Another crisis that has been arising around the consumption of this type of food is the rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. Part of the reason is because foods like instant ramen have high amounts of sodium in them. Companies do this as a cheap way to add flavor and since salt does not go bad, it has a long shelf life. When the food in one's diet is usually either saturated in oil or butter, has liberal amounts of salt or sugar, and mostly relies on meat

and carbohydrates, it is hard not to see why our health is declining the way it is. Many people still rely on this type of food, however, because of how easy and affordable it is. Plus, it does not taste half bad either.

Our society has slowly shifted over the years to becoming reliant on these comforts. Some can genuinely not live without them. The problem now is, how can we shift our society back to being sustainable and not instantly kill the planet, while we still have things that are affordable and convenient? This is where, as a community, we need to make the effort to change.

Instead of buying meat and vegetables that have been treated with chemicals at the supermarket, we can support our local farmers. This also encourages us to properly pay people for the work they do rather than invest in companies who capitalize on the use of migrant farmers who are then paid way below the minimum wage. Community-organized farmer's markets are both a fun time and a way to support each other. Just eating at local restaurants can help a great deal. Admittedly, these may be more expensive options compared to McDonald's \$1 breakfast



This is reality and it takes time, a lot of effort, and a large amount of people who support the cause.

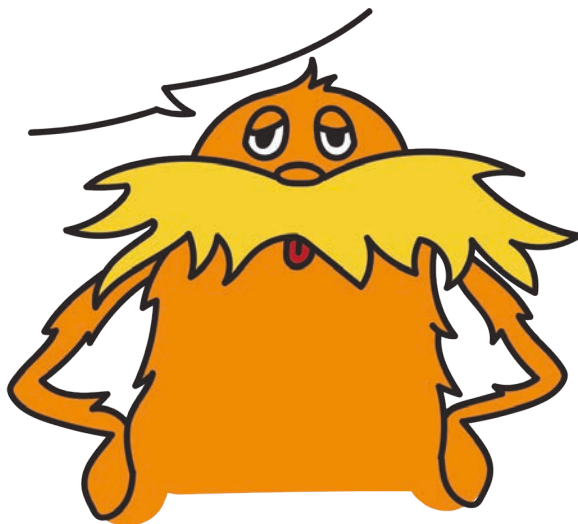
menu, but it is an option. There have also been projects around the country where open lots are used for gardening and the community is allowed to reap what they sow (pun intended).

A trend that has been gaining rapid popularity over the last few years is thrifting. This includes clothes, books, bags, you name it. This helps combat the negative effects of mass production by allowing these items to have a second life rather than just rot away in the landfill. It really is great to see that when one looks to Instagram, Tiktok, or even Pinterest, we see people creating these new styles and trends by using what they find in thrift stores.

Listen, I know I've just written a very long column on sustainability and called out several brands, but things are easier said (or written in this case) than done. Reversing the effects of pollution, over-harvesting, and the very corrupt system of capitalism is not easy. We just have to remember that this is not just

a game of Monopoly, where we can pack up at the end of the game. This is reality and it takes time, a lot of effort, and a large number of people who support the cause. Steps have already been made to create a better environment, both from individuals and the government itself. If we continue to care and make conscious decisions about the impact we have, then perhaps we aren't headed for the desolate planet we see in Wall-E.

Like the wise Lorax said, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."





ADVANCING MEDICAL RESEARCH WITH SNAKE VENOM

By Steven Hughes

Illustrations by Aaliyah Garza



A team comprised of a biology lecturer and two biology students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley are investigating the possible pharmaceutical benefits of snake venom.

“Snake venom molecules such as phospholipase A2 can kill some pathogenic bacteria. So, venom phospholipase A2 could be used to develop new life-saving antibiotics,” Dr. Ying Jia, a biology lecturer, told The Newsroom.

Jia, alongside biology seniors Ivan Lopez and Paulina Kowalski, recently had their research published in the *Journal of Venom Research*.

In the report, the researchers used the Western diamondback rattlesnake’s venom because it is “likely responsible for most snakebite fatalities in Northern Mexico and the second greatest numbers in the [United States] after the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake.”

According to a research paper published in a journal titled *Toxins* (Basel), the earliest use of venom in medicine dates back to Aristotle's time (384-322 B.C.).

The Romans also used animal venom to treat smallpox, leprosy, and fever. Antidotes weren't around until French scientist Albert Calmette found them by injecting small amounts of venom into rabbits. He did this to justify using it to make antivenom, recorded in his 1896 research paper called "The Treatment of Animals Poisoned with Snake Venom by the Injection of Antivenomous Serum".

After Calmette, venom research expanded to other areas such as the treatment of epilepsy. On Sept. 10, 1910, a newspaper called *Morning Press* reported research efforts in New York and Philadelphia on this topic. Dr. Ralph Spangler, a Philadelphia physician, found that using rattlesnake venom suppressed the frequency of seizures.

"The venom when given hypodermically [fluids injected beneath the skin] makes a profound impression on the nervous system,"

Spangler told the newspaper.

"I am convinced from my limited experience with its use in epilepsy that there is a distinct possibility of our having in this therapeutic agent a drug which, upon further medical investigation and study, may be the means of modifying the convulsions in epileptic attacks and possibly lessening their frequency."

It may seem excessive, but snake venom is also in cancer research. In a Jan. 8, 2020 report published by the American

Cancer Society, the United States had over a million new cancer cases and over 6,000 deaths. Back in the 1930s, Hiram Essex and James Priestly injected rattlesnake venom into 15 rats that had tumors. However, the results didn't yield any effects.

Several more studies were conducted revealing no avenue for snake venom in cancer research until after the 1930s. Researchers started to isolate components, such as phospholipase A2, which made way for snake venoms to be used for cancer target therapy.

"The isolation and characterization of components of snake venoms paved the way for cancer-targeted therapy in modern medicine," according to a 2018 research paper by Li Li, Jianzhong Huang and Yao Lin published in *Toxins* (Basel).

Cancer is formed when old cells don't die and keep growing, eventually becoming a tumor. Snake venom acts as an antiangiogenesis agent, which "prevents the growth of new blood vessels that tumors need to grow," according to the National Cancer Institute.

Snake venom is traditionally known to be used as an antivenom. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife "Snake Bites Statistics" webpage, about "7,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the [United States] annually." It adds that one to two people die each year from snakebites in Texas. Snakes often don't inject venom whenever they bite. This is called a dry bite.

On the top of a snake's head are the organoids, where the venom is produced.

Venom is categorized as neurotoxicity or hemotoxicity.

“The hemotoxic venom may affect the organs and blood, which may cause inflammation and breakdown in a body,”

according to Snake-Removal.com,

“A hemotoxic bite is the most painful since it hurts, and the tissue will start to die off. Neurotoxic venom will affect the nervous system and it leads to seizures and then to death. The neurotoxic bite is the most deadly. However, one snake may have two options when it comes to their venom, and it is hard to know which snake has which venom.”

The venom from a bite of a snake shows not only the lethality of its blood-clotting powers, but it also gives paths for medical research, aiding in the treatment of life-threatening illnesses. Organizations like MToxins Venom Laboratory, an educational facility and producer of venom extraction, see this and dedicate time and money to serve a community one drop at a time.

SPIRIT • PRIDE • TRADITIONS • COMMITMENT • UNITY • LEADERS • SPIRIT • PRIDE • TRADITIONS • COMMITMENT • UNITY • LEADERS



HAVE A SAY, ENGAGE TODAY!

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Brownsville: BSTUN 1.28 / Edinburg: EUCTR 215

✉ studentactivities@utrgv.edu ☎ 956.665.7364

utrgv.edu/studentactivities

SPIRIT • PRIDE • TRADITIONS • COMMITMENT • UNITY • LEADERS • SPIRIT • PRIDE • TRADITIONS • COMMITMENT • UNITY • LEADERS



By Dwayne Vega

Illustrations by
Michel Flores Tavizón

I joined the Army when I was 19 years old. I learned how to shoot, move, and communicate from my drill sergeants who seemed to take a sadistic pleasure in breaking us down. It would take years for me to realize they did it to build us back up. But what did we become? For all the training we did, nothing prepared me for the devastation I saw in Iraq.

Every day, out on patrol, I saw this little kid, dirty and spritely, hawking his DVDs and snacks from the bakery that his family owned. It was nestled behind a copse of palm trees above a small river that provided both water and a place to dump the villagers' waste buckets. His name was Mohammed, but I called him Alex because he looked like my little brother. Every morning, the river would carry away the waste of the villagers who lived in the small, hot, and humid town

just outside our Forward Operating Base (FOB), a secured military position used to conduct operations, according to defenceiq.com. The stench was unpleasant, but not unbearable and I got a kick out of watching someone upstream pour their buckets of human waste into the stream while someone downstream scooped out water for cooking and drinking. Iraqis had titanium stomachs.

"Fie for a dolla, fie for a dolla," Alex yelled at the top of his lungs.

I snapped my head around, assessing the sudden squeal. Was it a threat? When I noticed it was just this little kid slinging DVDs, I told him to come over to my Humvee, a military automotive vehicle. Part of the mission was to win the hearts and minds of the locals,

FIE FOR A DOLLA MISTA, FIE FOR A DOLLA

and we stupidly thought that injecting cash by buying the local wares was a surefire way to help Iraqis love us. I mean, it could have worked but U.S. soldiers conducted no-knock raids on an almost daily basis. Twelve highly motivated soldier-teenagers would kick in the thin wooden doors of “suspected terrorists” or “terrorist sympathizers” looking for weapons, which we always found because Iraqis in the countryside often had AK-47s and a stash of bullets. We would use that as a pretext to zip cord the man of the house, slam a black bag over his head, hog-tie him, and take him to our FOB where he would be put into a kennel like a dog in a shelter. If he told us what we wanted, he could return home within a few days. If he didn’t say anything, his stay extended. Winning the hearts and minds one fabricated, intrusive raid at a time.

“Fie for a dolla mista, fie for a dolla,” Alex said to me with his grubby little paw outstretched up to my gunner’s hatch.

“What do you have there?” I asked. He showed me, with a beaming smile, the DVDs he was selling. The titles were in Chinese, but the pictures on the front were stills from the movies. It was interesting to see his collection as the titles were all currently in theaters. I remember purchasing: Spider Man 2, Troy, Dodgeball, Kill Bill: Volume 2, and Napoleon Dynamite. I passed down a bottle of water, Meals Ready to Eat (pre-packed meals), and a \$5 bill. He smiled up at me and blurted out a surprise, “Shukran, mista”, and he darted back across the street to his family’s bakery where he came back with a fresh loaf of bread and tossed it up to me in the gunner’s hatch. I broke the bread in half and we ate it while he drank the water and ate the M&Ms from the MRE bag. I waved goodbye to him and he skittered off into the hot day, looking for other G.I.s to sell his movies to.

The next time I saw Alex, he was hanging dead from the bridge that crossed the river going into his village. The DVDs were strewn onto the ground below his body and I am sure I saw a \$5 bill fluttering away in the wind. His family’s bakery shop had been burned to the ground. I was trained to shoot, move, and communicate. I could knock down an advancing enemy from 300 yards away with my M-4, but there was no one to shoot. So, I took out my anger on everyone I thought was responsible, the no-knock raids were a little bit more violent and occurred more often. When I checked people for weapons, I took the time to make sure they suffered additional humiliation and felt the helplessness that I had.

I was sad, mad, and out of control; I wanted to cry too, but I took that feeling and channeled it into rage.

I was at war with these innocent Iraqis; I imagined myself as a modern General Sherman and this little village was my Atlanta. I wanted to raze everything and purify it with an inferno. I saw everyone as a combatant, and no one would escape my wrath. The only thing preventing me from lining everyone up in the village and executing them in revenge for my little buddy was the knowledge that I would have to do mounds of paperwork and I might have gotten sent back to the United States. before I had gotten the chance to kill any Iraqi people. Also, I guess the Rules of Engagement, laws that outline whom, when and why you can shoot, held me back.

I made sure to show them that I was an enemy. But why? I wanted to get revenge for my little friend Alex, but in the process, I proved the people who had murdered him right. I was an ugly violent American who only wanted to cause the Iraqi people harm.

I didn’t learn that lesson then, but I know it now.

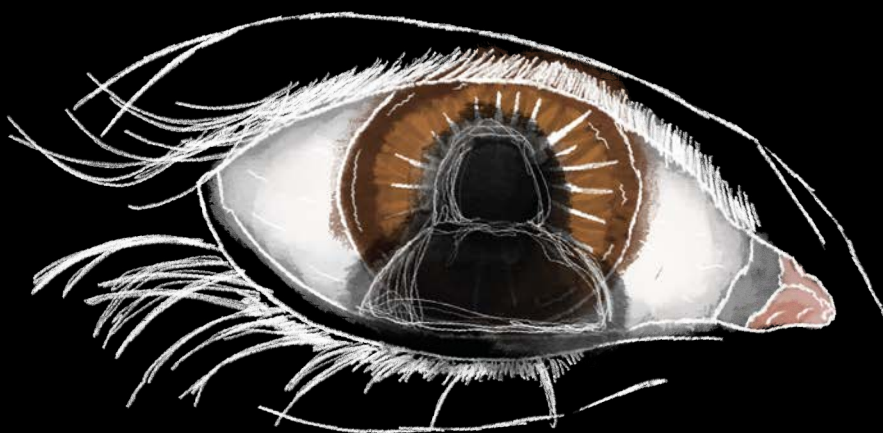
Answers

By Kaylee Hensley

Illustration by Manuel Gámez

In the darkness there is a room. A small cavern hidden away that undermines the cognitive processes of the dust accumulating in the air. This is where black engulfs the body. The unvoiced corner of a box. And with a small, simple spark the room comes to life. Shadows now danced along cave walls and surrounded the small body of a young woman, seated and holding her scathed

She poked at the twigs beneath the fire with a nearby stick, and watched it crackle and breathe just like her. She listened as the sound echoed across the floor. She cleared her throat. That echoed too. She listened again. Now it seemed life beyond just existence was possible in the darkness. She watched as the shadows continued to dance across the ceiling of the cave. Her eyes caught her own



knees to her chest. When her chest rose and fell against her she figured she was the only breathing thing in there. But the reflection of the fire before her, crackling and burning in the glossy gaze of her brown eyes assured her otherwise. But now what? Just her and this fire existing together in darkness. And their friends, the shadows, too. No speech or words to entertain any other signs of life.

shadow stretched onto the wall in front of her. It was thin; too thin and looked alien. Her long curly brown hair made her outline look wild and disjointed. She grimaced and rubbed along her arms, feeling the bones of her elbows poking out. She felt the urge to scratch her back and felt each vertebra down through her over worn t-shirt. She sighed and turned her focus back to the shadow before

her. She blinked a few times. The body looked less stretched out and began to form a small human figure identical to hers. She sighed again. This one heavier than the last. It was silly of her to look around to see if anybody was watching her. But she wanted to hear her voice if she had one. Who else but the fire could judge her? Her eyes tried to make out the shadow on the wall again.

"Hello," she said to it. Her voice sounded strained and scratchy.

Silence.

She cleared her throat again.

"My name is Farren. What's yours?"

"My name is Farren," the sound of her voice echoed and bounced off the walls, and back to her. It left a rhythmic buzzing in her ears, and she enjoyed it.

Then, Farren sat in silence. The fire crackled again.

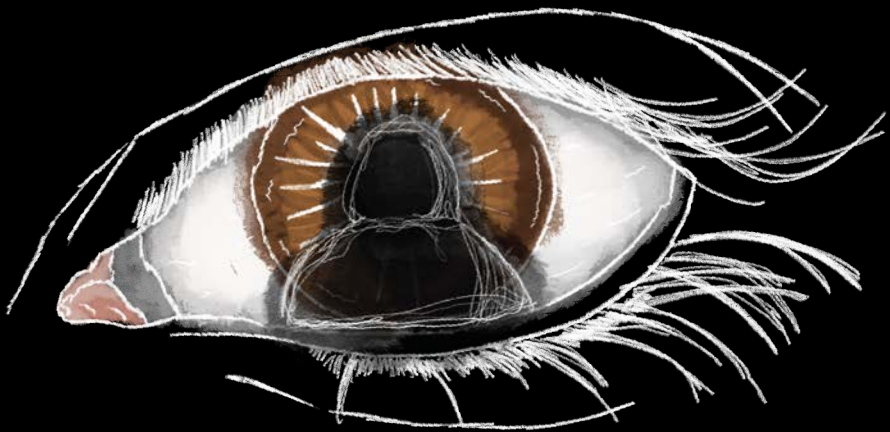
"Who are you?" an echo suddenly rang out.

Farren snapped her head up and strained to listen. What was that? She leaned forward on her hands and leaned back, looking around the corners of the cave. Nobody else could possibly be in there. It is always only her. A weird, delayed response maybe? But it didn't sound like her voice. It sounded like someone else's. Farren bit her lip in concern, considering whether she should reply.

"I'm Farren," she replied again,

"Who's there?"

There was another pause.



Farren looked around, following the echo as it dwindled off. She giggled. The smile stretched across her face made her skin feel strange, but she liked it.

"No, I'm Farren. Who are you?" Farren asked again in amusement.

"No, I'm Farren" the walls echoed back.

"I'm Farren" the echo responded.

The words seemed to bounce around the walls less and focused themselves on the wall across from Farren. She began to study her shadow again. This time more intently. Except, her shadow didn't look like her shadow anymore. The hair seemed shorter and the body was fuller. Definitely not her scrawny

little body anymore.

Against her better judgment, Farren decided to acknowledge the shadow seriously.

"Are you Farren too?" she asked.

"Yes," the shadow responded.

"I like the name Farren," Farren smiled.

"I see," the shadow responded again.

Farren sat in awe of herself talking to something that wasn't breathing like her. It was even more shocking that she was actually talking to something that was responding. Suddenly, Farren felt a chill and scooted closer to the fire. She wanted to ask more.

Unsure of what to ask next, Farren sat silent, just watching the tips of the flames touch the edges of the shadow.

"What else do you wish to ask me?" the shadow's voice echoed.

Farren, still cautiously studying the shadow, furrowed her eyebrows.

"Do you wish me to ask you something?" she asked.

"You asked of me first. You began the game," the shadow said.

"A game?" Farren questioned.

"Yes. The game of questions," the shadow responded.

"And answers?" Farren inquired.

"What kind of answers?"

"Well, right one's of course," Farren said.

"What designates an answer to be right? Because you say it is?"

Farren opened her mouth to respond but said nothing. She was stumped by this. What would designate an answer as right? Especially since this dark cave held no rule book, only existence. And she knew no rules. What was right? Farren pulled her arms in close again. Her right hand pressed up against her chest, and just beneath it there was a soft thumping. Could it be that her heart could tell her the truth? She felt this overwhelming need to answer.

"My heart then," Farren heard herself say.

"A heart?"

"Something that beats within me. I feel with it," Farren responded.

"Feel?" the shadow asked.

"Well, not how I feel with my body," Farren pondered, "but it's something inside that is invisible, but I feel with it like the way I feel the warm or the cold."

"Then if it is invisible how can you know if the feeling is true or not?" the shadow inquired.

"I... I don't know... because I just naturally trust that my heart knows the truth," Farren replied.

"Why?"

"Because it's part of me," Farren clutched her chest.

The shadow was silent for a moment.

"Do you think your name is right for you?" the shadow asked.

"Yes, I do," Farren replied.

"And your heart tells you that?"

"I suppose so..." Farren replied again.

"Well then that can't be it," said the

shadow, "how can it be that I have no heart and I know that my name is Farren? The feelings of the heart don't fit this equation."

"You don't like your name?" Farren inquired. "I don't know," replied the shadow, "I just have it."

"How can you not know?" Farren asked.

IF SHE WAS THE SHADOW,
AND SHE WAS ASKING THIS TO
HERSELF THEN SHE REALLY
DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING.
COULD IT BE NOTHING SHE
BELIEVED WAS RIGHT?

"I just don't," the shadow said simply.

Farren felt frustrated by this. Not knowing things seemed to make her unsettled. How can someone not know? Farren scratched the top of her head and gently caressed the outline of her skull.

"My head, er, my mind?" she answered anxiously.

"No, no. I have no mind and yet I have the ability to ask," the shadow said. "It must be something more."

Farren sat silent again, defeated. This shouldn't be this complicated. Or should it?

"What of the fire?" the shadow spoke again.

"What of it?"

"Does it know what's right? It breathes just like you."

Farren watched the fire as it continued

to dance and sway. It burned such a deep red and yellow. Its light spread out across the floor, trying to clear the darkness away. She smiled softly.

"No... I don't think so," Farren said "it just burns."

There was a pause.

"And what about you?"

"What about me?" asked the shadow. "How can you tell that Farren is the name that is right for you?" Farren asked. There was another pause.

"The only thing I know is that I am you," the shadow responded.

Farren furrowed her eyebrows again.

"You're me?"

"Yes." The shadow seemed to be sure about this one thing.

"You said you didn't know things, but now you know this?" Farren felt herself become irritated.

The shadow was silent.

"And how can this be? You can't be me. I haven't been responding for you" Farren pressed.

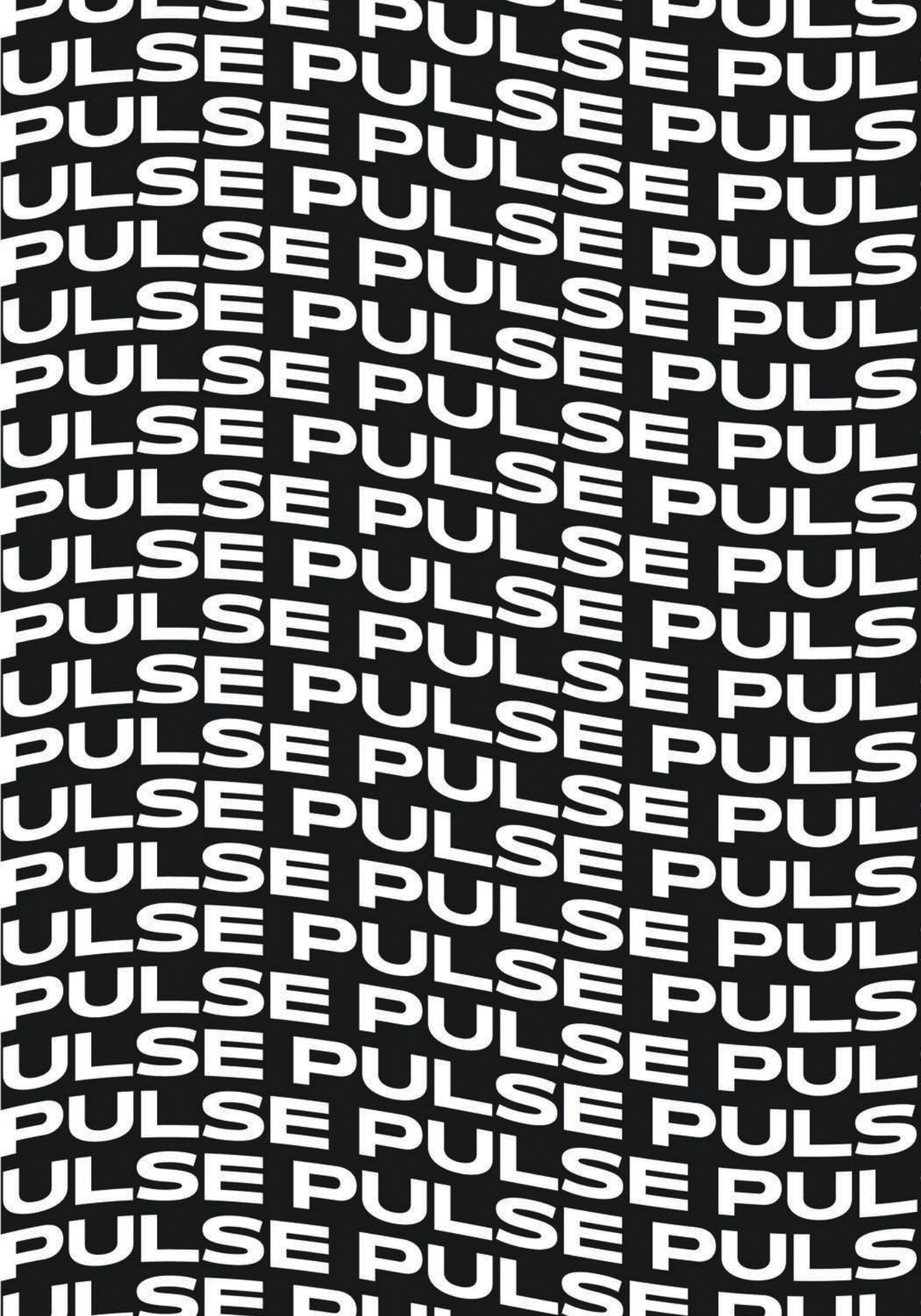
"No, but I've been responding for you," the shadow said. "Which is why I ask again, what designates something as right here?"

Farren felt cold again. She was torn by this. If she was the shadow, and she was asking this to herself then she really didn't know anything. Could it be nothing she believed was right? Is that right is decided by someone else? And how would she know it was right? Because some else deemed it so?

"I don't know," she croaked out. Even though she could say she felt her place was in that cave, who could say that she was right anymore? Farren mourned over the feeling of being lost for the first time. It felt like her once beating chest was suddenly empty.

She remembered the ratted t-shirt that hung off her body and felt that it held no warmth to it at all, along with the loose tattered shorts she wore. Farren huddled in close as she felt the walls of the cave seem closer than usual. A whistling of wind appeared out of nowhere and it whipped around the room forcing the fire to shrink. It pulled at Farren's hair and nearly pushed her off balance. She huddled into herself trying to hold together. Lost. She thought. Lost and maybe trapped.

"Farren!" she heard herself call out. Whether it was to herself or the shadow, the sound of her voice struggled to echo across the cave walls. Her shadow began to shrink too and then it was gone. The darkness closed in again. Farren was a little ball now, huddled against herself as the wind disappeared into nothing. And then, the darkness took her too.



Where It All Began

By Steven Hughes

It is a Saturday morning around the early 2000s. The smell of bacon coming from the kitchen filled my bedroom. The sound of it sizzling grew louder as I followed the scent of smoke to get my father's famous bacon sandwich – two to three strips of bacon over American cheese between two slices of wheat bread. It was simple but delicious. I sat in front of the television and grabbed the remote to watch “Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends,” a British children's T.V. series based on “The Railway Series” books by Rev. Wilbert Awdry. Twenty years later, not much changed other than cooking the vegetarian version of my father's bacon sandwich.

“Aww! you still watch Thomas?” My mother would say when she catches me watching it on my phone.

I would get embarrassed when she called it out. Perhaps it had something to do with my unchecked anxiety? I recall watching the Big Bang Theory when Sheldon, who also likes engines,

wanted something Thomas-related. I didn't remember what caused my embarrassment to flare up and run away to my room, but the feeling never left. From that day, it felt like enjoying stuff from my childhood was taboo.

During my time as a reporter for The Rider newspaper back in 2017-2018, I found a YouTube channel called Victor Tanzig. He wrote, directed, and acted in a series called “The Stories of Sodor” where he takes the characters from the T.V. show and incorporates them into his own world. The YouTuber uploads an episode every Friday morning, as of publication. I would go to the Student Union at UTRGV in Brownsville to order my sunrise croissant and watch Tanzig's video for the day.

The themes in Tanzig's videos are more serious compared to the original “Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends.” For example, he has done a miniseries called “The Stories of War.” The series revolved around World War II and showed all the death and sorrow during that time. One scene that forever remains burned into my eyes was when Adam, one of the engines who volunteered to serve in the war, and his crew entered a woodwork facility. There they discovered Nazis used the machines, such as saws, to gruesomely cut up prisoners.

“There is no God, and if there is, he sure as hell isn't fucking good,” Adam said to his platoonmates, Edward and Gordon.

This level of creativity demonstrates how much the fans who first watched the show matured. Although now the original T.V. series takes more liberties about what happens in an episode, such as the engine's increased animated movements, I still appreciate the series for giving me a childhood and getting me interested in editing and storytelling. It showed me to not be ashamed of my childhood and it

was okay to still like shows like “Thomas and Friends.”

Another show I grew up with was “Steven Universe.” It is a show about a boy who must save the Earth from aliens who are designed after precious gemstones. These alien gems use a planet’s life source and energy to create new beings and only stop when the planet is virtually dead. He is half-gem and half-human and works with his friends, three rebel gems, Pearl, Amethyst and Garnet, to save the universe.

I was about 13 years old when the show came out. It was also during the time when I revealed my sexuality to my parents, the start of a journey on finding how I wanted to express myself. At the time, I struggled with my mental health but I didn’t know why. The show supported me through that with its generally light-hearted themes but surprisingly touched on subjects like mental health and self-worth.

I remember the episode where Amethyst and Pearl, two of the main characters, got into an argument and ending up fighting at the Kindergarten. The quarrel was featured in the episode called “On the Run.” It starts with Steven and Amethyst wanting to run away from the stresses of home. The friends traveled through the countryside, in song, to Amethyst’s place of origin. The Kindergarten was a place where gems like them were created, Amethyst herself was of the gems from that specific area. Amethyst in comparison to the other gems, is very young. Somehow, she came out centuries after the rebellion, and not only that, she also came out different. Amethyst is shorter and, due to her experiences, much more carefree, unlike her soldier siblings. Despite her nonchalant and upbeat attitude, she is very insecure about who she is and ends up resenting a

lot of things about herself. After the brawl ended and the dust cloud faded, Amethyst revealed these insecurities and claimed she felt that Pearl kept reminding her of the reasons why she hated herself in the first place.

“You want to pretend that none of this ever happened,” Amethyst cried. “You think I’m just a big mistake.”

Pearl replied that she did not think that. Quite the contrary. She thought Amethyst was one of the few good things that came from the Kindergarten. It is a great example of open communication between the two characters, especially since these two specific characters often just yelled and bickered with one another throughout the series. That scene helped me understand why I felt like Amethyst. It was because I could relate to her. I understood her feelings of self-doubt and self-loathing.

On Pulse’s website, I wrote another personal essay that had a quote saying to be “unapologetically yourself.” From the ages of 18 to 20, I cared about what others thought of me. It got to a point that I neglected my mental and physical care, like setting boundaries. These shows were there for me when I need a laugh, cry, or anything other than a numbing feeling.

I learned this in my philosophy course called PHIL-1310: Ethics, Happiness, and Good Life - “Do what will yield you the most happiness.” If watching childhood T.V. shows accomplishes that, why stop?

“At the time, I struggled with my mental health but I didn’t know why.”





