

PULSE





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

005

Hello,

Thank you for your support of Pulse magazine. As a student-run publication, Pulse has brought together a group of unlikely people to stand as a team and make something we are all proud of. From the artwork to the pictures to the stories, this magazine is the essence of who the Pulse 005 staff are. It was an honor to create this issue and in doing so, make connections that will guide our careers and ultimately our lives.

This edition was created to celebrate our growth as people. When I asked my staff and I to look back at who we were when we started college to who we were as we began making this magazine, we all agreed those two versions of ourselves were nothing alike. We honor our growth with this magazine as it holds fragments of each and every one of our personalities in the moments we made it.

I would like to thank my staff for all their beautiful ideas and for having the courage to stand by my side as we took Pulse into new territory this year. My team tested the boundaries of what a magazine can do. We held a festival, expanded our use of multimedia and offered a platform to the strong and proud voices of the Rio Grande Valley. I would also like to show my gratitude to our advisers and their assistants for all their hard work. Lastly, thank you to our contributors and supporters. This issue is dedicated to everyone who made this year possible and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping us get this far.

I hope as you read this year's issue you are inspired to act on your dreams and what you stand for. Pulse magazine 005 has shown us the magic in believing in ourselves and that we are often capable of more than we give ourselves credit for. We can only hope it gives you that, too.

Patricia Monet Ramon

INSTRUCTIONS TO: DO SOMETHING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

By: Yazmín Sánchez Cortez

Illustrations: Leeanna Alaniz

It's been a while since marketplaces started to change plastic bags for reusable bags. But, this change was only made for the plastic bags you get at the end of your shopping trip when you are paying. What about the plastic bag you used to put your veggies in? The one used to put products bought in bulk? What about the one you get when you order food to go? What about the Styrofoam container? The list can go on and on, but this is not about the places where you get plastic for free.

ACCORDING TO THE GUARDIAN, ONLY ABOUT 30% OF PLASTIC EVER PRODUCED IS STILL IN USE. THE REST HAS BEEN DISPOSED OF IN ONE OF THREE WAYS:

79% ACCUMULATED IN LANDFILLS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

12% INCINERATED

9% RECYCLED

There's a lot about pollution that is out of our control, or that is harder to control. For

example, the use of fast fashion. Stores like Forever 21, H&M and Zara produce clothing that is made out of synthetic fibers, or at least isn't made out of cotton. These clothing also come from sweatshops where people are not getting paid fairly. However, to pay for something that is fair-trade, or at least not made out of plastic can be expensive and out of our price range. But there are other things that we can and should do to control our waste.

Almost two or three years ago, a video about a turtle with a straw stuck in its nose went viral and people magically stopped using straws, exchanging them with silicone or metal reusable straws. Along with these, a lot of people also bought brand new metal utensils and started bragging about how they were "ecofriendly" by carrying their utensils without actually using them. Months later another video went viral and the idea of being ecofriendly was forgotten.

Generation Z was raised with more environmental awareness than past

generations. Just try to watch your mom brush her teeth while the water is running without generating anxiety in you.

Some things are harder to change and other things are already normal to us that, although they help to combat the environmental changes, are not enough. We are already used to closing the water tap when we are not using it. To turn the lights off when there's sunlight or there's no one in the room. To walk when there's no real need to use the car or when the destination is within walking distance. However, this is not enough.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, recycling rates have increased from just over 6% of municipal solid waste generated in 1960 to about 16% in 1990, 29% in 2000 and over 35% in 2017. However, plastic recycling has increased by only 8% during the same amount of time. But, in comparison to other solid wastes, plastic takes the most time to deteriorate.

It's difficult to change habits. The simplicity of having everything done in a matter of minutes, like making a call, printing something, getting somewhere, looking up something or buying food, has become the new normal. We are so used to getting stuff easily, using it and then throwing it away. As we do with clothes because fast fashion is popular and we keep doing with plastic since it's everywhere and everything is discarded as quickly as it is acquired.

It's hard to make changes, but not impossible. I hopped a little late on the "ecofriendly" train back in October by carrying my utensils. Then I added the cup, then the straw, and after four months there are some things you need to know about making these changes in your daily habits.

To carry the stuff you may need throughout the day may seem like a tedious thing to do, but as any habit goes, it's about doing it so often that at some point you cannot live your life without doing it.

1. DON'T JUST CARRY A STRAW

As a start, it may be a good option, and no battle is small enough to not be fought. However, don't you think it's kind of redundant to use a metal straw in your disposable plastic to-go cup? I have committed that mistake a couple of times when I forget to pack my cup from home, and the guilt strikes at the exact moment when you want to buy a drink. Believe me, you don't need that drink that much and perhaps, you will be avoiding a small purchase.

2. BUY YOUR REUSABLE STUFF WISELY, OR DON'T BUY IT

When carrying a reusable straw became a trend, a lot of people bought the straw and because online pages packaged it with a set of utensils, people made the mistake of buying the utensils, too. Some of those pages sold wood utensils, which were not useful since the knife doesn't have sharp edges and the tines and points of the fork were too thick to grab something. If you live with your parents, then you most likely have metal utensils at home. If you live by yourself, then you, too, most likely have utensils at home. Don't buy them unless you don't have any.



3. CARRY A FOOD STORAGE CONTAINER (A.K.A. A TO-GO BOX)

Believe it or not, I've seen people trying to buy a to-go box on Amazon for \$22 instead of using the Tupperware their mom has in the kitchen. Same as the utensils, you don't have to buy new stuff to help the environment. Actually, you shouldn't buy stuff to help the environment. Don't buy more plastic to not use plastic. If you plan to buy a new storage container, get a glass container. Although glass takes more time to break down and return to the soil, glass containers can be reused as much as you want and can be recycled easier than plastic.

4. CARRY STUFF THAT YOU WILL ENJOY CARRYING AND USING

Before I started carrying my reusable kitchenware, I only had a reusable coffee cup and utensils. I wanted to get a straw, but thought it was pointless since it wouldn't fit the cup I have. I decided to buy one of those reusable cups that the theater sells to promote movies. So, I waited for a cup with a picture I'll enjoy and wouldn't feel ashamed

to show at any fast-food restaurant. Since fast food branches usually sell their own reusable cups, buying a reusable cup at a specific place can have its benefits. For example, I don't get charged for soda at the movies anymore (it doesn't even have the theaters' logo on it) and I'm also able to carry it with me whenever I need to avoid single-use plastic cups or containers.

5. DON'T GET DISCOURAGED

There are times when you are going to feel that this is pointless, especially at parties, when everyone is using disposable plates, cups, straws and utensils. People may laugh at you for taking your food to-go in a container like an old lady. You may feel all your work is going nowhere, but even after a week, especially if you eat out of home often, you'll look back at the many times you took out your bottle to fill it with soda, or your container to store your leftovers. If you put all those containers you didn't use together, then you'd see what a difference it does make.



6. "TO ERR IS HUMAN ..."

You don't have to be perfect every time. Sometimes you will forget to carry your stuff. Maybe one day you will bring lunch to school or work and you will think there's no point to carry all your necessities because it is tedious, but a friend will invite you to go to the coffee shop next door and you'll have to have a disposable cup. It's OK. No one is perfect and you are trying to make a difference. That's enough alone. Imperfect people who are willing to make a change is what is needed. However, when you find yourself with a disposable cup or straw, wash it and dry it the best you can. A clean cup has more chances to be recycled than a dirty one.

7. ALWAYS CARRY YOUR APPLIANCES

I will say it louder for the ones in the back. ALWAYS. You may think you don't need it. Maybe you are not planning to buy food. Maybe the restaurant you are planning to go to doesn't use disposables and you don't need to carry reusables. Trust me, something ALWAYS comes up and it is better to carry your stuff than regretting a cup. Usually, when I don't bring my cup I save the money, but there are some times that I want a drink so badly, that I'll just accept that the cup will stay with me on this earth for the rest of my life.

To change habits is hard; everyone makes mistakes. I sometimes still forget to ask the waiter to not put a straw in my drink. Seriously, who needs a straw in a lemonade when you're at a restaurant and can easily sip from the glass? That's just waste at its finest. But to change is not impossible; it's commitment and the desire for change.



WE CAN ALL DO IT: CARRY YOUR CUP, BRING YOUR PLATE. IT MAY NOT BE EVERYTHING, BUT IT'S A STARTING POINT. LET'S NOT JUST SAVE THE TURTLES, BUT THE WHOLE OCEAN.

VEGETARIAN DIARIES

By: Yazmín Sánchez Cortez and Gabriela Gonzalez

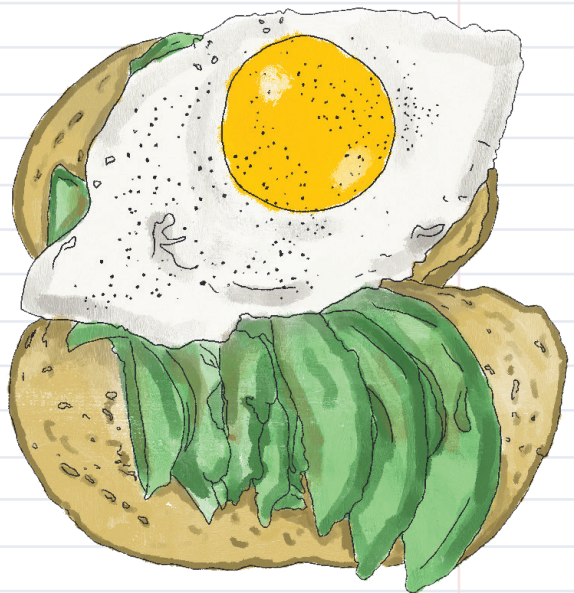
Illustrations: Manuel Gámez

GABRIELA'S ENTRY

Jan. 1, 2020. New decade, new me, right? I am leaving a decade that inspired changes, evoked resilience and brought transformation into my life. I will be leaving behind bad habits and negativity, and will be taking up good habits alongside a new challenge: becoming a vegetarian. I have decided to start the new decade by getting rid of meat from my diet. While most people decide to go vegetarian for health and ethical reasons, I decided to try vegetarianism out of curiosity and willpower to see how I would respond to the change.

First thing, I should mention, I am a meat lover. I can indulge in the meatiest foods and be satisfied to the fullest. Bistek-filled papa asada. Crispy chorizo with oozing cheese. Salsa verde and cilantro-filled fajita tacos. I eat meat religiously. This was going to be a challenge, but I was up for it. I decided to go vegetarian on New Year's and feasted on meat New Year's Eve like there was no tomorrow. I filled myself up on the meatiest potluck foods to endure what the next weeks of vegetarian life would be like. Before this approach, I attempted both veganism and pescetarianism. Each experiment having its difficulties and circumstances. A typical vegan diet entails abstaining from all animal products, while a pescetarian diet, similar to a vegetarian one, is flexible and allows you to substitute seafood for meats.

Being vegetarian in a predominantly Hispanic area is one of the biggest challenges I came across during my meatless journey. My usual diet consists of little to no dairy, minimal amounts of bread, fair amounts of vegetables, and usually white meat as my choice of protein. Considering the demographic of the Rio Grande Valley, it was difficult to get rid of meat without the obstacle of temptations of carne picada and without the potential mixed reactions received from friends and family. Initially, I figured my mom would call shenanigans on my attempt, but to my relief, she was supportive.



The first three days of being vegetarian were probably the most crucial ones. This was a transitional period in slowly getting accustomed to removing meat and implementing a different balance of foods into my diet. During these few days, the changes I noticed, if any contributed to my diet change, were that I only got hungry around evening and not during the day. Whether it was related to my change in diet or not, this was something I figured a few days of adjustment would require.

Through late-night hunger pangs and fridge visits, I would think about meat. My fridge usually contains plenty of meat products, but thankfully because of my sister and her past three-year vegan experience, it was easier to prepare foods without meat. Considering the vast amount of produce we have at home, it was easier being much more health conscious.

I started this experiment two weeks before school started. So, I was able to experience what it meant to be vegetarian in two varying environments: during the winter break and at the start of the new spring semester. Being vegetarian during the break served to be much simpler since I didn't see the need of spending money on food if I was going to be spending most of my break resting at home. Once spring semester started, the circumstances took a 180-degree turn.

I would spend less time at home and more time at school. Not being at home most of the day became an obstacle during this time. I resorted to eating to-go foods or went to my local frozen yogurt and smoothie shop since it was the most convenient option. My taste buds craved the taste of meat, but I did

not give in regardless of how tempting the smell of Chick-Fil-A at the Student Union was. This was when I remembered about the alternatives: tofu, mushrooms, beans, and cauliflower. These nutrition-filled foods helped me out throughout vegetarianism, but these were not always the foods I was craving. I wanted something savory, something that would balance my nutritional days with my not-so-nutritional days. I think the common misconception with removing meat from one's diet suggests resorting to solely fruits and vegetables. I also think people believe it is a gateway to losing weight. But the opposite is true.

I liked the idea of implementing and trying something new. Although if there is anything negative that I experienced, it is how my weight fluctuated. This was my first concern with my personal animal-free diet. I don't believe in numbers when it comes to weight nor do I care to define myself based on a numerical system. I noticed differences in how certain articles of clothing fit as I progressed with the experience. Or, did I regress? My jeans became a bit tighter, possibly from increasingly eating grains and dairy. I ate more cereals, pastas and rice. I insisted on refraining from any dairy milk and would instead drink either almond or soy milk. Although, I ate cheese as though I was a type of cheese enthusiast. Feta, Muenster, Parmesan, mozzarella; these were my go-to types.

My other concern while going vegetarian was how my skin seemed to be getting more troubled as the days went by. I have always had combination skin, where some areas are oily, and some areas appear to be dry. Yet, this seemed to fluctuate much more during this time. I believe that because of my changes in my

diet, specifically in the dairy food group, I experienced a sort of hormonal imbalance contributing to the inflammation of my skin and breakouts.

Of course, my experience wasn't just one obstacle after another. I discovered that vegetarianism is not a bad experience, nor should it have to be. I initially started knowing what I was giving up without any thought of what would be brought back to me. During this time, I noticed positive changes in my efforts and dedication to apply this lifestyle for a few weeks. Each day was a push toward growth and through numerous temptations, the experiment taught me the willpower to not give in and the patience of taking things one day at a time. This same mentality can be applied to many first-time experiences. In the process, I educated myself on how getting rid of meat can help combat current global issues through measuring food sustainability and acknowledging how crucial resources, such as water, can be preserved by removing meat from one's diet. As Paul McCartney once said, "Vegetarianism takes care of so many things in one shot: ecology, famine, cruelty."

I lasted 27 days without eating any form of meat. Almost four whole weeks. However, this is the beginning. Would I challenge myself again to removing meat from my dietary regimen? Absolutely.

Struggles aside, I understand that I can proceed with this diet through better planning and preparation instead of jumping ahead without proper thought. If there is something that I would like to do differently the next time I attempt vegetarianism, it is to not get too comfortable with familiar foods and to venture trying new foods. This change

has taught me to not focus so much on eating the same foods that would trigger a comfortable and stagnant palate. I would especially prioritize cooking instead of conveniently (yet, financially inconvenient) eating out. Preparing meals in advance would make for a healthier diet.

I would expect to see positive changes where I saw problems with my weight and skin condition. This one is for vegetarianism and my future attempt: until we "meat" again.

YAZMIN'S ENTRY

I've never been able to eat veggies willingly, as I'm more of a meat person. Leaving the veggies for the end and then complaining that they're too cold to eat so I wouldn't eat them was my go-to action at restaurants. Although I don't get a lot of vitamins from fruits or vegetables, I have good health and I don't have any cardiovascular problems, yet. However, all my family members, even the ones that have worse eating habits than me, enjoy telling me how I should be careful about what I eat.

I decided to go meatless for a month to improve my health, and see how much weight I could lose just by avoiding any type of meat starting in 2020.

Jan. 3: I never realized how much meat I ate every day until then, especially when going out.

Going out for breakfast in Mexico means having barbacoa or birria tacos, even if you want to get something fancy for breakfast at one of those hotel buffets.

They will certainly have meat in every option.

Although I just went meatless, instead of following a strict vegetarian diet and exercise routine, I have to admit that my metabolism worked faster during that entire month than for the past three or four years. Even a month after the meatless journey, my metabolism kept working better than before.

Jan. 10: I didn't resent the need of having meat at the beginning. I was so aware that I couldn't eat meat and invested myself in achieving that goal for the month that for the first half of the month I felt nothing. However, during the first two weeks, I started eating less healthy. I ate a lot of pasta and rice. The only dairy products I have at home are eggs. Besides that, the milk we have at home is almond milk, the butter is made of olive oil, and there's usually no cheese. So, my diet was based on eggs, cereals and a few legumes.

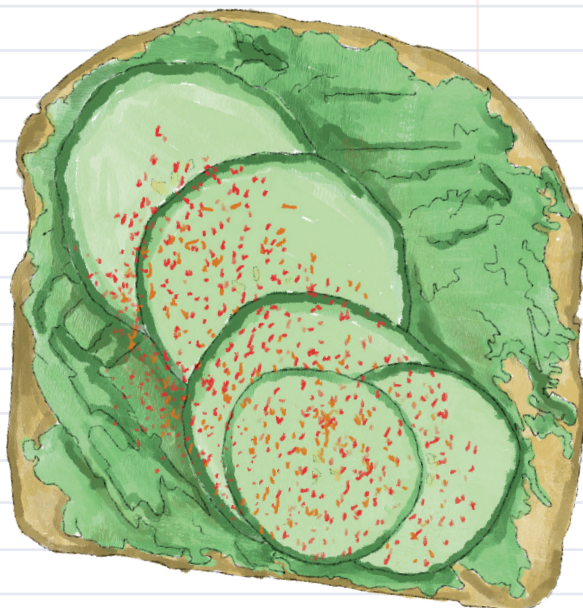
Although I wasn't eating meat, this didn't help me to increase my fruit and veggie consumption. Especially during the break, (with no pride) I woke up at noon and spent the whole day doing laundry and watching TV. I only ate old crackers from the cabinet and, sometimes, cereal with sliced bananas. I went down the rabbit hole so fast that by the time I recalled, I was just avoiding meat. That was the moment when I started counting down.

Jan. 17: By this time, I was avoiding all types of food. I started craving all kinds of meat, even chicken, which I don't like. I just ate cookies and side foods during lunch. Even eating takeout was giving me a hard time, and listening to friends and family saying, "Choose somewhere you can eat" gave me a headache. I tried

all the plant friendly options at the food court in the mall of my hometown, and the idea of eating something "vegetarian" made the food taste horrible.

Jan. 25: The day my diet stopped being meatless. By this time, I was eating French fries, or anything fried that wasn't meat. I didn't want to have food outside the house because I knew I wasn't able to eat what I wanted to eat.

From this experience, the only thing I can recommend is to plan. Research what you want to do. Know the difference between vegetarian and vegan, and the spectrums between them. Plan what you want to eat. Buy your groceries wisely. Learn how to cook, because there's no way you can eat out each day and hope for vegetarian or vegan alternatives. Not every restaurant offers dietary options, and the ones that do will charge you extra. If I had to do this again, I would certainly do it more thoughtfully. Learn from my mistakes, and plan.



THE GREEN NEW DEAL AND THE GREAT FUTURE OF AMERICA

By: Patricia Monet Ramon

Illustrations: Valeria Peña

In 2018, the United States of America emitted 6.7 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. The emitted greenhouse gases are largely due to agriculture, the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, all of which are common practices in the US. This has led the US to become the second-largest country in the world to emit greenhouse gases, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Advocating for a Better World

On Nov. 14, 2019, Andres Bernal, a University of Texas-Pan American alum, came back to the Rio Grande Valley to discuss the Green New Deal, a proposed package of US legislation by US Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), which he was one of the architects for.

The Green New Deal proposal addresses climate change and economic inequality all at once. Ocasio-Cortez and Bernal argue that what will be better for the environment will also benefit the American people, especially those who face economic, environmental, gender and racial inequality.

“We’re having this crisis in the Standing Rock area, in the Dakotas, with the Dakota Access Pipeline, which is threatening the well-being of all these communities,” said Bernal, who studied philosophy at UTPA. “My dear friend, whose father passed away a couple years before [and] her house almost got foreclosed on, didn’t know what to do with her life. She didn’t know

whether to go to graduate school and she just said, ‘I’m going to go to Standing Rock and I’m going to be in solidarity with the people that are here, resisting, fighting back against this pipeline.’”

His dear friend happened to be Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She spent time with the community of Standing Rock as they fought the pipeline from being built to protect their land and water supply and left “deeply transformed” in the words of Bernal. After her time in the Dakotas, Ocasio-Cortez decided she would run for Congress, going up against Anthony Pappas, who had been in the world of politics for over 30 years.

“She set out to start a social-based campaign in her community,” said Bernal, who received his master’s from the University of San Diego. “This meant bringing in everybody, from people who were stand-up comedians to artists to just local organizers and students of all generations who were just interested in something exciting, something different.



So, we did that for the entire year and by the end of it, she pulled off the biggest political upset in modern US history and became the youngest woman to ever be elected into the United States Congress.”

Bernal describes Ocasio-Cortez’ win as a shift in the world. There was now a space open for a new era to transform the world into a better place, which is where the GND comes in.

The Green New Deal

The GND is focused on converting the current economy into a stable one, while also combatting environmental, economic and social issues that are prevalent in the US. In the GND it states the US has “historically been responsible for a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas emissions, having emitted 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions through 2014.” Because the US is such a huge contributor to climate change, the GND proposes why and what we must do to avoid any catastrophic repercussions.

The proposed legislation states that the effects of the earth’s temperature rising beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius would be disastrous, warning that nature’s course will be thrown off, causing mass migration, wildfires that will annually burn twice the amount burned previous to 2019, a loss of 99% of the world’s coral reefs, over 350 million people will be exposed to deadly heat stress by the year 2050, a rise in sea levels, and an increase in severe weather. The GND states that

this will eventually lead to \$500 billion in lost annual economic output by 2100 and \$1 trillion worth of damage to US public infrastructure and coastal real estate.

How does the Green New Deal propose avoiding this?

This approach, which will help us avoid bigger climate catastrophes than we’re already seeing, starts with change. Climate change is a non-partisan issue that threatens the state of the world, regardless of our political party affiliations or background. The GND breaks down how to best tackle this issue, while proposing solutions to other problems within our country, into five set goals.

- Net Zero Emissions
- Good High Wage Jobs
- Infrastructure and Industry
- Clean and Sustainable Environment
- Justice and Equity

Net Zero Emissions

The GND states that the US must have net zero emissions by the year 2050 in order to combat the climate crisis. This means that the amount of carbon we release into our atmosphere is as much as we’d have to absorb. According to the World Resources Institute, the way to achieve net zero emissions is by ridding society of fossil-fueled vehicles and factories and restoring our forests along with any ecosystems destroyed for resources. The

World Resources Institute also mentions that although not every country needs to reach net zero emissions by 2050, at the very least, countries such as China and the US, who are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, should do so.

“We treat the environment like something that’s just going to give us infinite access to things that we can just use for... consumption and then shoot waste back into the environment [like] it’s always going to be there to take on all the waste that we [produce],” Bernal said.

The GND proposes the US reach net zero emissions “through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers.” They ask the country to build resilience against climate change issues by leveraging funds which would then allow investments in “community-defined projects and strategies.” The proposed legislation also discusses eliminating greenhouse gas emissions and pollution through our technological means, which means meeting 100% of the US power demand through “clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources.” This would be possible by upgrading our renewable power resources, such as solar panels, and building energy-efficient and smart-power grids, while also making electricity affordable to the people.

Another area that can help combat our carbon output is by working closely with US farmers and ranchers to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gases emitted from the agricultural sector as much as possible, since agriculture is the

second-largest contributor of man-made greenhouse gas emissions and the “leading cause of deforestation, water and air pollution and biodiversity loss,” according to climatenexus.org. This would be done by encouraging family farming, sustainable farming and sustainable food systems that would ensure public access to healthy foods across the world.

As mentioned before, fossil-fueled vehicles are another big reason for climate change. The GND proposes moving away from those models and for the US to start making affordable zero-emission vehicles the new normal. It also mentions building a high-speed rail, which will help the country to cut down the use of personal vehicles and start making a shift toward public transportation.

Lastly, the GND asks the US to promote the “international exchange of technology, expertise, products, funding and services” with the goal of having the US become the international leader on climate change issues and having us help other countries achieve their own GND.

Good High-Wage Jobs

The proposed package highlights the US minimum wage staying stagnant since the 1970s despite the cost of living and worker productivity drastically increasing. It states that the US has the “third-worst level [of] socioeconomic mobility in the developed world since before the Great Recession” and points out the fact that the country has inadequate resources

for our public sector workers to face the challenges posed by climate change.

“One policy idea that was very important to me was the Federal Jobs Guarantee: unemployment. Today Trump tells us that unemployment is at an all-time low, right? But when you look at what that looks like it’s a lot of people who are either getting paid either very, very low wages, or are having to work a lot of part time jobs. So, the actual well-being of communities is not exactly where it could be,” said Bernal.

The GND talks about how our country is experiencing the greatest economic inequality since the 1920’s with the top 1% earners taking a majority of the gain in the first few years after our economic recovery from the Great Recession. Along with that, there is a major racial wealth divide with white families earning 20 times the wealth of black families and lastly, a gender gap that has women earning only 80% of what men earn. Because of this the US House of Representatives recognizes that if we implement a “new national, social, industrial and economic mobilization”, it will bring about a “historic opportunity” to create millions of “good, high wage jobs in the United States”, which Ocasio-Cortez, and the other architects of the deal, believe will dramatically increase

levels of “prosperity and economic stability” and “counteract systematic injustices” for people in the US

The deal also addresses the issue of education in America. With the average education level in the US being no higher than a high school diploma or a general education development (GED), according to the US Census Bureau, the deal demands for high quality higher education, especially for minorities and other vulnerable communities.

Another topic discussed in the deal is making direct investments in our communities that would positively stimulate our economy and prioritize the opening of high-quality union jobs that include economic, social and environmental benefits for people. These jobs would be high in quality due to their ability to provide “family-sustaining wages, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, retirement security” for all, “strengthening and protecting the right of all workers to organize, unionize and collectively bargain free of coercion, intimidation and harassment”, having adequate workplace health and safety regulations, enforcing antidiscrimination laws, and having better hours and wages for all workers.



Infrastructure and Industry

"We kind of returned to this idea of the New Deal. The entire global economy had collapsed in the 1920's and in the 1930's something had been offered. People demanded social movements, labor movements, movements for racial justice, the origins of the women's movement," said Bernal. "All of that kind of pushed the public to respond. To take responsibility and offer a new deal to its people. To say if you're going to live here and be a part of our community, we have a responsibility to take care of you. We have a responsibility to offer you the infrastructure and the support, so people can live dignified lives together."

Bernal goes on to explain how the New Deal was far from perfect and was built on the legacy of slavery and other racial injustices. In turn, many people were excluded from the benefits of the New Deal, spurring Ocasio-Cortez, and the other architects of the GND, to create something that would benefit everyone and close the wounds of social injustices in America, while also moving the country away from fossil fuels.

Bernal asked attendees, "What if we unlock the power of the public purse, which our federal government has in its

monopoly over the US dollars, which it uses very irresponsibly for war, for tax cuts for billionaires and millionaires and we actually use it to stimulate and improve our lives?"

This seems to mirror the thoughts of presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, who, when asked where the money will come from to fund his policies of free healthcare and higher education for all, tells the American people why they never question where the US gets the money to fund war or tax cuts on billionaires, just as Bernal said. With that in mind, the GND proposes that we "invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century". This means structurally changing the foundation of our country to allow Americans to live sustainable and economically and socially just lives, by investing the obscene amount of money we already use for war and tax cuts on improving a system that Ocasio-Cortez and Bernal feel are currently failing the American people.

Upgrading America's infrastructure via the GND includes providing universal access to clean water, technologically advancing our power systems to be energy efficient, reducing the risks that come with climate change and lastly,



ensuring that every infrastructure bill Congress considers must address climate change.

Clean and Sustainable Environment

Ocasio-Cortez advocates for a cleaner environment through her GND. In the deal she talks about the effects of climate change, pollution and environmental destruction disproportionately affecting minorities and other vulnerable communities in America. Because of this, she asks the US to take leadership when it comes to living sustainably and demands for the to secure clean air and water, climate and community resilience, healthy food, access to nature and a sustainable environment for generations to come.

As mentioned before, this would be achieved by “eliminating pollution and greenhouses gases as much as technologically feasible” and moving the country away from our current energy supply and into more energy efficient resources, such as wind farms. The GND believes another way this will be possible is if we restore natural ecosystems

through “low-tech solutions that increase... land preservation and afforestation”. This also ties into their goals to restore and protect ecosystems that are endangered, threatened or fragile, clean up existing hazardous waste and abandoned sites, and lastly, identify other emission and pollution sources and find a way to eliminate them.

Both Democratic presidential candidates, Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden, mention how crucial the GND is to their presidency, with Sanders dedicating a whole page on his website to outlining the piece of proposed legislation and the positive impact it will have on both the planet and American jobs. Biden said it is a crucial framework for combatting the climate issues we face. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has publicly mocked the legislation and said that, “It’ll crush the dreams of the poorest Americans and disproportionately harm minority communities,” despite the GND’s explicit dedication to helping minorities prosper. Trump also mentions how much good he has done for the planet while in office, despite withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord, making America the only nation to not participate in the accord that advocated for the world to take environmental responsibility, according to the Washington Post. Having our next president implement the GND into his presidency is key to making the



goals of the proposed legislation a reality, something that is considered highly important to scientists, such as Dr. Rachel Cleetus, an economic and climate expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, who are saying the GND is a crucial step in eliminating the impacts of climate change before it's too late.

Justice and Equity

“The lack of availability of work and access to jobs that are meaningful and dignified means that people have to choose to do work in things that might be problematic. Like going into the oil fields, for no fault of their own, for just wanting to bring food to the table and live a dignified life of a family. People are forced into industries that are causing harm for us and for our futures. Or maybe it means growing law enforcement and building more prisons. Or maybe it means creating a mass hysteria over undocumented people [which is] putting babies and children [in cages] on our borders,” said Bernal, talking about the social injustices that occur when high quality jobs are denied to the people of America.

According to the document, this can be solved by stopping any current and preventing any future instances of the US infamous oppression of “indigenous people, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth”. Just as the GND states we should work closely with US farmers and ranchers

to help reduce greenhouse gas emission and pollutions, it states we should work closely and in collaboration with these “frontline and vulnerable communities” listed above to improve their quality of living. This would mean bringing them access to higher education, dignified jobs with sustainable wages, and a clean environment that does not leave them facing global warming repercussions, which these communities are usually not responsible for.

How will the Green New Deal affect the Rio Grande Valley?

The GND would likely bring a halt to Trump’s border wall construction that was going to cut through the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas, especially since it would likely cause irreversible damage to the Texas nature reserve, as stated by earthjustice.org. Along with helping keep our natural ecosystems intact, the GND would likely bring about many high-quality job opportunities to the Rio Grande Valley that could replace jobs in popular industries such as the oil fields. This would allow our community to contribute to enforcing clean energy in the country and would lead to safer and just working conditions that come with the job, according to the deal.

“What if we created millions of jobs and paid people dignified wages to rebuild homes? To install them with renewable energy efficiency. And employ the same people from those same communities to create more parks in their communities,

to create more daycares, support our educators and our caretakers, support artists again,” questions Bernal.

Our community would reap the benefits of a cleaner environment and sustainable farming, as the GND encourages the US to support local farmers and ranchers in order to ensure we are receiving quality food. This in turn would limit the large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions produced by big agriculture companies like Tyson Foods. We would likely see an improvement on the Valley’s public transportation, as well. According to the KHF Group Inc.’s Final Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan, the Lower Rio Grande Valley is in need of a “regular fixed-route public transit”, especially for marginalized communities, such as the elderly, youth and people with disabilities.

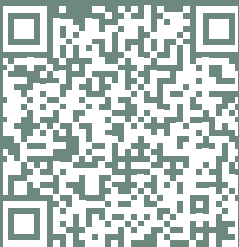
“What if we transformed the way we use transportation in this country?” asked

Bernal. “To where there were high speed trains all across the nation that were based on renewable energy. [Allowing you to] get to Austin in an hour and a half, two hours. And it’s affordable so people can access it... See right now everybody’s driving a car and all these big cities are jammed up and the Valley, it’s going in that direction too. The same model that’s used for growth, that they use in New York, that they use in San Francisco, where it’s now impossible to live because of how high rent is, that’s where all the other smaller cities in the country are heading, unless we change something.”

Bernal states that the GND is about mobilizing communities to become aware of their role in the nations fate, telling the crowd that, “What a Green New Deal would like for the Rio Grande Valley is a little different from what it would look like in the East Coast. So, now it’s our responsibility to ask ourselves ‘What do we need here in the RGV?’”



READ MORE
ABOUT THE
GREEN NEW
DEAL



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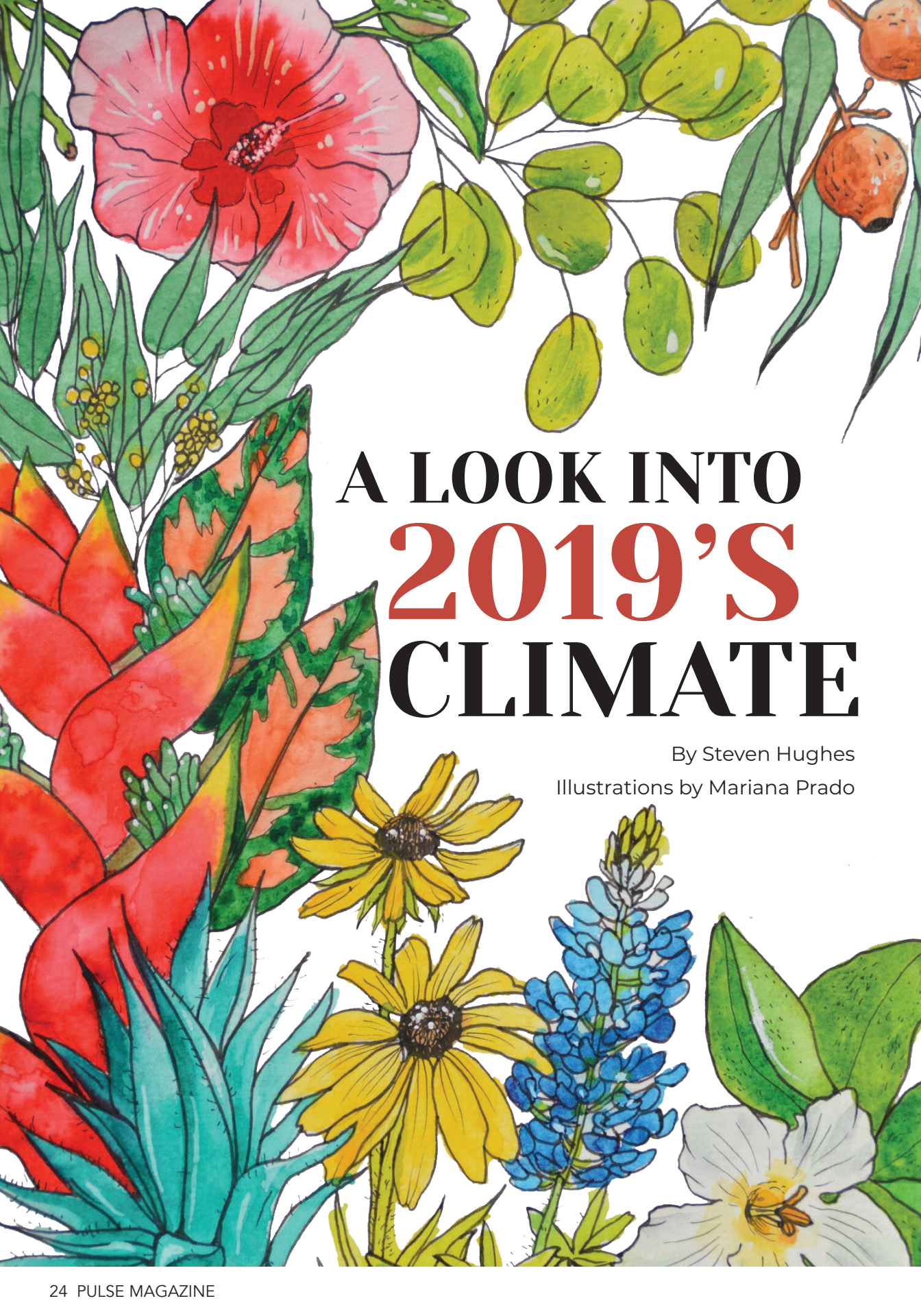
A collage of four photographs: top left shows three cheerleaders in purple and white uniforms; top right shows three students wearing crowns and sashes; bottom left shows a man with a beard and headphones DJing; bottom right shows two students on a red playground structure.

HAVE A SAY, ENGAGE TODAY!

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Brownsville: **BSTUN 1.28** / Edinburg: **EUCTR 215**
✉ studentactivities@utrgv.edu ☎ 956.665.7364
🌐 utrgv.edu/studentactivities

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A LOOK INTO 2019'S CLIMATE

By Steven Hughes

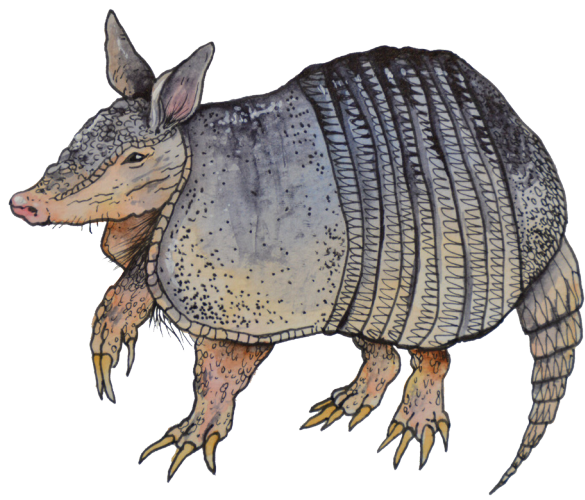
Illustrations by Mariana Prado

TEXAS WEATHER

Last year's temperatures in Texas were above average, such as this winter season, which was recorded as the 31st warmest on record for the state, compared to its recorded coldest temperature at -23 degrees in Feb. 8, 1933. Although late October into November presented a colder weather pattern, that doesn't correlate to the winter temperature pattern, according to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT).

"THERE ARE INDICATIONS DECEMBER WILL TURN WARMER, RESULTING IN AN ABOVE-NORMAL-TEMPERATURE MONTH," ERCOT STATED ON ITS WEBSITE. "BUT COLD OPPORTUNITIES MAY INCREASE MID-TO-LATE-WINTER. FEBRUARY 2020 HAS THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR BELOW-NORMAL TEMPERATURES THIS WINTER."

During June in South Texas, heat indices hit triple digits, such as 120 degrees. Brownsville's highest recorded temperature was 104 degrees, beating



the record of 103 degrees on June 26, 2012, and June 19, 1918. The city's highest temp was 106 degrees on March 27, 1984.

Soaring temperatures brought significant droughts for South Texas. According to the Dec. 31 US Drought Monitor, about 11% of the contiguous United States was in drought. Texas joined several other states to combat the issue by the end of 2019.

Contrasting the droughts were several large-scale floods caused by Tropical Storm Imelda that hit Southeast Texas in September of last year. According to the National Centers for Environmental Information, more than 40 inches of rain fell in Jefferson County, Texas, for more than a five-day period.





AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRES

In September 2019, the states of New South Wales and Victoria in Australia were scorched by about 135 bushfires. Nearly 27 people, over a billion animals and 3,000 homes are gone.

About 2,700 American firefighters were sent to help the nation battle the flames. Other countries that sent manpower include New Zealand, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.

One of these firefighters, Reynaldo Navarro, is a Mission, Texas, native. As an assistant fire management officer with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, he is the only member selected out of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Oklahoma to go to Australia, according to CBS.

As the bushfires in Australia leave their mark in the new decades' history, more people are saying this is a sign of global warming.

"Climate change is real, and we are already feeling its effects," said Christopher Gabler, an assistant professor in the Biology department and master's program coordinator for the School of Earth, Environmental, and Marine Sciences at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. This is one of the biggest and most visible examples of how climate change is already harming human life and well-being, but there are ... others [to take note of].

"WE NEED TO TAKE CLIMATE CHANGE SERIOUSLY AND ACT TO MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIGNIFICANT WAYS RIGHT NOW. IT WON'T BE EASY, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE WELL-BEING OF HUMANS AND ALL OF EARTH'S INHABITANTS."



BRAZIL

FOREST FIRES



Australia wasn't the only country that suffered a massive natural disaster. The Amazon Rainforest, also known as the lungs of the world, experienced more than 80,000 fires, which is the most ever recorded. More than 3,500 square miles of the Amazon was scorched.

The cause of the fires was the result of human actions, according to CNN. These actions ranged from agricultural to political. For example, many blame President Jair Bolsonaro's rhetoric as the central factor of these fires with the slashing of governmental budgets for the environment and eliminating support for indigenous and traditional subsistence communities.

"EVERYONE ON THE PLANET BENEFITS FROM THE HEALTH OF THE AMAZON. AS ITS TREES TAKE IN CARBON DIOXIDE AND RELEASE OXYGEN, THE AMAZON PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN PULLING PLANET-WARMING GREENHOUSE GASES OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERE. WITHOUT IT, CLIMATE CHANGE SPEEDS UP. BUT AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST RAINFOREST IS EATEN AWAY BY LOGGING, MINING, AND AGRIBUSINESS, IT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE SAME BUFFER."

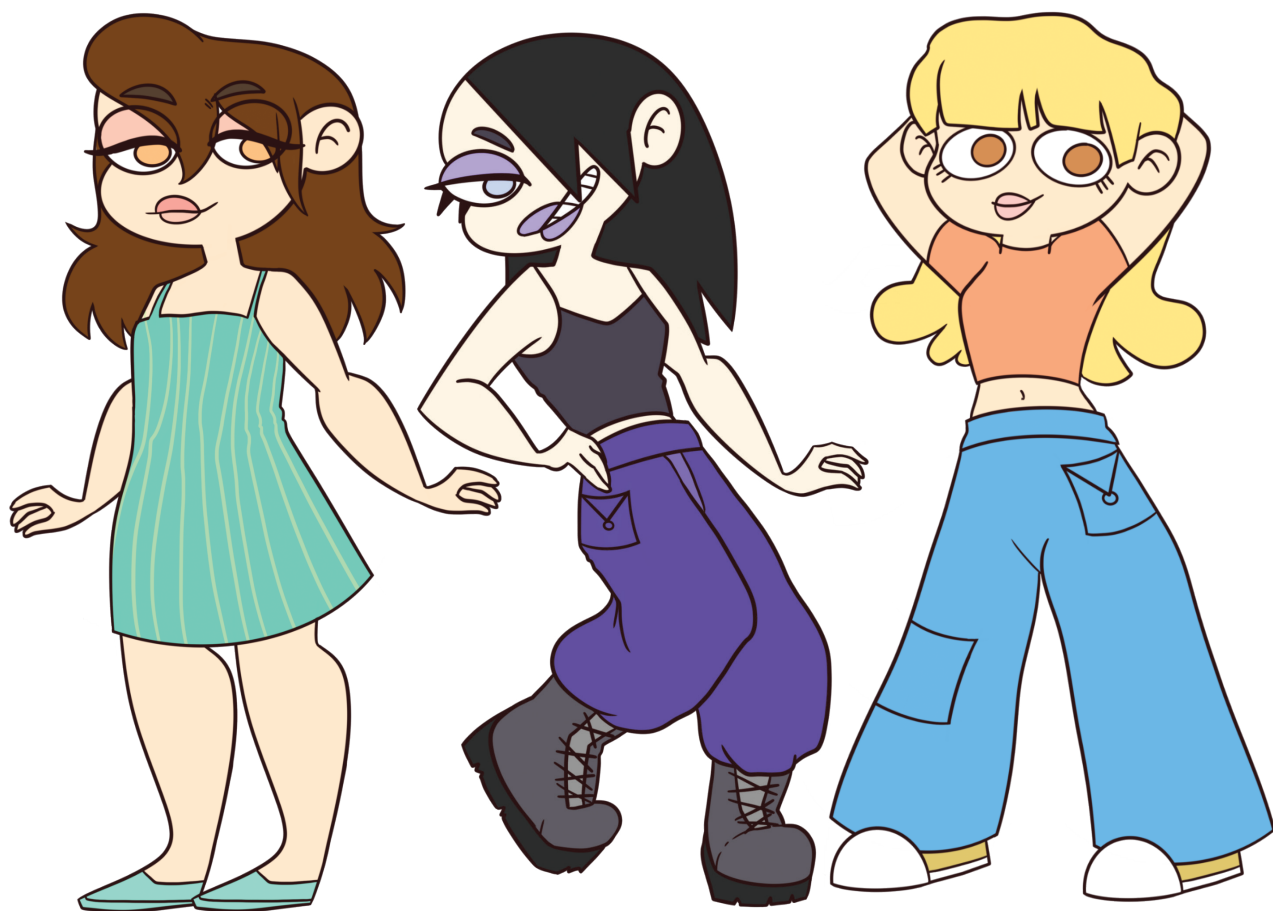
-THE VERGE



OLD FASHION IS THE FUTURE

By: Patricia Monet Ramon

Illustrations: Aaliyah Garza



WHETHER IT'S FOR CLOTHES, FURNITURE, ACCESSORIES, OR SIMPLY FUN, GENERATIONS X, Y AND Z ARE FINDING THEIR AESTHETICS IN SECONDHAND SHOPS, SUCH AS GOODWILL AND TEXAS THRIFT.

The growing trend is popping up everywhere nowadays, with YouTubers' thumbnails covered in thrifted pieces and the promise of a haul. It might seem like this is something you could do with just about any store, especially fast-fashion chains such as Forever 21. However, the appeal of a thrifting haul isn't the amount of clothes you get, but the originality in the pieces you find. Going thrifting is usually a win-win for the customer. You either get something so beautiful and rare that is no longer in production, or you get something that can be found at your local mall, but at a price that won't leave you broke for the next month.

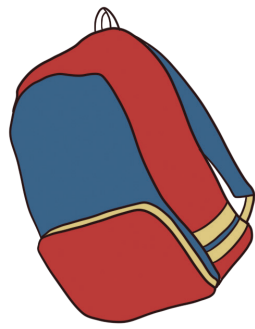
The appeal of thrifting goes beyond affordability, when you realize that secondhand clothing is a great way to help the environment and exploited workers. Fashion empire Fashion Nova is one of the many fast-fashion chains that pays its workers well below America's minimum wage. Employees of the company have been getting paid as little as \$2.77 for their labor, according to worker Mercedes Cortez, who told The New York Times she was paid just a few cents for each part of a shirt she made.

According to the Federal Labor Department, Fashion Nova uses a work force that is paid wages so low, they're considered illegal. With that in mind, many young adults and teens are looking to find more ethically produced products.

One of the brands that falls under the category would be Reformation, known as one of the top companies to produce sustainable women's clothing. However, the downside to Reformation

are the high prices that don't meet most people's standards for affordable purchases. Their mini-length Vivienne dress costs nearly \$250, a price that minimum wage can't sustain. In their "About Us" page they state:

"WE TRIED TO MAKE THESE STANDARDS AS HOLISTIC AS POSSIBLE, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION WATER INPUT, ENERGY INPUT, LAND USE, ECO-TOXICITY, GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, HUMAN TOXICITY, AVAILABILITY AND PRICE."



Though they are doing a great job at being sustainable, they lack in affordability, which is the goal of most young adults.

A budget-friendly option for those looking to be more environmentally conscious is thrifting. Making a trip to Goodwill on a shopping day has been rising in popularity among people between the ages 15-25. Vintage pieces are now being held to higher standards than brand-new pieces, with their uniqueness outshining their pre-worn label. Fashion "it girl," Ashley (who only goes by her first name), also known as "bestdressed" on her YouTube channel that reaches 2.8 million subscribers, is widely known for her thrifting skills. In her videos she often gives her viewers fashion advice. Her tips include investing in quality staple items to mix in with a thrifted wardrobe in order to achieve the look you want for a reasonable price. For example, in a video titled "my most worn clothing of 2019," Ashley shares with her audience that although most of her outfits are thrifted, she usually completes them with one higher-priced staple item,





such as her pearl purse, which retailed at \$64 from Princess Polly, an Australian clothing company.

Though secondhand shopping is a growing trend, there has been much debate on whether it is ethical to do so when you are in a financial position to buy brand new clothing, therefore taking away options from people who are less economically stable.

"I do think that's an important issue to be sensitive about and I would love to hear [your] experiences, if it has personally affected you or your family," Ashley said.

"BUT I WILL SAY OVERALL ONLY AROUND 20% OF CLOTHING THAT GETS DONATED TO THRIFT STORES IS ACTUALLY SOLD AND THE REST HAS TO GO TO RECYCLING PLANTS OR GET SOLD TO RESALE MARKETS IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. SO, OVERALL THERE IS STILL AN INCREDIBLE SUPPLY OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING THAT ISN'T BEING BOUGHT...I DO THINK IT IS A NET GOOD IF WE GET MORE PEOPLE THRIFTING."

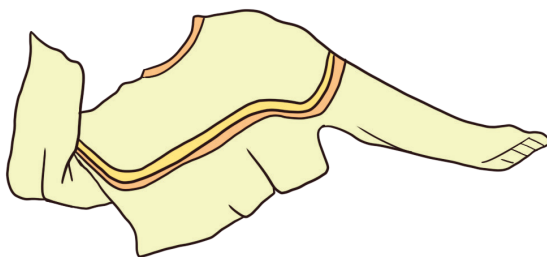
Ashley goes on to say that when she was in high school people cared about buying the most expensive items. She is happy that people have now widely accepted buying secondhand clothing and are proud of expressing themselves more



authentically since there is now a larger and more diverse list of what's in style. She also notes the good it does for the environment and that is something she values

when it comes to the world of fashion.

Back in 2018 the IPCC released a Special Report, that stated "the global emissions of carbon dioxide must peak by 2020 to keep the planet below 1.5°C". Headlines quickly spread across social media warning the masses that we only had 12 years to do something about global warming before irreversible damage is done to the planet that will eventually lead to our demise. What happens if the temperature rises above 1.5°C? The rise in temperature won't directly affect humans. After all there are many places, especially in South Texas, that have risen well above 1.5°C, which is roughly 35°F. However, this increase in temperature affects the Earth's overall temperature, meaning the average temperature in one region will increase gradually too, making those Rio Grande Valley triple digit summers rise higher than ever before. This in turn affects the balance of nature, creating permanent ruin to important natural systems. It leads to effects we are already seeing today such as dangerous weather, droughts and dying crops, melting glaciers, and habitats that are dying along with our resources that grow in them.



According to McKinsey & Company's State of Fashion report 2018, if the fashion industry does not restrict their production, they will be responsible for a quarter of the world's carbon budget. With the world's carbon budget already



being cut down in order to keep the Earth's warming limit to 1.5 °C, this is not a good sign. It is fast-fashion chains and their demand for an unending

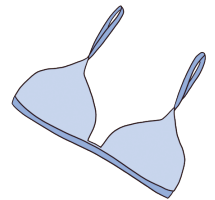
supply of cheaply made clothes that is creating this phenomenon. According to Nature.com, the production of synthetic fabrics, such as polyester, produce more carbon emissions because they are made from fossil fuels. However, because they are low-cost they have become a favorite material of fast-fashion brands. Social media influencers are also having the finger pointed at them for encouraging their followers to keep up with trends and buy from whichever fashion chain that sponsors them.

"[The consumers] need to buy a lot of different styles and probably only wear them a couple times so their Instagram feeds can stay fresh," said the founder of Fashion Nova, Richard Saghan in a 2018 interview, bringing to light the wasted resources on items that won't come off the shelf more than a handful of times in their life span.

People are also calling others to action by taking part in Fashion Revolution Week, a protest of the harmful side of fashion, both fast and luxury, that takes place during the week of Earth Day and the anniversary of Rana Plaza's factory collapse. After an incident in April of 2013, in which a Bangladesh building collapsed and killed 1,138 garment workers and left 2,500 injured, Carry Somers and Orsola de Castro, a British businesswoman and a designer, decided to create a global movement called Fashion Revolution. It started with a social media trend, asking brands '#whomademyclothes?', calling to attention the unfair working conditions

and wages the fashion industry pays its garment workers.

They even have their own website, Fashionrevolution.org, which states, "We are Fashion Revolution. We are designers, producers, makers, workers and consumers. We are academics, writers, business leaders, brands, retailers, trade unions and policymakers. We are the industry and the public. We are world citizens. We are a movement and a community. We are you. We love fashion. But we don't want our clothes to exploit people or destroy our planet. We demand radical, revolutionary change."



Underneath their manifesto lies their dream of 10 things that they believe would help create a positive and sustainable fashion world. It highlights everything from saving the environment and maintaining fair wages, to recycling clothes and being inclusive to all identities. Their website also has a variety of resources to get people involved by taking part in their clothing swaps, reading their fanzines, writing for their blog or participating in Fashion Revolution Week.

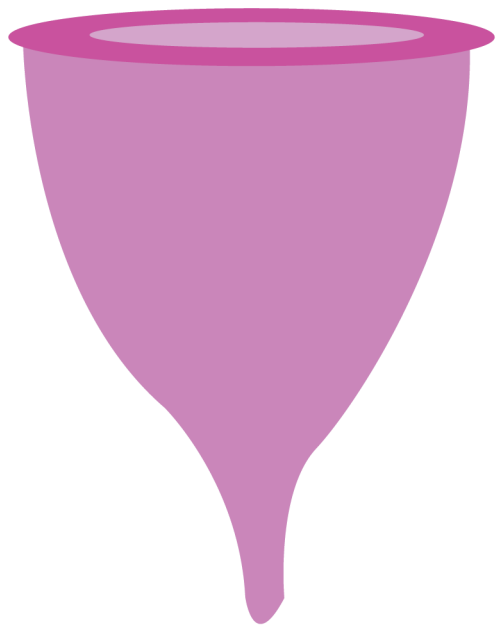
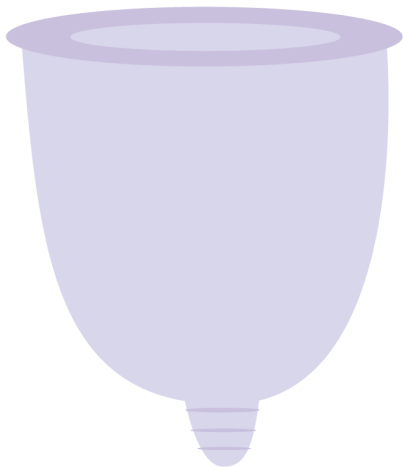
You can visit their website by scanning the QR code to learn more about Fashion Revolution and how to make the necessary changes to better the fashion community.

**VISIT FASHION
REVOLUTION'S
WEBSITE**



MENSTRUAL CUP

Story and illustrations by: Michel Flores Tavizón



Menstruation is unavoidable. Once you reach that lovely stage of “becoming a woman,” your period will be there every month until you hit your late 40s or early 50s.

As the female body prepares for pregnancy every month, the eggs in the ovaries mature and become ready to be fertilized. A thick and spongy lining made of tissue and blood is created in the uterus in case of fertilization. If pregnancy doesn't occur, the uterus sheds its lining and starts menstruation. It can last from three to five days depending on how heavy or light the cycle is and includes symptoms, such as cramps, bloating, sore breasts, lower back pain, food cravings, headaches, fatigue, mood swings and irritability. Besides the endless symptoms, periods also manage to cost money with the few selections of feminine hygiene products.

When you go to the store to pick up something for your bloody friend, your options are limited; you either get tampons or pads. However, despite being conventional options since the 19th century, pads and tampons can have some negative effects on a woman's health. The constant use of pads doesn't let the vaginal lips breathe and can cause irritation, or even vaginitis while tampons can absorb more than just your blood. They can absorb vaginal fluid and disturb your pH and bacterial balance. If left for too long, tampons can lead to the rare, but possible, Toxic Shock Syndrome (TTS), whose symptoms include vomiting, high fever, rash, low blood pressure, muscle aches and dizziness.

Pads and tampons containing cotton can also include residues of pesticides, herbicides and even chlorine, that is



used to bleach and sterilize the cotton material. Beside pesticides and chlorine, these products can also contain plastic materials and chemicals including dioxins, rayon, synthetic fibers, and petrochemical additives. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), dioxin is considered a carcinogen. The prolonged exposure of dioxin can cause an increased risk of cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease and infection of the uterine lining. It can also suppress the immune system and reduce fertility.

Now that we have discussed the impact these products have on the female body, let's talk about the environmental impact.

Did you know that a pack of pads can contain the equivalent of four plastic bags? According to NatraCare, a sustainable feminine products brand, there is approximately 2.4g of plastic in each average pad, and that's only the pad itself. If you consider the packaging it comes in, that makes up for another 2.5g, a total of 36g per pack. On average, a woman can use approximately 11,000 sanitary products, including pads, tampons and panty liners, in her lifetime. This generates 200,000+ tons of waste per year, most of it ending up in landfills or in our oceans.

IT TAKES UP TO 500 YEARS FOR TAMPONS AND PADS TO DEGRADE.

Nowadays, being eco-friendly is gaining awareness because of the impactful damage of our planet's suffering. The population is coming up with eco-friendly practices to avoid making the problem even worse. Some examples include using reusable bags instead of plastic ones, carrying your own reusable water bottle, using metal straws instead of plastic ones and using public transportation to reduce carbon emission.

But how can we be eco-friendly while dealing with menstruation?

A new alternative has come to the market, replacing tampons and pads. The menstrual cup. The menstrual cup is a device that is inserted almost like a tampon and collects that nasty red liquid. It's made of medical grade silicone, a safe and resistant chemical-free material. It's reusable, durable and it can last up to 10 years, meaning you only have to buy a few in your lifetime. Saving up money and helping the planet? Talk about benefits!

The cup is not only environmentally friendly, it's body friendly, too! The cup is available in different sizes. Depending on where you buy it, sizes can vary. Some brands categorize their cups from small to extra-large while others base their sizes on factors like virginity and giving birth. When inserted correctly, the cup creates a suction seal that makes it leak-free. No more worrying about having an accident in public during the day or while sleeping in weird positions at night. The cup can retain the capacity of three to five tampons and can be worn up to 12 hours. No more running to the bathroom to change your pad or tampon!



THIS MAGICAL CUP CAN SUBSTITUTE UP TO 264 TAMPONS ANNUALLY

Despite it being a developmental milestone in female hygiene products, it can take time to get used to it. The first couple of times might be uncomfortable, but it's part of the process. It can take from three to five menstrual cycles to fully get the hang of it, and you can wear a small pad in the meanwhile in case of wrong insertion and leakage.

When first getting your menstrual cup, it is advised to boil it in hot water to disinfect it before the first use. The cup must be boiled before and after each cycle for three to five minutes. Once disinfected, the cup is folded and inserted into the vagina.

There are different ways to fold it; there's the C-fold, the punch down, the 7-fold and many more. It's a matter of finding out which folding method works better for you.

Lubricant can be used for easier application. It's important to note that you should be relaxed while inserting the cup. When you're stressed out, your

C-FOLD



PUNCH DOWN



7-FOLD



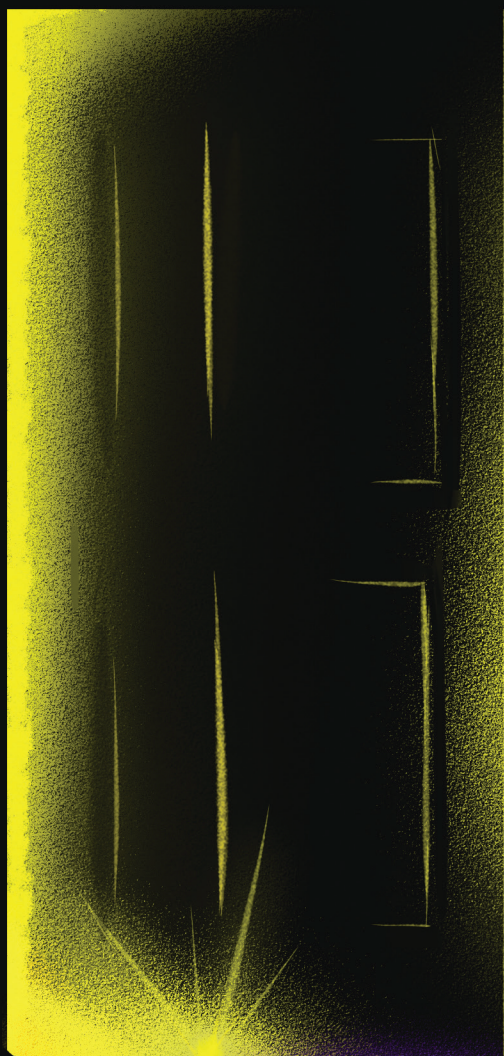
muscles can tense up making it harder to either insert or remove the cup. So, be sure to find a comfortable position and try different angles. You can be sitting down on the toilet, squatting, with one leg on the toilet or even standing up. Play around and find what's more convenient for your body.

When you're comfortable, insert the folded cup and slowly remove your fingers. When inserted correctly, the cup should pop open. Make sure it's completely unfolded by moving your finger around the base. If you are able to feel any dents or folds, that means it's not completely unfolded. Grab it gently by the base and try to rotate it until it opens. If that doesn't work, remove it and insert it again. On the bottom, the cup has a little stem that helps the removal process. Vaginas come in different shapes and sizes, and the cup's position depends on how deep the vaginal canal is. The stem can be left intact or it can be trimmed down to match the woman's body.

Once it's inside, you can go about your daily routine and after some adjustment, you won't even feel it. If you do happen to feel the cup inside or it gives you any pain or discomfort, then it was inserted incorrectly. If that is the case, take it out and try again later. As stated previously, it's important to be relaxed when removing and reinserting it.

For removal of the cup, use the stomach's muscles to push the cup down until you reach the base. With clean hands, slowly squeeze the base of the cup with your fingers to break the suction seal and rock it from side to side until it's out. Empty the cup into the toilet and clean it with soap and water before reinserting it. If you're in a public restroom or a place without direct access to a sink, you can clean the cup with toilet paper or a sanitizing wipe and rinse it when you get back home.

Once the cycle is done, it's time to boil it again, put it in its cotton bag and have it ready for next month.



THE FBI
REPORTED ABOUT
7,175 HATE CRIMES
IN 2017, AND
1,130 OF THEM
HAD A SEXUAL
ORIENTATION BIAS.

HOMOPHOBIA IN AND OUT OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

By Steven Hughes

Illustrations: Arianna Cantú

According to the Safe Zone Ally Manual by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, homophobia is the irrational fear and/or hatred of LGBTQ+ people because ‘these individuals’ don’t conform to traditional sex-role stereotypes. Some examples of homophobia are: calling lesbians “male-haters,” calling radical gay men “wimps”, or wondering which one is the man or woman in a same-sex relationship.

This example is one of many that members of the LGBTQ+ community experience when confronted by those who do not see eye-to-eye with them.

“Some obvious examples are the audible slurs and clear separation between groups, or isolation,” Timothy Fleenor, a biology student at the University of Saint Francis said. “But there are small things too, [such as] the online comments or the side-eye ... or even constant [jokes]. Playing around is fun and unless you know someone personally, [some] jokes aren’t OK. I know sometimes people can get hurt a little too easily, [but] some things

are cruel [and] others don’t understand how cruel [jokes can get].”

The phobia can occur at home, work, in friend groups, or, even within the LGBTQ+ community. “The biphobia experienced in the LGBTQ+ community is especially damning as it is coupled with a nauseating invalidation,” according to Joel Lucyszyn, a writer for Varsity. Often bisexual people experience exclusion from the LGBTQ+ community because they are seen as “less queer” than other members.

Those who don’t conform face assumptions, questions, and stereotyping. Jade Wilson, a freelancer, wrote in The Establishment of her experience of biphobia from the LGBTQ+. She met a woman at The George, a gay bar in Ireland. The woman asked Wilson twice if she was sure if she liked women. Once Wilson said she liked both genders, the woman, according to Wilson, commented on Wilson’s sexuality “in a sardonic tone, rolling her eyes.” Even after having sex, the woman asked Wilson if she was still bisexual.

"LOOKING BACK NOW, I REGRET SLEEPING WITH SOMEONE WHO WAS SO PATRONIZING. BUT FROM MY EXPERIENCE, GAY PEOPLE BEING DISMISSIVE OF BISEXUALITY IS A LOT MORE COMMON THAN ONE MIGHT EXPECT."

Social media is another place where homophobia is found. Eric Garcia, a psychology student at UTRGV, said he received hate-filled comments back in 2015 when he posted a picture on Instagram of himself wearing makeup. A popular Instagrammer named Jazmina Daniel, her username is "missjazminad", noticed the post, which brought positive comments and more than 100 likes. However, a few said men shouldn't wear makeup, and called Garcia a "faggot." Garcia wasn't fazed by this and continued to use the app. He occasionally makes a post of him in makeup.

Sometimes, these acts can bleed into reality. Such as for Vicente Martinez Jr., 23, who encountered homophobia firsthand. He was scrolling through Instagram when he saw a meme stating, "Gay people rely on straight people to produce more gay people." He and his friend laughed at it and caught the attention of the bartender. He asked what was funny and Martinez showed him the image. After seeing it, the bartender told Martinez gay

people shouldn't have the same rights as straight people.

Martinez had been struggling with his sexuality. He said hearing this made him feel invalid. Martinez added that the bartender hovered over him and the 23-year-old moved to a table after feeling uncomfortable.

"THIS PERSON TOLD ME THAT I DIDN'T DESERVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS ANY OTHER PERSON IN THE US, IT MADE ME ANGRY AND SAD. WHY CAN PEOPLE DICTATE HOW OTHERS LIVE THEIR LIVES AND WHICH RIGHTS THEY HAVE?"

It wouldn't be the only time the Brownsville native would experience this. On Halloween day in 2017, he and his friends visited a local club he had been to multiple times before. Feeling comfortable in his own skin, he decided to dance and enjoy himself. After a few songs played, he felt someone watching him. He turned around to see a man, who looked a little over 45-years-old, staring at him. Although Martinez said he tried to ignore the man, he kept staring and made Martinez feel uneasy. The 23-year-old, although 6'1" and more than 300 pounds, said he felt powerless as "the stare was full of hate and it lasted all the time." Martinez felt sick to his stomach

and feared for his life, which was a feeling he hadn't experienced in years.

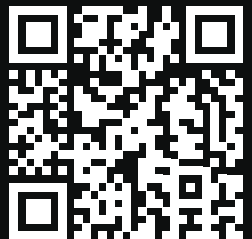
"I WAS FEELING FREE AND FULL OF LIFE UNTIL I FELT I HAD TO TONE DOWN MY PERSONALITY TO ENSURE THAT OTHER PEOPLE FEEL COMFORTABLE. EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T GET YELLED AT, OR SOMEONE [HADN'T] ASSAULTED ME PHYSICALLY, IT WAS SOMETHING THAT MADE ME THINK. IT MADE ME REMEMBER THAT PEOPLE LIKE ME AREN'T WELCOME IN MOST SPACES UNLESS IT'S SPECIALLY TARGETED TO THE LGBTQ."

Despite the LGBTQ+'s progress into acceptance through the years, the community still faces backlash into becoming a societal norm. However, members of the community came together to provide a Lifeline "crisis intervention and suicide prevention services" for LGBTQ members under the age of 25.

After producing *Trevor* (1994), a film about a 13-year-old boy named Trevor who explored his sexuality and faced prejudice from family and friends, and the film starting a national movement which lead to the creation of the Trevor Project. Peggy Rajski, director and producer, worked with mental health experts to establish the TrevorLifeLine and James

Lecesne, writer for the film, helped find funding for it. "Since then, hundreds of thousands of young people in crisis have reached out to The Trevor Project's multiple in-person and online life-saving, life-affirming resources—Trevor Lifeline, TrevorChat, TrevorSpace and Trevor Education Workshops," according to its about page.

**VISIT THE
TREVOR
PROJECT'S
WEBSITE**



SPRING CLEANING



By: Jazmine Casas

Illustrations: Celeste Strange

Listen here, all who witness,
have doubted, or taunted me in my youth:
I, a daughter of the so-called inferior millennium, specially frosted in snow
Born to an out of wed-lock mother,
carrier of the scarlet name of my father upon my breast
Present to you the opportunity
to strike such cynical assumptions about my generation
From your broken, ever-repetitive record

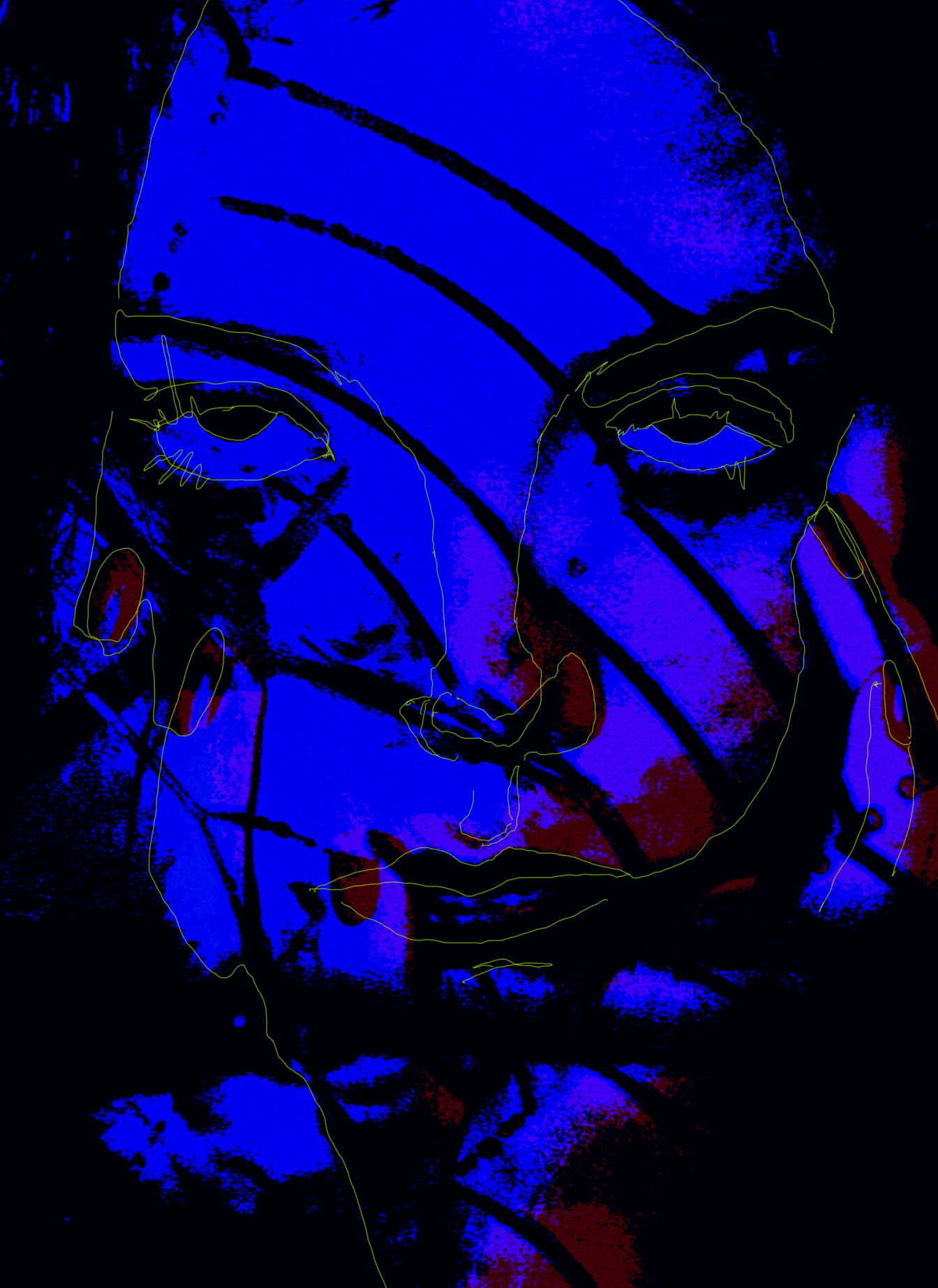
Watch me as I take brooms to the rugs
You have swept your generation's problems under
I, who see right through your claim of over sensitivity,
A defense mechanism for your shame
I will never cower beneath your verdict claimers,
Yes, I am the proud product of politically correct
My name is progress, my home is a protesting ground,
My language is correcting you

I march with the strength of a thousand women before me,
Suffragettes and sufferers who made sound through silence
I speak with the volume of awareness,
A prize only hidden so well for you have never even sought its power
I will lead the revolution hand in hand with a youthful Battalion armed with
words and wisdom

The glasses upon my face fool you, I have sight worth of envy,
I see everyone, I see truth, and most importantly I see what could be
There is no conclusion in my book, I am an option operated, open-ended
question with many intentions
I seek to learn every day, to evolve, while you have made up your mind,
A fixed point in time

The coffin dwellers who planted such firm roots may rest uneasy
as I take to their garden with a shovel and bleach
To wreck, ruin, and reform the rot
that prevents the earth every day from evolution
When the sun rises over an equal land,
where kings and queens reign no more and all the work has been done

Remember it was I, a child of the generation z:
sensitive and oblivious to hard work
I who had everything handed to me,
except for all that you failed to see made sense
The answer is simple, and it is in your stepping aside,
for I am coming with my generation, and we are wasting no time.



My Dreams Keep Getting Worse and Worse

By: Angela Garza

Illustrations: Bianca López

Sitting on the bench as I look through the room with the fishes,
I turn left,
I see me on my death bed covered in yellow
Dressed in red
I turn right,
I see an ignition of fire through his blue eyes and the passing of
my dear mother
Who unfortunately didn't survive
I look down,
I see two pairs of feet on what seems to be a hospital floor.
I wish it would've been me instead of you.
Thirteen follows me.
I look up,
I smell cigarette smoke and cologne.
The scent brings clouded memories through my head.
Remembering the details but always forgetting the big picture. I
miss you
I look straight ahead,
It's my future.
Full of hope and light
But the past keeps picking at my brain.
A never ending cycle with the devil looking over my shoulder.
Was I awake this whole time?

EL GENOMA LITERARIO FUE ESCRITO EN ESPAÑOL

Por: Jesus Amaya

Ilustraciones: Cecilia Sierra

Fue a principios de este semestre de otoño 2019 cuando me conseguí una de las mejores ediciones del Quijote: la versión conmemorativa publicada por la RAE con estudios absolutamente fundamentales para complementar lo quijotesco. Por igual, la profesora nos había pedido un texto de crítica literaria nada más y nada menos de la editorial Cátedra, una revelación para mis trabajos. Siempre he conocido la Primera Parte de el Quijote, sus personajes, sus tramas, hasta el final – ¡Cómo no puede conocerse, aunque sea frívolamente a un artefacto fundamental de la expresión literaria de mi lenguaje! – pero a base de mis relecturas de la obra y la gran aventura que fue leer por primera vez la *Segunda Parte*, añadiéndole la crítica literaria, me di cuenta de que es mucho más que una novela. Es claramente la novelización de todas las literaturas pasadas y futuras; es lo que fue y lo que vendría en el porvenir en la literatura universal. Con el tiempo, empecé a sospechar que algunos

cuantos suelen tener por desapercibido el magnífico hecho de que el Quijote – las dos partes (1605 y 1615) y excluyendo tanto al Quijote de Avellaneda como a “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” – haya sido escrito en español. Es un poco extraño pensar que esta obrita de alrededor de mil páginas ha inspirado toda la literatura de todos los tipos, y no sólo el género novelístico. Puede verse su presencia en



los cuentos con los relatos intercalados, como “El cautivo de Argel” o “El curioso impertinente”; vemos la dramaturgia en el “Retablo de maese Pedro”, evidenciando la técnica de haber un narrador fuera de la obra. Esta posible desconsideración filológica – consciente o inconsciente – con el Quijote, de hecho, no es nada nuevo. Los contemporáneos a Cervantes no la catalogaban como una obra “clásica” o algo que formase parte del canon literario. Tampoco hay que olvidar la poca fama de Cervantes en comparación con Garcilaso de la Vega, Lope de Vega, Francisco de Quevedo o Luis de Góngora, fenómenos de la manifestación literaria de la época en español.

A mediados de octubre, en una de mis investigaciones para mi clase, me revelé que, quizá, la expresión literaria del español que se vio en el Quijote fue tan adelantada a su tiempo que los conceptos, las teorías filosóficas y las

teorías literarias (de lenguaje, de la novela, de la literatura, etcétera) que la definirían como una obra sumamente moderna y única aún no existían ni se habían desarrollado al inicio del siglo XVII, ni se manifestarían en el próximo siglo. En la obra de Cervantes ya estaban las teorías de muchos campos literarios, lingüísticos, filosóficos, y narratológicos que llegarían con posterioridad.

No sería errado pensar en que ha habido teoría de la novela, teoría del lenguaje, teoría literaria, teoría de la narratología por esta obra maestra escrita originalmente en español. Desafortunadamente la época posrenacentista, barroca o moderna-temprana aún no tenía la capacidad de interpretarla literaria y/o críticamente, negándole su debido lugar como una de las mejores – sino la mejor – manifestación de escritura desde su publicación. Una noche donde emulaba la lectura de Alonso Quijano, sin embargo, a mí no se me secó

el cerebro, leí un artículo que nos sugirió la profesora para un trabajo del curso; encontré algo que me hizo pensar; tanto que quise tomar una siesta para darle su debido momento, que lo requería. Esto no lo he debatido ni he visto hablarse: Me parece extraño cuando leo, o veo, esta idea de que el Quijote es una novela “extremadamente moderna”; no por tanto de negar tales argumentos, que también los comparto. Lo que veo con esas declaraciones acerca de la obra es que aparentemente la modernidad siempre ha estado con el Quijote; nunca ha acabado la modernidad, en todas las épocas ha sido moderna.



Con los exponentes del Romanticismo (temprano y tardío), moderna; con los realistas y modernistas, moderna; en el vanguardismo, moderna. En el siglo XXI, sumamente moderna. No me atrevería a hablar de las interpretaciones posmodernas. Hay una tendencia desde 1800 donde lo moderno del Quijote siempre ha estado. ¡Es extraño que la época entre la tradición ilustrada y la realista moderna haya catapultado a la obra de Cervantes! Es probable que el idealismo de los 1800 se halló perfectamente con el de don Quijote a pesar de que Cervantes ridiculizó por completo el idealismo y a los idealistas.

Entonces no sé si la obra maestra de Cervantes es moderna, o si simplemente la modernizan las distintas épocas por la cuales va caminando la obra. Pero también hay que considerar que quizás la modernidad o “lo moderno” siempre está y por ende el Quijote también. Remataría que en mis reflexiones he notado la presencia de una oscilación en cuanto a la valorización óptima a la que se sostiene al Quijote. Inicialmente, la novela fue considerada por el Siglo de Oro como una obra graciosa, para entretener – supongo que por los actos ridículos y la sátira que protagonizaban don Quijote y Sancho; posteriormente, alrededor de dos siglos, se elevó a lo más alto de la escritura hecha en español y se consagró en el canon literario.

Pero a pesar del estatus conseguido, a la hora de andar “eligiendo” la supremacía dentro del hispanismo algunos optarían por los sonetistas del Siglo de Oro español, Bécquer, las generaciones del 98 y/o 27; los romances gitanos de García Lorca; otros por la literatura fantástica de Jorge Luis Borges o por la poética en Octavio Paz. Lo cierto es que en muchas ocasiones hasta

el mismo Borges, “los Nobel” de Neruda, Mistral, Asturias, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa u Octavio Paz se han mostrado en deuda con la obra cervantina; fue de haber leído el Quijote que catapultó – con el español como la herramienta tecnológica de comunicación – a la literatura hispánica en América.

Tal trascendencia que tuvo el Quijote en América nos mostraría la firmeza del enlace histórico-literario que siempre hubo, ha habido, hay y habrá entre las dos regiones del mundo unidas por el español. Me atrevería a compartir una declaración: con Borges aprendí a leer como un lector digno de tal literatura, pero con el Quijote aprendí a comprender la literatura. Ya que he enlazado a Cervantes y a Borges, me parece válida una intervención que he formulado en mis estudios literarios a lo largo del semestre. Como bien es sabido que el Quijote es la obra capital de la literatura universal, y que toda la literatura que vendría en el futuro ya estaba escrita en ella; pues yo argumentaría que lo mismo sucede con *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923) de Jorge Luis Borges – ¡hasta en este concepto del porvenir literario influyó el Quijote! En una gran entrevista hecha por el programa español *A Fondo* en 1975 Borges dice que todo lo que escribiría en su carrera literaria ya estaba en *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, pero que sólo él podía verlo. Una ironía sumamente triste este aforismo por la ceguera que le dejaría sin vista.

Con esto mencionado, intento llegar a un paralelismo entre ambas obras: todo lo que se escribió posterior a 1615 por los ámbitos tanto en la literatura como en la crítica y teoría literaria ya estaba en el Quijote. Pero dejándonos del futuro literario que generó esta obra, me parece indispensable ver, ahora, el pasado dentro

de la novela cervantina. Cuando volví a releer la novela para una tarea y tuve que emparejarla con un artículo que tocaba el concepto de la historia quijotesca, razoné en algo que era tan obvio. Siento que, quizá, se me había escapado por mis ingenuidades previas; porque a la literatura hay que llegarse leído, con conocimientos; si no cuentas con algunos conceptos literarios, narratológicos, filosóficos, etc. a la hora de leer literatura, como el Quijote, la obra se convertirá en una casa de trampas incesantes. Lo que noté fue la forma en la cual nuestro caballero andante don Quijote estaba ideándose el pasado de su época.

Como bien es sabido, tras haber leído tanto sus libros de caballerías se le secó el cerebro, y tenía el deseo de que la sociedad y su época regresase a aquellos tiempos de honra, de caballería, de grandes batallas épicas que les darían a los caballeros andantes gran fama y prestigio. Con esa locura que le dio, él – por loco o por ser sobradamente cuerdo – erraba al tener esta gran idea, llena de idealismo, que el pasado de su realidad era como el de las novelas de caballerías. Tiene todo el sentido del mundo, ahora que lo pienso, que absolutamente nadie le sigue sus manías caballerescas ni su lenguaje idealizado que originan de esos libros; y, por lo tanto, sufre varios accidentes; él supone que todo mundo conoce la historia, aunque ficticia, que él toma como verdadera...como si todos hubiesen leído libros de caballerías. Es de suma importancia este hecho.

Cervantes nos demuestra a principios del siglo XVII cómo podría entrometerse la fantasía, la irrealidad y el idealismo en la cotidianidad de la vida real, algo claramente borgeano, pero ya estaba en el Quijote. Este concepto quijotesco

vuelve a verse en otra de las mejores obras literarias escritas en mi lenguaje: *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Terius*. Este relato fantástico relata sobre un planeta ficticio llamado Tlön, el cual se había inventado por una sociedad secreta y que “siglos y siglos de idealismo no han dejado de influir en la realidad”. Al final del cuento, el narrador nos explica la penetración que hace aquel planeta irreal en el nuestro; todos los componentes de la “pseudo-realidad” de Tlön van invadiendo la realidad de nuestro planeta real, del narrador, del mío y del tuyo querido lector. Las cosas empiezan a chocar y tenemos nuestra interrelación de realidad y fantasía. Todo esto, originó de el Quijote. Nuestro caballero incorpora fantasías irreales al mundo real y cotidiano donde todos operan naturalmente; ese choque es la raíz por la cual a don Quijote y a Sancho les suceden experiencias desafortunadas.

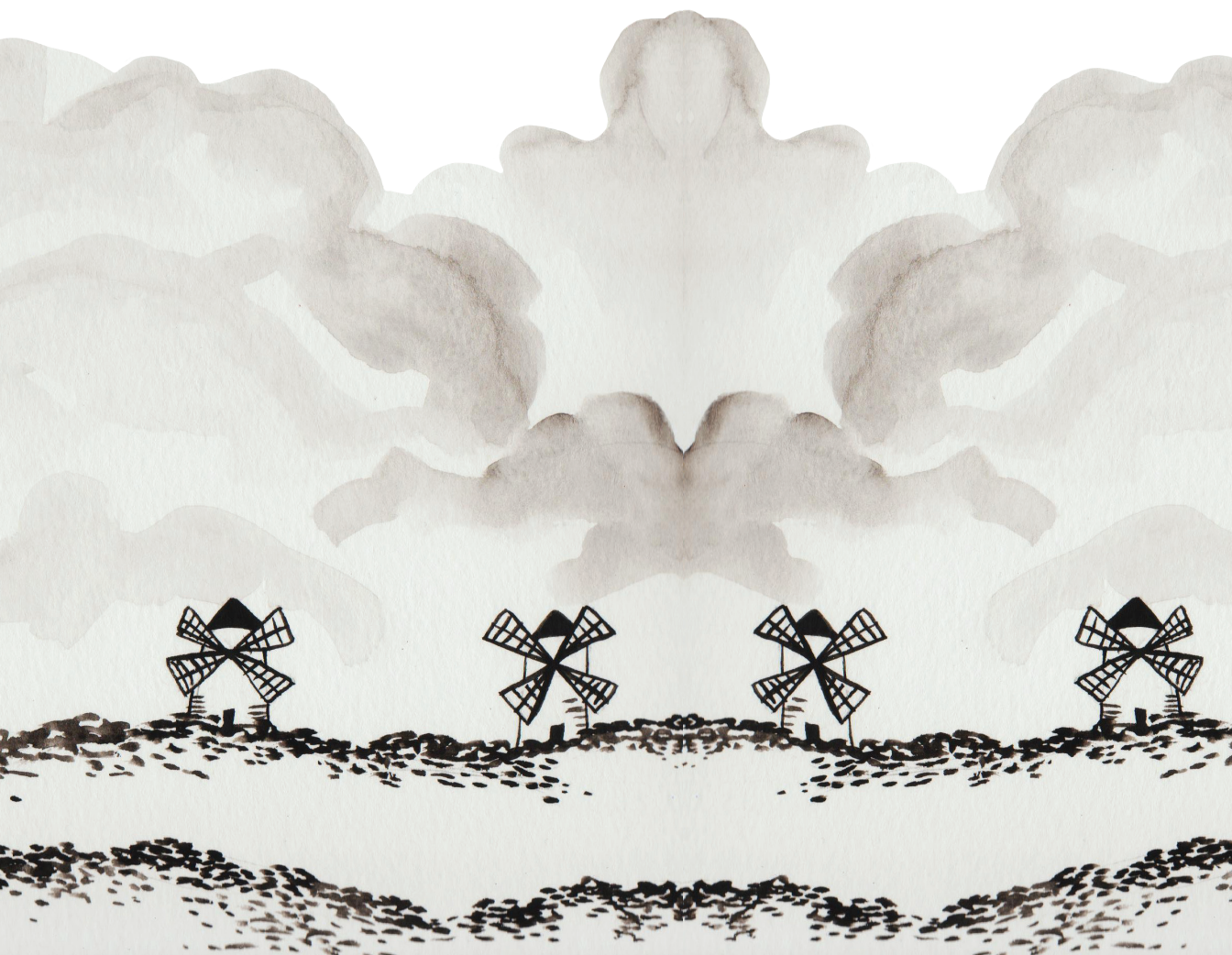
Todos esos libros que leyó fueron producto de la imaginación de gente que vivía en la miseria del medievo europeo, y anhelaba, aunque fuese en la ficción un mundo ordenado, de honra, valentía y justicieros. Ya, muy tempranamente, se empieza en la novela con un contraste entre realidad y fantasía que algunos catalogarían como un posible origen de la literatura fantástica. Esta literatura fantástica tuvo su máximo esplendor, consiguientemente en español; pero ahora, en el mundo Hispanoamericano del Siglo XX.

Hace una semana, tocaba participar en un Foro de Discusión para nuestro estudio de el Quijote; tocaba afrontar el tema de la locura. Al estar buscando unos trabajos a cerca de la locura en la obra, di con un artículo que hablaba del estado mental de don Quijote en un capítulo de la Segunda Parte: “La cueva de Montesinos”. El gran

trabajo tocaba más el hecho de que toda esa aventura en la cueva formaba parte de lo fantástico, o que la locura/ estado mental de don Quijote en esa cueva generaba lo fantástico. Tras haber estudiado este artículo me di cuenta de algo: que el Quijote es un puente entre realidad y ficción, el puente entre esos dos elementos de lo que genera lo fantástico en la literatura. Lo fantástico también se ha caracterizado por exponer varias realidades en una misma obra. Esto lo veo cuando hay historias – en la cuales no protagonizan don Quijote ni Sancho – dentro de historias, en una sola obra que es el Quijote, que en sí es un libro dentro de su mismo texto cuando conocemos

a mi personaje preferido: el bachiller Sansón Carrasco. Él le cuenta a Sancho que la *Primera Parte* (1605) de la obra ha sido publicada tanto en Valencia como en Barcelona y está dentro de la misma novela, al nivel de los personajes.

No olvidemos, tampoco, que el Quijote fue escrito originalmente en árabe por Cide Hamete Benengeli; posteriormente, el manuscrito en árabe fue encontrado por un segundo narrador; él consigue traducir la obra del árabe al español encontrando y pagándole a un morisco que conoce la lengua española; finalmente, es editada y narrada a nosotros por el segundo narrador como él ha querido. Entonces



puede haber realidades múltiples en cuanto a las escrituras y narraciones: hay una realidad para el árabe, para el morisco traductor y otra realidad para el segundo narrador, todos con su verdad de los acontecimientos de nuestro caballero andante. Complejísimo el tema de lo fantástico en esta obra en español.

Páramo... se ha prestado para que se manifestase por la vía de Miguel de Cervantes, una obra partida en dos por una década. El español ha sido el portavoz de lo que engendraría las letras futuras. El Quijote, con todo su hispanismo es el genoma literario.

Me da un orgullo que el genoma de la literatura universal haya sido escrito en español. El español, la gran lengua de las letras, del Siglo de Oro, del Boom hispanoamericano, de Leopoldo Lugones, del modernismo de Rubén Darío, de la lengua de Quevedo, del Martín Fierro, de Borges, de Vargas Llosa, de Pedro





RED FRAISES AND BUTTERY BREAD

By: Fedra Hinojosa

Illustrations: Arianna Cantú

Nice, France

Red fraises in my hands from the market. The soft smell of bread. I waited 12 months for me to get here, like a body on the verge of a fever.

A tiny room I got those weeks--water drizzling, sun spicing. The August sunshine sips in an open window. I thought I would never get here. To this tiny bed with a kabob rotting in my fridge.

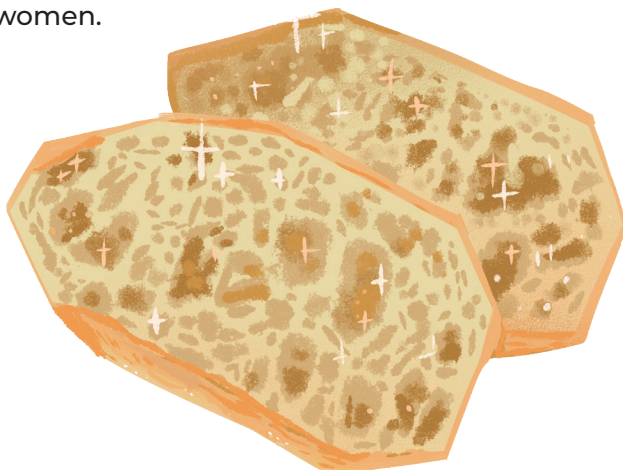
After dinner, we laugh, we crash, mix it with cheap tobacco. When we are tired of this heavy smoke, I put myself to sleep, but how can I sleep when I am finally free?

For breakfast, we ate buttery bread, and drink coffee heavy in cream. I saw him. He nudges me, and says "Qu'aimerais-tu commander?" I ate, I left, and that noon, we got out of class and I manage to walk myself and leave.

I grabbed his hand. I sense it still.

Then, it's Sunday and the salty ocean calls me.
And screams. The people are yelling in French. The people are yelling in Arabic. I have never seen so many free women. Wrapped in orange garments. Or wrapped just by the sun.

Today, I stand in a grocery store, missing those red, shiny fraises in my hands from the market, and wrapped by the reverie of that buttery bread.





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GRUBHUB

INNER NATURE



WHO ARE YOU?

INNER NATURE

YOUNG SEED OF GOLD

OH, HOW THE UNIVERSE HAS BIRTHED YOU.

INTERTWINED BY THE ROOT SEEPING THROUGH THE DEPTHS
OF EARTH, STRETCHING, ACHING TO REACH ITS CORE;

QUENCHED BY THE VAST AND LIMITLESS CURIOSITIES OF
LIFE,

NURTURED TO SEEK A GREATER MEANING

A FRUITFUL PURPOSE

A REFLECTION OF TRUTH,

DESTINED TO BLOOM TOWARDS THE RAYS OF A GOLDEN-
HUED UNKNOWN AND BEYOND.

Title
Anxiety doesn't knock on my door

Artist
Josie Del Castillo

Medium
Oil on panel



Title
Where the Flowers Blooms

Artist
Arianna Cantú

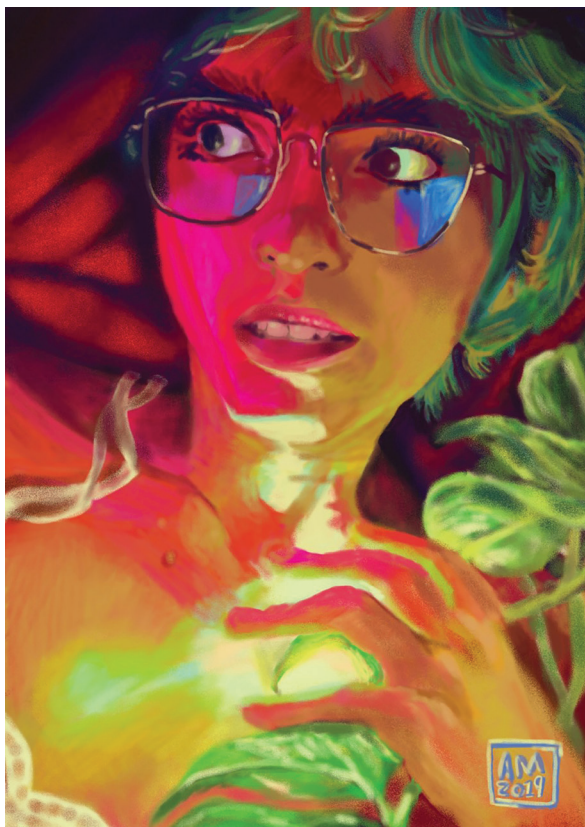
Medium
Digital



Title
Suppressed Light

Artist
Andrea Monasmith

Medium
Digital



Title
Evening Self-Portrait
(Faith and Doubt)

Artist
Jocelyn Torres

Medium
Soft Pastels and Charcoal





Title
Unwanted Solicitation

Artist
Hailey Quick

Medium
Lithograph



Title
Self-Portrait

Artist
Jessica Garza

Medium
Digital

Title
Untitled

Artist
Brenda Juarez

Medium
Pen and Ink on Paper



Title
Untitled

Artist
Fernando Ramirez

Medium
Digital Photography





Title
Untitled

Artist
Ángela García

Medium
Oil on Canvas



Title
Untitled

Artist
Perry Picasshoe

Medium
Oil on Canvas

MEET OUR JUDGES



ERIKA BALOGH

Erika Balogh is an artist, educator, and graphic designer. She teaches graphic design courses at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, School of Art.

Erika's bi-cultural background has greatly shaped her identity and influenced her artwork as well. Her works consist of mixed media paintings, collages, photographs, graphic design and digital art. Her research interests include: the role of women in our society, social and economic inequality, and exploring alternatives to capitalism.



PATRICIA RAMON

Patricia Ramon is the Editor-In-Chief of Pulse Magazine. She is currently working towards her bachelor's degree in mass communications with a concentration in print journalism and a minor in gender and women's studies.

She is a journalist, a writer, and enjoys doing graphic design and art on the side. She is motivated by her passion to tell the truth and fight against social justice issues and expresses these passions through her work.

Photography: Manuel G3mez

By: Gabriela Gonzalez and Karla Cavazos



BFFF



How do you define a best friend? A best friend can be anything you want it to be; your siblings, a family member, your significant other, or even a pet. It is not about how long you have known them, but everything in between. Having a best friend means valuing and supporting one another, supporting each other's desires, growth, and guiding each other through the world. A best friend is a soulmate; someone that you can trust with your life and who will be there for you every step of the way. Once you find them, hold them close to your heart, and never let them go. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has a multitude of best friends whose stories are worth sharing.



Meet Varesh Gorabi, Rozena Shirvani and Celeste Infante

HOW DID YOU ALL MEET?

VARESH: I met Rose over text because our families knew each other and my mom moved down here before me and I was still in Utah. [Varesh's mother] figured out that [Rozena's mom] has a daughter the same age, doing the same major and going to the same school. So, she gave me her contact info and we just started talking. I met Celeste through Rose about a year after.

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF A BEST FRIEND?

ROZENA: Someone who is your soulmate.

CELESTE: Someone you hang out with, and when you don't hang out for a while, you feel like something is missing.

VARESH: Someone that you can talk to and if there's something on your mind, you can go to them right away if you need advice.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

ROZENA: Varesh and I both have the same classes, so we have the same career goal. Celeste and I don't have the same goal, but we do a lot of cool side things, like art.

CELESTE: We like to do art together, like painting.

VARESH: Sometimes we'll knit, other times we'll crochet. We just like to do artsy things together. We all make costumes together, and do photography.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT EACH OTHER?

ROZENA: [about Celeste] She's very accepting of others. That's the main thing, [About Varesh] She's very inspiring because she does so many different things for the community and for her own career. I look at that and think 'Wow, I should do what she's doing'.

CELESTE: [about Rose] She's very attached and makes me feel like I'm needed as a friend. She always wants to hangout. She can be sassy and I like that.

[about Varesh] She's so inspiring. She's always willing to try new things. She makes you want to be learning about something that is going on.

VARESH: [about Celeste] She's so kind-hearted. She's always making sure that everyone is comfortable and feeling okay. If there's anything wrong, she's quick to help out and I admire that.

[about Rose] I mean, what can I say? I love that I can just randomly text her and ask for advice. She'll give me something straight up. I just like how she's always there for me. We've done a lot of things together throughout college. I just love her entire being. Her aura. I'm just really glad I met both of these girls. I also love her love for quirky things. Rose is very determined about what she wants.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY WITH EACH OTHER?

ROZENA: Last year, we went out for Valentine's Day. All of us went out together to a restaurant. We all dressed up and it was our cute little date.

CELESTE: Last month, we went to Varesh's house. Rose and Varesh both saw Twilight for the first time. It was funny. We were laughing the entire time.

VARESH: We had a painting night. It was a Bob Ross painting night and it was so fun.

DESCRIBE YOUR FRIEND IN ONE WORD. EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THAT WORD.

CELESTE: [about Varesh] Intelligent. I think she's one of the smartest people. She's very intelligent and very adult. She's very independent, she knows what she wants and she's here to get it. She's just very put together.

[about Rose] Fiery. She's very sarcastic and is always ready to fight, but in a good way. It's a good fire. She's passionate. It's not a type of fieriness you realize right away. It's like a secret fire.

ROZENA: [about Varesh] Determined. She does whatever she wants and is very successful. She's the most successful person I've ever met.

[about Celeste] Innovative. She's had a lot of struggles being who she is. Yet, she overcomes these struggles in her own way.

WHERE DO YOU ALL SEE EACH OTHER'S FRIENDSHIP FIVE YEARS FROM NOW? 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

ROZENA: Celeste and I would be living together. Varesh would be overseas doing some big discovery that's going to change the world. Celeste and I [would] be at home rooting her on.

CELESTE: I feel like I'll never have to pay for another doctors' visit. I'll just ask Rose what's wrong.

VARESH: I think we'll all stay in contact, even if we live in different places. We'll [Rose and Varesh] probably be doing our residency. We might move around, but wherever we go, we'll stick together.



Meet Samantha Aleman and Vanessa Perez

WHEN DID YOU GUYS MEET?

SAMANTHA: We met [during] P.E. in 7th grade. In our middle school, they separated us into teams and we were on the same team. I didn't have anybody to talk to. I saw her, went up to her and the rest is history.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF EACH OTHER?

SAMANTHA: I thought she was quiet and reserved.

VANESSA: For me, my first impression of her, she looked friendly and I thought she was popular because a lot of people were always hanging around with her.

WHAT MAKES YOU ALL BEST FRIENDS? HOW DID YOU ALL GET ALONG SO WELL?

SAMANTHA: For me I think its our humor, our really dumb humor. We can just say [one] word and we'll just be laughing. I think also just how time can pass and we can just talk to each other like time hasn't passed. When we were in high school we wouldn't talk to each other for weeks because of our schedules, but when we talked again it was like nothing had changed. We can just make it work because of our strong bond.

VANESSA: For sure our humor. I feel like I can't be like that with anyone else. Like Samantha said, we can hangout after not seeing each other for a while but its [as though] time hasn't passed for us, and we pick up right where we left off.

WHAT DO YOU GUYS LOVE ABOUT EACH OTHER?

SAMANTHA: I love that Vanessa is outspoken, [and] she will say what she thinks. Also, her determination [too]. [For example], when she got in a car crash, she was very strong, [and] she is a strong person.

VANESSA: I love that Samantha is very kind and outgoing. I am very introverted, so her being my best friend has helped me get out of my comfort zone.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY WITH EACH OTHER?

BOTH: Probably our first semester of college, when we got lost trying to find our classes. We took a wrong turn and ended up on the field. We were frustrated, it was hot [and about] 100 degrees. We

look back at it now and we laugh about it.

WHERE DO YOU GUYS SEE YOURSELF FIVE YEARS FROM NOW?

SAMANTHA: Well I hope we have both graduated college, and still keeping up with each other, [and] hang[ing] out. I hope to have a strong bond with Vanessa, like we do right now in college.

VANESSA: Regarding the time, I hope we are still best friends and keep in touch

WHAT MAKES THIS PERSON YOUR BEST FRIEND ASIDE FROM YOUR OTHER FRIENDS?

SAMANTHA: We have gone through so much together! I've had several friends, but we always lose contact, but with Vanessa its different; she knows a lot about me and I know a lot about her. Throughout all these years, we've both had different friends but we always come back to each other. Sometimes we get busy with school, but we understand we are growing up.

VANESSA: We've known each other longer, so she knows everything about me, and I just trust her.



BOSS WOMEN

By: Gabriela Gonzalez and Maria Teresa Ruiz



INGRID MONSERRAT

The Healing Factory Juice & Co. is a Vegan, woman owned and eco-friendly restaurant located in McAllen, Texas. The restaurant opened its doors in April 2017, and its owner and creator, Ingrid Monserrat, has decided to share her entrepreneurial journey.

“It isn’t something I had in mind.”

Shares Monserrat, initially set off for a career in dentistry, and previously, architecture and interior design.

Monserrat transitioned into a plant-based lifestyle, because she felt it was something the Valley had lacked.

Starting off, Monserrat had zero dollars, and \$3,000 in credit to use for construction services at Home Depot. Unable to hire an entire construction team, she hired one construction worker, rolled up her sleeves and helped all she could to make her entrepreneurial dream happen.

When the restaurant was done and set in stone, Monserrat now had to rely on pure

dedication and work ethic.

For the initial six-month period, Monserrat and her husband would wake up bright and early to work from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., a total of 12 hours per day.

“After all that stress and crazy work...came the rewards.” said Monserrat.

Once Monserrat and her husband had enough saved up, they hired a team that helped expand their plant-based goals out into the public eye.

The Healing Factory Juice & Co. provides a unique experience. From being 100% plant-based, being pet-friendly and also

having an incorporated juice bar, this Vegan restaurant sets a comforting mood for everyone.

“We want to let everyone know that veganism [and] plant-based [eating] isn’t only for vegans. There’s a little bit for everybody.”

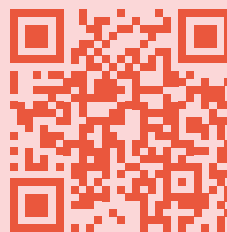
When it comes to giving aspiring entrepreneurs advice, Monserrat shares some fruitful advice.

“Be organized. Know exactly what you want,” advises Monserrat.

Bringing up the idea of “haters” and doubt when first starting off, Monserrat sheds some light.

“Everyone is going to tell you that you can’t... but you should do it anyway.”

**VISIT THE
HEALING FACTORY
JUICE & CO’S
WEBSITE**



RAQUEL RIVERA

If you happen to find yourself along Main Street in McAllen, Texas, you may come across a restaurant by the name of Bonhomia. Bonhomia, meaning “honesty, kindness and simplicity”, sets the overall atmosphere for the garden-like and brunch-based restaurant.

Owner and creator, Chef Raquel Rivera has used her culinary experience as a base for her menu items.

It took an entire year to create the concept of Bonhomia, to establish menu items and build a team. Rivera admits that she “just went for it” when conceiving the brunch-based restaurant.



**“I worked in different kitchens around the world—
Spain, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Austin, so I was
trying to bring a little bit of everything here.”**

"I always knew I wanted a restaurant. Since I lean more [towards the] pastry side, I decided to do something [along the lines of] breakfast and brunch."

When it comes to Bonhomia, what sets it apart from local brunches is the menu items. Pastries are an influence on just about every dish added with some cultural flair.

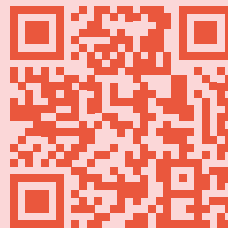
"Every time they [customers] ask me what food it is, I don't know what to say. It's not Mexican, it's not French, it just has a little bit of everything in there".

"Not a lot of restaurants say they make everything in house," shares Rivera.

Everything at Bonhomia is made from scratch; their salmon is cured in house and dough for bread and pastries are made daily.

"The Valley is growing a lot, and I feel that this concept is part of a growth. It's something new, it's something people were looking for but no one had it done [before]."

**VISIT BONHOMIA
ON MAIN'S
FACEBOOK PAGE**



BARBARA DELGADO

Barbara Delgado has always had an eye for the arts, and even went to school for fashion design. While working at an art gallery, she took photos for the artists who featured their work. From there, people began to flood her with requests, creating a snowball effect that would then birth BD Photography.



"When I started seeing people's reaction to the photography...it was extremely gratifying," shares Delgado. "Being able to create memories for people that were [going to] last their lifetime, I think it's just priceless."

As a photographer, Delgado collaborated with Photographers Without Borders, an organization that sends photographers

worldwide to document and capture nonprofits that are contributing to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Declaration of The Rights of Indigenous People.

"Being an entrepreneur requires you to have all the hats in your business," Delgado advised. "You're the one that cleans. You're the one that shoots. You're

the one that invoices. You're the one that takes care of the entire business."

With regards to staff, BD Photography consists of Chief Photographer Delgado and her executive assistant, Lissette Marie.

"When it comes to having a staff, it's [about] getting the right match and not looking for someone who is [only] doing the job, but also cares about the business," Delgado explained.

BD Photography gives off a modern and inviting atmosphere; from the touches of vintage furniture to the spacious studio and bold backdrops. Equipment is also up to date and state-of-the-art.

The studio, having been in business for eight years now, gives back to its community by helping clients with branding their local businesses and shaping memories that will remain timeless.

"We donate a lot of our time too," Delgado stated after having worked with many nonprofits around the Valley.

At the mention of entrepreneurship, the chief photographer gives her share of advice.

"If you're consistent with your effort, anything is possible."

Delgado started off her studio in her parent's two-bedroom condo. She got rid of their furniture and turned half of it into her minimal, small-scale studio.

"Whatever you want to do, start [it off] with what you have," Delgado advised, pushing for female entrepreneurs to get out there even though they feel as though they lack experience or credentials to start up a business.

**VISIT BD
PHOTOGRAPHY'S
WEBSITE**



JAYMEE HANSHAW

Second-generation owner Jaymee Lynn Hanshaw has been head of Texas Tops since 2015 after her father stepped down into retirement.

"My father started this store in 1988. When he started this business, it was [from] very humble beginnings," shares Hanshaw. Her father started off Texas Tops in a small, wood storage shed.



Hanshaw came into the business not knowing too much about truck accessories and having to learn a lot as she went through the motions.

“My father was diagnosed with Parkinson’s from being in the military.”

Being an only child, Hanshaw was flown down from Dallas to the Valley to face a major decision: either the family would sell the business or have their only child take it over.

“I literally don’t know life without us having this store.” Hanshaw states.

Hanshaw takes a lot from the way her father ran the business. “For one, he believed in making a living, not making a killing.” Hanshaw explains further, “The concept behind not over-charging your customers, not over-selling them. We work more on volume than one-time-sales.”

Aside from values involving quality over quantity, customer engagement and attention to detail seems to bring out the best in Texas Tops.

“We really try to take people from customer status, to ‘you’re basically family.’” Chimes Hanshaw.

Texas Tops goes the extra mile with customer engagement by offering snacks, complimentary coffee and trying to engage and know their customers while they wait on their trucks.

“You may go to other places. They take your keys and they tell you ‘have a seat’ and they may not speak to you the rest of the time that you’re there. That’s more man

trait,” shares Hanshaw “Women want to be more engaging with the customer... you have that nurturing aspect.”

Hanshaw states that there has been a huge boost to customer satisfaction.

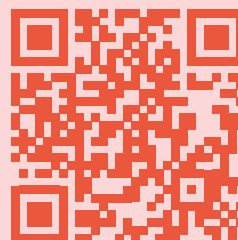
One way customer service is different with Texas Tops is that ever since Hanshaw’s arrival, more women are working inside the store.

“I have heard a lot of women say that they don’t feel confident to step out and do what they want to do,” shares Hanshaw. “[Women] don’t understand the impact [they] can have as a female. The attention to our detail, to our displays, to keeping things...so they look very professional, that’s all women.”

Hanshaw encourages women of the Valley to place their best foot forward when it comes to wanting to start up a business and to not face doubt when in an environment that is majorly male.

“If you’re a female and you feel you want to get out there and start a business, don’t be afraid because more than likely, you’ll do better than a man will.”

**VISIT TEXAS
TOPS’
WEBSITE**



ALEXIS KINGS

Alexis Kings believes in fashion embodying self-love and confidence. Her clothing shop, Baby Doll Gang, personifies just that. Experimenting with textures, colors, and patterns with her craft, Kings has always had a passion for fashion and applies her belief of empowerment with her work and daily life.



“Baby Doll Gang is not just a brand, it’s a lifestyle,” Kings said.

The shop owner has always presented an eccentric edge with her personal apparel by marching to the beat of her own drum and expressing individuality through her love of fashion. Influenced by Japanese “kawaii” fashion and Spice Girls, Kings strives for her brand to allow her clients – also known as her “baby dolls” – to unapologetically be themselves, honoring who they are, and finding beauty both inwards and outwards.

Before her brand existed, Kings knew what route she wanted to take with her strength and enthusiasm. After she graduated from college, Kings decided to pursue her dream and start Baby Doll Gang in 2019 as an online pop-up shop. Primarily focusing on custom jackets during her shop’s grand opening, it was a new beginning to showcase Kings’ creativity and skill.

“My clothes definitely go against the grain here in the valley, when it’s normal to be conservative,” Kings said.

Since Baby Doll Gang’s online debut, Kings has experienced growth in and out of the shop. Through brainstorming and self-realization, Kings: the shop owner pondered and asked herself: What’s the next step?

“I started feeling too comfortable and I didn’t like that because it didn’t allow [any] room for growth,” Kings said.

Kings ventured to find the step in her journey, and in her favor, continued forward. She decided to enhance Baby Doll Gang by broadening the shop’s list of custom items, taking an economically friendly approach, and expanding its platform. Additional customized items that Kings provides includes personalized orders for purses and shoes. Each custom order is intended to emphasize a uniqueness for her baby dolls. The shop owner coexists the idea of ethicality with authenticity when creating custom accessories by bodega shopping for recycled fabrics to cut up and design detailed pieces.

“I’m making the world a better place through my passion,” Kings said.

Aside from her custom pieces, Kings imports clothes from China to add variety to her shop. One of her current goals for the store is to stop buying her material overseas.

"I don't really support the Chinese. I don't like when I see that they use animal fur. When I order, it [the clothing] comes in so much plastic and, weighs down my consciousness," Kings said.

Kings makes it a priority to always give 10% of her earnings from her custom pieces to local animal shelters such as Yaqui Animal Rescue and Laurie P. Andrews Animal Shelter. Kings says her work is attributed to making a difference, educating people, motivating others, and making changes. She believes that everything people put out into existence comes back to them by giving an account for what they do with their time here on earth. This mentality and determination would not be possible without the help of three of the most

important people in her life: her mom, sister, and fiancé.

"I feel like I'm doing really great things. I may not be financially rich, but I feel like I'm spiritually rich," Kings said.

Kings' future goals for Baby Doll Gang entail transitioning into a custom based shop, finding new ways to be environmentally friendly with her brand, and upgrading the shops' venue throughout her journey.

"Everything is from my heart to yours."

**VISIT BABY
DOLL GANG'S
WEBSITE**



VIOLETA VILLARREAL

Every stitch is magic. This is a mantra that Violeta Villarreal speaks into existence when she is doing what she loves most: embroidering. Villarreal's embroidery skills have gifted her the ambition to create, the empowerment towards her craft, and have brought bliss into her life. This is what drove her to establish her own business: Half Moon Thread.

Villarreal started Half Moon Thread in 2016 as a small business to help support female crafters in the Rio Grande Valley. Villarreal attributes her artistic pursuit to two important women crafters in her life,



her mom and her grandmother. These are the two people who introduced her the passion and knowledge of embroidery.

"I asked my mom if she could teach me. She sat there with me and taught me," Villarreal said.

During this learning period, Villarreal came to the realization that embroidery was a hobby that was very calming for her to do on a meditative level. The art skill was something that started to grow on her, and eventually she started to embroider on her own. She would create pieces as gifts to friends as family. Inching on her path to success, Villarreal's soul discovery through her new interest inspired a growth that would guide her to be a part of her community and create for others.

Villarreal has had the opportunity to meet many new people from different walks of life, all with one common interest: Villarreal's contemporary vision of embroidery incorporating artistic and literary flare. Everything from Vincent Van Gogh's post-impressionism art to Sylvia Plath's confessional poetry inspires Villarreal to challenge herself to re-create historically recognized artworks such as *Starry Night* and *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.

"One of my biggest influences is literature. I do those [inspired works] because I think people would love to have that kind of art displayed on a different medium. A goal for me is to see how many different artists' [works] I can recreate," said Villarreal.

Villarreal's embroidery is created with the best and most purposeful intentions. During her creative process, she makes sure to surround herself with an enlightened and positive energy through

every precisely woven stitch. Villarreal's typical workspace is a sun-lit room with candles and incense where she can meditate and get lost in her work.

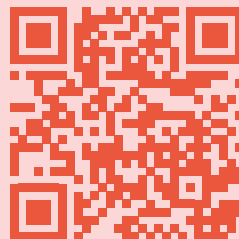
Since its beginning, Half Moon Thread sells items from its Instagram and collaborative local pop-up events with other local vendors and creators. Villarreal participates in these pop-up shops once or twice a month to interact and connect with her customers through the things she creates.

"At the end of the day, we are our community, and this means everything."

Through connecting with her customers, Villarreal wants to share her love and grasp of embroidery with other people. She is focused on starting a workshop series where she can teach others in the Rio Grande Valley how to embroider by providing the materials needed [hoops and fabrics], teach the basics of embroidery, and serve as a mentor and role model for others to start something challenging and new.

"It was difficult at first for me to start because I didn't know what would come of it. To be able to create something for people, I have been really lucky," said Villarreal. "Half Moon Thread is my baby. It's my inspiration. It's a part of who I am."

**VISIT HALF
MOON THREAD'S
INSTAGRAM**



ALONZO CANTU

A MAN OF THE VALLEY

By: Maria Teresa Ruiz

Photography: Manuel Gámez

CORDIALLY, HE INVITES VISITORS TO HIS CONSTRUCTION OFFICE. HIS OFFICE, CLUTTERED WITH PAPERWORK, SPEAKS OF HARD WORK AND SUCCESS. THE TYPE OF SUCCESS THAT WAS EARNED, NOT GIVEN. DESPITE BEING ENGULFED IN THE ATMOSPHERE THAT IS THE OFFICE OF A BUSINESSMAN, THERE IS A TINGE OF FAMILIARITY WHEN TALKING TO HIM, AS THOUGH ONE IS SPEAKING TO A GOOD FRIEND.



Meet Alonzo Cantu, a businessman, philanthropist and political figure in the Rio Grande Valley. From owning a second-generation construction company to becoming the founder and board member of Doctors Hospital at Renaissance, Cantu continues to serve the Valley as a 'Man of The People.'

Born and raised in the United States to Mexican migrants, Cantu said he spent his childhood summers working in the fields until his hands calloused. It wasn't until his parents pushed for the family to get a higher education that Cantu would start the stepping-stones to an unforeseen empire.

Cantu attended the University of Texas Pan-American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley) and applied for pharmaceutical school at the University of Houston following in the footsteps of his sister. However, after being cooped up in a room counting pills, he said he decided it wasn't a passion that fueled his fire.

"I switched my degree to business [at] the University of Houston, [and] came back." When he returned to the Valley, Cantu said he was offered a job at a bank as an officer. However, even as a banker, Cantu believed there was much more worth his time and desired to do something much more within his community. This turned him to the family business: construction.

At that time, Cantu's parents were in the construction business and had built a

few homes. His father worked at a construction company in Corpus Christi, and then he and his wife started a construction company that built homes in Mexico. Cantu's parents then took their work with them when moving to the Rio Grande Valley and instilled an exemplary work ethic for the family.

"I decided, 'I want to start building,'" said Cantu.

That decision, with the groundwork of family mentorship, became the foundation of what became the Cantu Construction and Development Co. "With the help of my sister, [I] financed a [spec] house. We built it, sold it and then went on to the next one," Cantu said. More than four decades later, Cantu is still building in the Rio Grande Valley, specializing in building commercial properties such as the Bert Ogden Arena and custom residential homes. But construction isn't all he does.

Cantu is also the owner of the United Soccer League's Rio Grande Valley FC Toros Soccer team, the chairman of Lone Star National Bank, owner of H-E-B Park and many more. Cantu is also an influential political figure. According to a Texas Monthly article in 2018, he is the president of the Border Health PAC, which primarily contributes to politicians' campaigns at all levels of government. Cantu said, "We don't fund any candidate, Republican or Democrat, that doesn't visit the Valley." According to Carlos Sanchez, a writer for Texas Monthly, "Border Health has consistently ranked among the top 10 most generous political action committees over the past decade". Though Cantu's efforts are felt nationally and state-wide, he said his main concern is the RGV.





"I'm committed to the Valley, and I want to help the Valley first," Cantu added. One way he is doing this is through education.

As one of the original founders of the Valley Alliance of Mentors for Opportunities and Scholarships (VAMOS), Cantu and the Board of Directors have academic opportunity in mind. From its establishment nearly 24 years ago in 1996, Cantu said that the original founders were mostly migrants who got a college degree and became professionals who wanted to give back and help. VAMOS candidates, according to Cantu, who chairs the board, are not selected based on grades or GPA alone, but by ability and drive. With his aid in emphasizing education, schools such as Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and the University of Texas have established higher education centers here in the RGV.

"I want to get more kids into professional schools," said Cantu. As an alum and current member of the University of

Houston Board of Regents, Cantu also hopes to someday bring UH down to the Valley. The University of Houston even has a scholarship in the businessman's name for business students who graduate from any high school in Hidalgo County, Texas.

Executive Vice President and Marketing Director of Lone Star National Bank, Edna De Saro, has known Cantu for 16 years. Overseeing all marketing and advertising strategies for Lone Star National Bank, De Saro works closely with him.

"He has been a mentor and a friend," said De Saro. "It is a privilege to work with him."

De Saro added, "He may not realize it, but he set standards. He sets the bar as to how we should be behaving and how we should treat other people. He's not about the reward, he's about serving other people."

De Saro also brightly described Cantu as a good man with remarkable intelligence.



“Mr. Cantu is an icon in the Rio Grande Valley,” De Saro said. “Somebody that doesn’t know him may say, ‘he’s driven by wanting to make more wealth!’, [but] that’s not what Alonzo is about. He’s such a humble man that he doesn’t even realize it. He doesn’t realize the extent of the footprint he is leaving behind.”

In light of advice for aspiring businessmen and businesswomen, Cantu gave some words of guidance.

“WORK HARD, STAY FOCUSED, DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU RE GOING DO, BE ON TIME AND NEVER LOSE YOUR CREDIBILITY,” CANTU ADVISED. “IF YOU RE IN A BUSINESS, ALL YOU HAVE IS TRUST AND CREDIBILITY. IT’S ALL ON REPUTATION. TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT, EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS ESPECIALLY.”

Looking back to a moment when his parents influenced his success, Cantu shared a personal story about his daily visits to his mother. “My mother is 94 years old, and I go see her every day,” said Cantu. “There’s no doubt that my parents had an influence on us. The [drive] to help

others came from them.” Cantu then continued, with heartfelt emotion, “When I go to see my mother, there’s flashbacks on how we grew up. Their vision [placed us] where we are today.”

In his many years of work, the McAllen business icon has learned a lot when it comes to business, even if it means making a few mistakes along the way.

“I’m like any other businessperson,” Cantu said, “I’ve learned when I’ve made mistakes, but I stop and analyze what [went] wrong.” The CEO of Cantu Construction says that he may even be working more hours than he first began with the company, but that despite the multitude of work, it never places a damper on his day.

“I love what I do, and I don’t consider it work,” shares Cantu. “I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

Cantu has been married to his wife Yolanda for 36 years and has two daughters, Allysa and Alexis Cantu.

¿PATRIOTISMO

O

¿LISMO?

NACIONA

Por: Yazmín Sánchez Cortez



ARTÍCULO 1o.- El Escudo, la Bandera y el Himno Nacionales, son los Símbolos Patrios de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos.

ARTÍCULO 32 Bis.- Las personas físicas e Instituciones no podrán usar la Bandera Nacional para promover su imagen, bienes o servicios.

ARTÍCULO 33 Bis.- Los accesorios en que se reproduzcan la Bandera o el Himno Nacionales para efectos comerciales, deberán cumplir con los requisitos que establezca el Reglamento de esta Ley, de conformidad con lo previsto en la presente Ley.

La palabra “patriotismo” tiene diferentes significados dependiendo de la cultura de cada país y en principal de cada ciudadano del mismo. Lo que para algunos es considerado patriotismo para otros es un término extremista o exagerado, y otros tal vez no son tan respetuosos con su patria como deberían. Pero entonces, ¿Qué es el patriotismo?

Patriotismo significa devoción a un lugar o a un estilo de vida en específico. Una cultura que se cree es la mejor pero no busca imponerla sobre los demás. Entonces patriotismo se podría decir que es ser defensor de su cultura o lugar de origen, ya sea de forma militar o cultural. Patriotismo es similar al nacionalismo. Basado en la definición que ofrece el diccionario Merriam-Webster el nacionalismo va de la mano con el deseo de adquirir poder sobre los demás.

La cultura mexicana es medida en muchos aspectos de acuerdo al punto de vista americano. Uno de estos es el

respeto que se ofrece a los símbolos patrios, los cuales son: el himno, la bandera y el escudo de armas. El respeto hacia la patria a través de estos símbolos es enseñado durante la educación básica por medio de la clase de Educación Cívica y Ética, además de celebrar una ceremonia de honores a la bandera que estipulado por ley se debe realizar en las escuelas.

En México, los símbolos patrios, en especial el escudo y la bandera conllevan una historia previa a la conquista española que se ha querido mantener para no olvidar las raíces del país. Estos símbolos se respetan y por ley no pueden ser alterados ni usados para otro propósito que no sea para el que fueron creados. El respeto hacia ellos se empieza desde muy jóvenes, y aprendiendo su historia para conocer su importancia.

De acuerdo con la maestra Diana Chagoya del Colegio Bilingüe Juventus de la ciudad de Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Explica como



la formación cívica de los estudiantes no es obligatoria si no que se muestra en la historia y por medio de ella los alumnos asocian la historia de la nación con el respeto que se le debe tener.

“En la materia de historia no se aborda específicamente la historia de los símbolos patrios, pero si se hace hincapié en que los símbolos patrios han sido determinantes para todos los procesos históricos,” dice Chagoya, quien ha sido docente del área de ciencias sociales por 17 años.

Alumnos de la misma escuela hicieron observaciones de lo que ellos consideran importante de los símbolos que representan a la nación.

“Siento que [al hacer honores] recordamos de dónde venimos y porque es parte de nosotros. Creo que cada quien debe de conocer de dónde viene.”

- Shalom, alumna de 13 años

Otro alumno que quiso compartir su sentimiento hacia la nación fue Víctor

Cazares quien admite estar feliz de su procedencia y de su nacionalidad.

“Claro que conozco lo que me representa, la bandera y me siento orgulloso de tener una bandera que tiene mucha historia. Uno debería sentirse orgulloso de venir de un país muy diverso, de mucha cultura e historia,” dice Cazares, 14 años.

“Saber que yo soy mexicano me hace sentir orgulloso de mi mismo, yo antes que no sabía de historia, y poco a poco empecé a conocerla y me fui sorprendiendo. Es importante recordar de donde provenimos, nuestras raíces. De sentirnos orgullosos de quienes somos. Conocer de dónde vienes, de donde provienes, de quien eres y quien podrías ser. Uno se siente bien al conocer de sus raíces, es como si no supieras de donde naciste, eso te dejaría intriga.”

En Estados Unidos el respeto a la patria se presenta de diferente forma. Si bien es respetando a la bandera al igual que en México, también se presenta al ejercer el voto, por medio de cumplir con la obligación de jurado y a su vez al rendirle honor a diferentes instituciones

nacionales como a los oficiales de la armada. También los símbolos patrios son diferentes en Estados Unidos, además de la bandera, también se le considera como símbolos patrios al águila nacional, algunos monumentos nacionales como La tumba del soldado desconocido (The tomb of the unknown soldier), parques nacionales como Yosemite, y también los avances tecnológicos que representan el orgullo americano como las avionetas y demás transportes de guerra.

De acuerdo al Dr. Irving Levinson de la Universidad de Texas del Valle del Rio Grande, en México también se tiene un respeto a la armada nacional, sin embargo, el respeto hacia la armada en México se refiere a la armada que peleó durante la revolución mientras en Estados Unidos el respeto a la armada es hacia los soldados en la actualidad.

“En México existe un número de símbolos militares...[por ejemplo] el Altar a la Patria que fue específicamente construido para honrar a los mexicanos caídos en la guerra 1848-1849 contra Estados Unidos, pero es mayormente para honrar a todos los mexicanos que pelearon por este país,” dice Levinson, quien enseña historia latinoamericana en UTRGV.

“Los mexicanos recuerdan particularmente la gloria de la milicia por eventos. Se enfocan en el Padre Hidalgo durante 1810, en el Sitio de Cuautla cuando los independistas escaparon la fortaleza de los españoles. [Se puede apreciar] El monumento a la revolución en la Ciudad de México el cual tiene grabado los nombres de los héroes de la revolución en su interior.”

Ambos, Estados Unidos y México recuerdan a las figuras que realizaron grandes cosas por su país.

Los últimos 20 o 30 años en Estados Unidos, la gente ha usado la bandera para protestar. Por esa razón la bandera ha sufrido alteraciones, alteraciones que en el caso de México no podrían suceder. Por ejemplo, la bandera ecológica que es una alteración a la bandera nacional americana usada durante los 70's. En lugar de franjas blancas y rojas posee franjas verdes y blancas y se cambiaron las estrellas por un símbolo ecologista. El alterar la bandera, representaba el compromiso que se tenía hacia el medio ambiente. Otro ejemplo sería bandera por el “movimiento de las vidas azules” (Blue Life Matters) que es usada cuando un policía es asesinado. Estas alteraciones no son consideradas un delito o irrespetuosas como si lo serían en México, ya que la bandera en dicho país es un símbolo que no se modifica.

En México al apoyar a una causa como las ejemplificadas anteriormente, la bandera se usa como es y se puede portar una bandera diferente apoyando a dicha causa junto con la bandera nacional. Esto se puede ver cuando se apoya a un partido político o un equipo de fútbol. Los partidos políticos poseen su propia bandera al igual que los equipos deportivos y pueden ser acompañadas por la bandera nacional.

Otro ejemplo sería el uso de la bandera de la comunidad LGBTQ+ y la diferencia en ambos países. En Estados Unidos no hay un problema en mezclar ambas banderas, pues al hacer esto representa que la comunidad es tan americana como cualquier otro ciudadano, por eso se mantienen su vez las 50 estrellas que representan los 50 estados que conforman la nación. Por otro lado en México no es aceptado pues la cultura es diferente al igual el respeto a la patria.



La bandera nacional es la bandera nacional y no puede ser modificada, pues se considera sagrada.

A pesar de que ambas naciones tienen maneras muy similares de respetar a su patria, por medio de monumentos, símbolos y representación histórica, de igual forma ambos países son muy diferentes entre lo que es aceptado y lo que no. Esto no significa que una u otra nación sea nacionalista o extremista. Significa que las culturas son diferentes pues poseen historias diferentes y para poder respetar una nación se debe conocer de la misma. No es cuestión de opinión, es cuestión de respeto hacia las demás naciones que son ajenas a la nuestra.

**“Entre los individuos, como entre las naciones,
el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz.”**

-Benito Juárez



CRAFT CULTURA

CHICANO CULTURE IN THE RGV

By: Gabriela Gonzalez

Illustrations: Manuel Gámez

reating real art for tomorrow. On a surface level, these words can imply what they say as a sentence. For Misael “Chico” Ramirez, co-founder of Craft Cultura, a collective community organization founded in May 2018, serving as a platform for writers and creators representing the values of the Chicano/Latinx culture, these words bring a wider perspective as to what it means to be a minority in today’s society and how we can defy the status quo.

“Me and my buddy Arnulfo [co-founder] majored in Mexican-American studies. After we graduated, we wanted to create a platform where we can apply our skills as South Texas artists, entrepreneurs, and creators,” said Ramirez.

The core of this project comes out of necessity for Mexican-American communities to gather and seek the opportunity to become something larger than the scope of denotation and assumption of this minority group, and to have their voices heard, valued, and represented. Before and currently during his presidency, Donald Trump’s rhetoric and xenophobic-led campaigns have influenced his supporters into publicly marginalizing the Latinx community.

“Dating back, we had separate Mexican-American boarding schools. In school we’re usually taught about black and white, but are never really taught what happened to our people when we were here,” said Ramirez.

During the time of the Chicano Movement, Latinx minorities strived to justify the importance of their people with one common goal: empowerment. The movement involved various issues from working rights to seeking equal education. Chicanos were restricted from learning about their people and the history of their ancestors. South Texas was stolen land, and between the 1940s and the 1960s, people were restricted from learning about Chicano contributions in the United States.

All across the nation, Chicano students participated in walkouts, fighting the people in power to receive adequate tools and resources for basic education. These individuals received more than just light insignificant punishments for instances like speaking Spanish or speaking up on their beliefs. The consequences resulted in injuries and, in harsher times, police brutality and violence. If one does not see his or her people reflected in education, what role models does one look up to and aspire to be like?

WE HAVEN'T BEEN ALLOWED TO FULLY HEAL. WE HAVEN'T BEEN ALLOWED TO FULLY CELEBRATE OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. I THINK IT'S MUCH MORE HARMFUL ERASING THE PEOPLE'S HISTORY.

Craft Cultura is trying to shift the narrative in the Rio Grande Valley by educating Latinx individuals of the impact the Mexican-American movement had on its people and how to pave the way for the next generation.

"Our end goal [at Craft Cultura] is full liberation, full freedom for everybody, but we have long ways to go in our community," Ramirez said.

One of the oldest Chicano traditions that lives on to this day is storytelling. Similar to the time of the Chicano movement and now, those in power do not want minorities to tell their story. So, instead of telling their story vocally, these stories are expressed visually through mural artwork.

"Storytelling is in our blood and one of the traditions we have to continue, by any means necessary," said Ramirez.

Throughout the upper and lower Valley, the art of storytelling continues, each mural with their own story to tell. In Downtown McAllen, there is a rose mural painted by Rina Roberts, an art teacher at McAllen Memorial High School. Roberts has painted other canvases in the McAllen area, one of them being the hands of Christ mural outside of the Salvation Army. The Mexican-American Studies Department at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has also had the

privilege of creating a mural at the San Juan Municipal Park.

"The mural was a summer long project. They [MAS] got a blank wall canvas from the community and surveyed the neighborhood and asked the people what they want to see," said Ramirez.

Through surveys, the department discovered that many people in the neighborhood used to be braceros – laborers admitted into the United States for a seasonal period for agricultural work – during the World War II period. This is exactly what the university department decided to paint.

"It [the mural] tells a story of how these men would come into the United States and their hands would be checked for calluses. If they had calluses, this meant that they were hard workers, and they would go through inspection," said Ramirez.

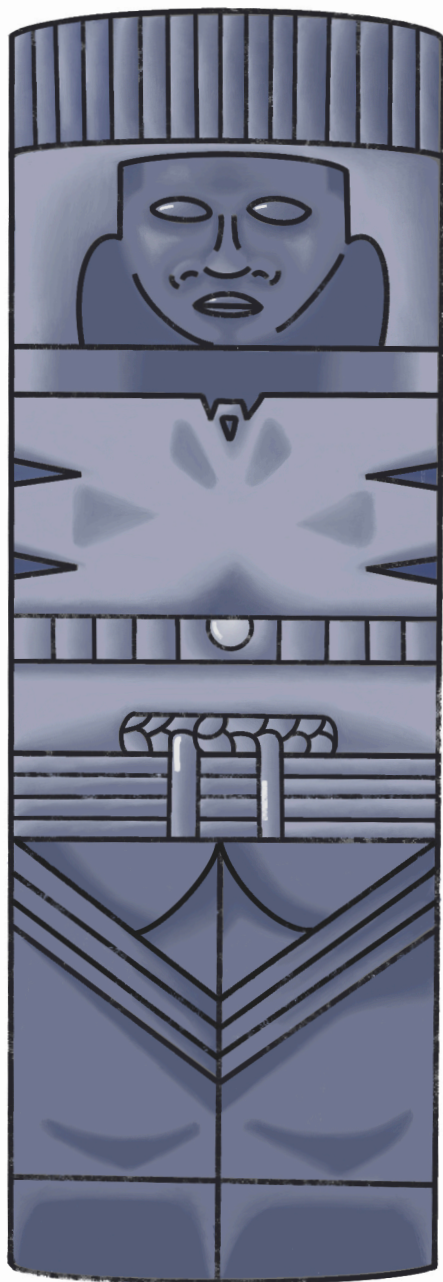
Inspections meant taking an inhumane approach by any means possible. Braceros often encountered cases of dehumanization and were sprayed with pesticides, got on the trains to the United States, and would begin their work in the fields. The San Juan mural shows the growth and evolution from the Chicano Movement to now, and how these ancestors paved the way for future generations.



“SO, THE STORY CONTINUES AND SHOWS BRACEROS WORKING FROM THE FIELDS, AND NOW BECAUSE OF THEM WE ARE GRADUATING. THE MURAL ENDS WITH THE GRANDCHILDREN OF THOSE WORKERS GRADUATING FROM UTRGV. IT’S A BEAUTIFUL MURAL BECAUSE THAT’S HOW OUR ANCESTORS TOLD STORIES.”

The Rio Grande Valley has the upmost potential for showing those from the outside looking inwards what it means to be a Latinx individual. Craft Cultura wants to keep representing these people through any means necessary and keep the heritage of stories and community alive while destigmatizing the minority group. They aim to do this by educating others about Mexican-American life with the hope to create a safe space for all ages and paths of life. Craft Cultura’s organization is unique and one of its own in the RGV. Making its name known, the organization started by speaking up for what the community has lost and how to continue creating bigger and better opportunities for the future people of South Texas and all Chicano community. The organization’s primary future goal is to become a non-profit with a Craft Cultura cultural center dedicated towards growth and unity.

“We are descendants of a beautiful people that are creatives and beyond,” said Ramirez. “You can’t help but to feel some sort of anger, but also channel that anger and create something amazing. Our weapons are our voices and minds. Let’s keep creating. Let’s keep representing. Let’s leave a legacy behind.”



**VISIT CRAFT
CULTURA'S
INSTAGRAM
PAGE**



utrgvpulse.com

IS
CO

PULSE

Saving the Strays of South Texas

By: Maria Teresa Ruiz

Photography: Maria Teresa Ruiz and Manuel Gámez



**From little kittens to big German Shepherds,
there is a large number of strays that roam the
streets of the Rio Grande Valley.**







ocal shelter Laurie P. Andrews and its mother organization, Palm Valley, take in about 50,000 strays per year.

"We have a high intake at Palm Valley. There's about 100 animals that get brought in [to our shelters] per day," Shares Renee, the adoption team leader at Laurie P. Andrews.

Despite these efforts, Laurie P. Andrews and the Palm Valley shelter on Trenton Road take in more strays than they push out. Palm Valley Animal Society alone is taking in strays from 8 cities across Hidalgo county.

"It's a lot for two shelters to handle," adds Renee.

A variety of pets with loving and contagious personalities manage to get overlooked, decreasing the capacity and space to hold incoming strays. This means current residents are at risk of losing their lives.

"Some of these guys have been here going on 200 days," said Renee, "So we try to push them out because they are the ones at risk [of euthanasia]."

Such an issue has prompted the shelters to promote the importance of adopting with the hashtags #save20 for their dogs, and #save10 for their cats on their social media platforms. Each adoption deadline lasts for about a week or two. If they get enough adoptions through these means, enough space is freed up, allowing the few remaining to be saved as the new week comes in.

In order to ensure that their residents get home soundly, Laurie P. Andrews waives

its adoption fees, provides vaccines, and makes sure that the outgoing fur-baby is spayed or neutered. They even give away a complimentary bag of food and a collar.

"WE ALWAYS NEED OUR COMMUNITY TO COME HELP US OUT. ADOPTION, EVEN FOSTERING CAN GO A LONG WAY."

Laurie P. Andrews and Palm Valley are currently working alongside the non-profit, nation-wide rescue organization known as Best Friends. There is a current rescue team at Palm Valley that networks all of their cats and dogs around the country.

Despite the fact that rescue teams can manage to get about 200 animals tagged, it won't make a difference when the shelters get that same amount coming into the facility. As soon as space is made, a larger volume of strays and surrenders come in, creating a constant and unending cycle.

When asked on possible expansion of the shelter, Renee stated that Laurie P. Andrews won't be looking for one anytime soon. As of now, the parent facility, Palm Valley, is mainly outdoor-based and remains one of the most under-resourced shelters in the nation.

"It's a really old facility," shares Renee. "It's been around since the 80s." Many parts of the facility have gone unchanged. Aside from having the same phone lines and boxlike desktop computers, the problem also lies in Palm Valley being outdoor-based. With escalating south Texas temperatures, it can become overbearing to both staff and current residents who stay in the outdoor kennels.

According to the RGV Low Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic, the problem lies in not having enough shelters, but in reproduction that leads to the insane levels of overpopulation here in the Valley.

“THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS TO CONTROL PET OVERPOPULATION: EUTHANASIA OR STERILIZATION. STERILIZATION (SPAY OR NEUTER SURGERY) IS THE ONLY HUMANE SOLUTION.”

Despite having these low-cost options, not many are available in the Valley. Even though these services are provided, there is no guarantee that it will be done in a timely manner. Due to high demand, appointments can be booked for months in advance. By the time an owner would need to spay or neuter their pet, they've either got puppies or kittens on the way, and it would be considered too late for a fixable option.

So, why is this an issue, and how bad of a problem has it become over the past few years?

According to myrgvspayneuter.com, a fertile female cat can have an average of five kittens per litter and can reproduce three times a year. With this in mind, the same cat, alongside the kittens, can produce up to 11 million kittens in just nine years.

When it comes to man's best friend, a fertile dog can have up to six pups per litter and can reproduce twice within the span of a year. These numbers rise to over 67,000 puppies per six years.

These numbers alone cause our local shelters to become overwhelmed with

the intake.

Michael Bricker, executive director of Palm Valley, further explained the issues of overpopulation in the Valley and Palm Valley's role in the situation.

“The issue here...is that there are limited resources for us to fix that problem,” begins Bricker, “I think the more people think adoption first...I think that helps.”

“The community's part in that is backing animal shelters,” said Bricker, “The better the shelter does and the more animals we're putting out into the community, that are already fixed and ready to go, the less animals we're going to see on the streets.”

As reported by Best Friends Animal Rescue, there are over 100,000 animals that need to be saved in order for Texas to be considered a no-kill state.

Both facilities wish to be a no-kill shelter by early 2020, but with lack of funding and community awareness, such a goal could be delayed.

Pets getting out of the backyard and either getting pregnant or getting other pets pregnant is also a major factor to the problem of overpopulation. Many owners, in these circumstances, need to be aware of their own responsibility to the matter.

When it comes to unlicensed breeders, how can one guarantee that the puppies are healthy and without any illness or critical defect? How would one guarantee that these individuals are truly taking care of the animals they are breeding for profit? How would anyone be so sure that these unlicensed breeders are selling them to the right people?

“WE NEED OUR COMMUNITY’S HELP,” EXPLAINS RENEE. “WE NEED OUR COMMUNITY TO REACH OUT TO THEIR CITY COUNCILS [AND] THEIR CITY MAYORS TO GET MORE FUNDING AND PROGRAMS AS FAR AS ANIMALS.”

Some doable solutions involve the enforcement of animal care laws that prioritize sterilization in order to implement stray population control, bring awareness to practice proper animal enclosures, and prevent illegal breeders and crack down on those who dump unwanted pets.

However, the Executive Director of Palm Valley Animal Society states that laws

might not be the way to go.

“A lot of people want to jump to that. If there was a law...it would just happen. But that’s not true, because there has to be people [veterinarians] who are able to do it,” Bricker said.

Making the Valley much accessible to veterinary services can also go a long way. There is a shortage of veterinarians not only here in the Valley, but in the nation as a whole.

According to Dr. James Lloyd, a veterinary economist, the underlying issue to the shortage in vets is due to the veterinary schools not accepting enough qualified students.

“There’s a bit of a frenzy — to me, I would



characterize it as that — in the hiring market,” said Lloyd at the Banfield Pet Healthcare Industry Summit in Portland, Oregon in September of last year.

Thus, pet owners being unable to spay or neuter their pets due to the lack of vets in the Valley adds to the problem.

“You can’t just [nurture] them into being spayed and neutered. There has to be [that service] available to them,” said Bricker.

When first coming to the Valley, Bricker had a negative view on the animal community.

“It’s about the way we talk about the community on social media and in other outlets,” Bricker said, going on to share about his skewed initial views about the

Valley’s care for animals before moving to the area.

The things he saw plastered on social media made him believe that since there were overpopulation problems, the community had no care or no intention to fix it whatsoever.

“It painted a picture that people here didn’t care about animals,” Bricker admitted.

However, experiencing the Valley’s love for animals firsthand changed his view.

“I think it’s the exact opposite. And I think the best thing people can do, is to show the good sides of the Valley,” said Bricker, mentioning that pet friendly places can go a long way.



"If they go on social media and they read the same articles that I did before I came here, they may be reluctant to come," begins Bricker, "But if they start seeing the positive things that are going on down here, that's what's going to bring more people down."

Bricker said the more that the community can do with Palm Valley Animals Society, the better.

"THE MORE HAPPY STORIES WE PUSH OUT, THE HIGHER OUR SAVE RATE BECOMES, AND THEY CAN ALL HELP US OUT WITH THAT."

Bricker also took time to speak about future projects.

"Some things you're going to see from us really soon is trying to build a coalition of shelters in the Valley," spills Bricker. Palm Valley Animal Society is looking forward to Mega-Adoption events, where shelters Valley-wide come together at a single location to adopt the animals of the Valley.

Not only is the animal society looking to collaborate, but they are also looking to expand valley-wide. As of December 2019, Palm Valley has opened up a pop-up location in the Downtown McAllen area that is expected to be packed with adoptees each weekend.

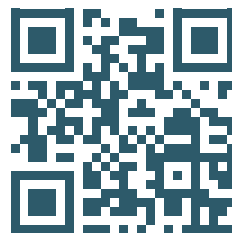
If you were to look back at Laurie P. Andrews and Palm Valley a couple of years ago, you would've been shocked to know that they were at an all-time low, 30% save rate in 2015, and a 54.2% save rate in 2018. Now, as of late 2019, their life-rate percentage has nearly tripled.

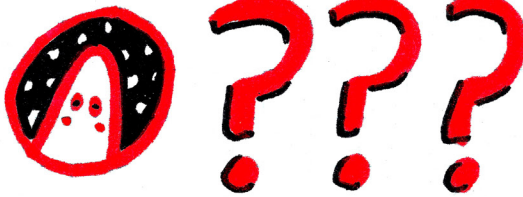
"We're hovering around that 80% save rate," shares Bricker. In order to become considered as a no-kill shelter, the life rate has to at least meet a 90% requirement. If Palm Valley Animal Society saved about 18 to 20 more dogs and about over 100 more cats in the year 2019, they would have reached that passing mark.

"We're close," Bricker said.

Volunteers and staff of Laurie P. Andrews and Palm Valley no longer want to euthanize due to lack of space, and seek their goal of becoming a no-kill Shelter by 2020 or 2021. According to Best Friends, the goal to have no-kill shelters nationwide is expected to be reached by 2025.

**VISIT PALM
VALLEY ANIMAL
SOCIETY'S
WEBSITE**





Por: Gabriela Gonzalez

Traducción por: Ramiro Barrera

Ilustraciones: Celeste Strange



PUEDE QUE LE DES “ME GUSTA” O NO, A ESTA NUEVA FUNCIÓN

La frase que dice “Una imagen vale mas que mil palabras”, puede que ya no sea tan cierta.

La frase que dice “Una imagen vale mas que mil palabras”, puede que ya no sea tan cierta. La red social, Instagram, ha revolucionado la faceta de las redes sociales, al permitir que sus usuarios tengan una conexión con otras personas, descubran contenidos inimaginables y sobre todo que libren su individualidad como una salida social y creativa a través de sus fotos y videos.

Desde su lanzamiento en 2010, esta aplicación de contenido multimedia ha estado arrasando en el mundo, atrayendo a más usuarios con sus funciones actualizadas como las famosas “Instahistorias” y “IGTV”. Instagram sigue con la misión de ser mejores que sus competidores y seguir conquistando usuarios. Pero, ¿Cuál es el siguiente paso ahora para Instagram?

A principios de este año, el CEO de Instagram, Adam Mosseri. Anunció una nueva función que ha estado siendo probada en varios países de Europa y Sudamérica. Ahora, es el turno de Estados Unidos para experimentar con la eliminación de una de las principales funciones de la plataforma, los famosos “Likes” o “Me gusta”. El único propósito de Mosseri para eliminar los “Likes” de su plataforma es despresurizar a los usuarios para que no dependan de varios “Me gusta” en una publicación para su validación, centrarse en mejorar la salud

mental y emocional, así como también producir contenido de forma creativa en lugar de competitiva. La característica retirada tendrá sus pros y sus contras, pero depende de los usuarios cómo abordar este cambio tecnológico.

Linda Chapman, una estudiante de primer año de la Universidad de Texas del Valle del Rio Grande, admite haberse adentrado al mundo del Instagram y sus dificultades para encontrar su camino dentro de la aplicación.

“Si tuviera que dar un tiempo máximo de uso de Instagram por día, definitivamente diría que más de dos horas”, dijo Chapman.

Chapman comenzó a usar Instagram durante su primer año de secundaria. Al principio, no le importaba formar parte de esta red social. Pero pronto se dio cuenta de que muchos de sus compañeros usaban Instagram, por lo que decidió hacerse usuaria de la misma.

Existe esta percepción en Instagram y las personas tienen una opinión “, agregó Chapman. “A todos les gusta presumir. Tal como está ahora con esta generación, se trata de mostrar tu cuerpo y tu increíble cabello”, continuó.

A Chapman le gusta compartir lo que hace durante su día y otras cosas más, en su cuenta. Al igual que otros usuarios, Chapman ha experimentado el sentirse desanimada debido a que algunas de sus publicaciones de Instagram no reciben la suficiente atención que ella esperaría por



“LOS VERIFICO [ME GUSTA], Y NO ME GUSTA ESTAR HACIÉNDOLO, PERO ES ALGO EN EL FONDO DE MI MENTE”.

la cantidad de “likes” que recibe.

“Si es una foto perfecta que realmente me gusta, entonces sí, me siento mal por no obtener suficientes “me gusta”. Quiero saber que me felicitan”, dijo Chapman. “Los verifico ‘me gusta’, y no me gusta estar haciéndolo, pero es algo en el fondo de mi mente”.

En sus años como usuaria de Instagram, Chapman ha experimentado cambios en su salud mental y emocional, también admite que es causa debido a un incremento del tiempo de uso de esta red social.

“Con los amigos que tenía, todo se trataba de depresión y ansiedad, y estás tratando de olvidarte de esos [problemas mentales y emocionales] usando Instagram”, dijo Chapman.

Mirar el contenido que intriga a los usuarios y afecta su propia imagen a través de una serie de “Me gusta” fue un ciclo continuo en la vida diaria de Chapman. Sabía que, para romper el ciclo, un ciclo con el que se familiarizó a través de la era digital, algo tenía que cambiar.

“Las cosas que las personas publican no son exactamente siempre felices. Y me hace pensar, y digo ¡wow!, no me gusta esto”. Es ahí cuando me desconecto”, agregó Chapman.

Ahora consciente de la nueva característica de Instagram, Chapman tiene un nuevo objetivo y una actitud progresiva hacia el uso de la aplicación más social y menos competitiva.

“Entonces, debido a que tengo este cierto objetivo con lo que quiero hacer con mi futuro, voy a usarlo más ahora como una salida social para poner cosas que quiero hacer para mi futuro”, comentó.

Sin embargo, no todos usan Instagram. Paul Díaz, estudiante de último año en UTRGV, nunca ha visto el interés de crear una cuenta de Instagram, pero simpatiza con los sentimientos de presión de millones de usuarios en las redes sociales.

“CREO QUE [INSTAGRAM] DA COMO RESULTADO QUE PRESENTAS UN RETRATO MUY EQUILIBRADO O SUPERFICIAL DE TU VIDA EN GENERAL. ME OBLIGARÍA A SER FALSO DE ALGUNA MANERA”

Díaz solía navegar en otras plataformas de redes sociales como Facebook y Twitter. Al igual que en Instagram; Facebook y Twitter tienen medidas de participación como me gusta, retuitear y compartir publicaciones. Ahora, Díaz ha tomado la decisión de dejar de usar las redes sociales por completo.

“Cuando utilicé las redes sociales, estaba mucho más preocupado por lo que la gente pensaba de

mí. Entiendo más ahora que tu autoestima está determinada por la cantidad de ‘me gusta’ en una foto que publicas”, agregó Díaz.

El año pasado fue la última presencia de Díaz en las redes sociales. La presión de mantener un estándar para el número de Me gusta por publicación y los estándares sociales lo hicieron reflejar su propia imagen y apariencia. Cuando estaba en las redes sociales, otros amigos que lo etiquetaban subían a Facebook fotos de Díaz. Después de ver sus fotos, entró en un estado mental consciente de sí mismo al analizar inconscientemente su apariencia en cada foto considerando los estándares. Ver vitriolo en las redes sociales lo hizo sentir entumecido y desanimado.

“[LAS REDES SOCIALES] ME HICIERON PREGUNTARME SI ASÍ ES COMO SE VE LA SOCIEDAD EN SU CONJUNTO. TAMBIÉN ME HIZO SENTIR UN POCO MÁS PESIMISTA SOBRE NUESTRAS RELACIONES. ESA FUE UNA DE LAS RAZONES POR LAS QUE SENTÍ LA NECESIDAD DE DEJARLAS”

Aunque nunca ha estado en Instagram, la opinión de Díaz sobre los próximamente eliminados “me gusta” sigue siendo fiel a su razonamiento para estar fuera de las redes sociales.

“Si alguien usa Instagram solo para obtener su dosis diaria de dopamina, entonces no me importa que eliminen la función Me gusta”, dijo Díaz.

El CEO de Instagram reiteró que el objetivo de eliminar los “likes” es resaltar la importancia de mantener intactas las raíces de las aplicaciones por medios creativos y de redes sociales. Díaz comprende lo que puede significar la eliminación de “likes” para los usuarios que usan Instagram con fines profesionales.

“La característica puede hacer que sea más difícil para alguien medir cuánta atención están generando con su negocio”, dijo Díaz. “Creo que será problemático para las personas que tienen más utilidad para Instagram que una persona promedio”.

A pesar del nuevo objetivo de Instagram, Díaz no tiene la intención de usar las redes sociales a corto plazo. Sin embargo, corresponde a los usuarios y a los no usuarios determinar si desean utilizar la aplicación sin presión para buscar la validación y los estándares numéricos o viceversa.

“Aunque todavía está todo ahí, al menos ya no me expongo a eso. Me siento mejor con quién soy y dónde estoy ahora.”

**READ THE
STORY IN
ENGLISH**



GETTING TO KNOW



DAVID "BIBI" HERMOSILLO

By: Karla Cavazos and Maria Teresa Ruiz



On Dec. 28, 2019, 23-year-old University of Texas Rio Grande Valley student and musician, David "BIBI" Hermosillo had his first headliner show, the Axis Mundi Tour: "Where heaven meets earth" at Cine El Rey. The opening acts, Gustavo Sustaita, AD3N and 350, all gave their performances before BIBI came out and performed his singles "Simple", "Out of my mind" (which he performed with 350), "Ghost" and "The hardest part."



Growing up in a musically influenced household, BIBI took inspiration from his father, Heriberto. When BIBI was a young boy, his father would bring him along to concerts.

“Music has always been kind of in my blood. I grew up backstage and [at] concerts”

As a an 8 year old, BIBI would also get his hands on his dad’s tape recorder and play around with it. Although he didn’t have much of a clue as to how tape recorders worked, BIBI enjoyed it anyways. BIBI also said that he would try and play piano, which became a kick-off to his musical career.

“As I grew older, I would just write songs with the melodies,” said BIBI.

At 18 years old, BIBI released his first EP –Extended Play Record– “The

Corners of My Mind.”

The creative process that went into his first EP is based on letting the music come to him. When Hermosillo feels that tug, he picks up his guitar and starts. Basing his lyrics on real-life experiences, BIBI’s music gives a tone of relatability.

“Let’s say I’m in a relationship and I get cheated on. I feel like I don’t know how to cope with anger, and I just start writing. I’m naturally just a very emotional person,” he said. “I grab my guitar; I start playing it and I just start singing things as they come. Everything just comes together.”

When it comes to doing the melody or lyrics first, Hermosillo said, “People ask me ‘Hey do you do lyrics, music or melody first?’, and honestly most of the time it’s all three at the same time”.

Hermosillo finds that music is a therapeutic remedy for expressing his emotions. He feels as though writing music is equivalent to letting his emotions loose.

“When I feel something really strong, my way of getting it out was by writing, and all of a sudden I had all these songs.” Hermosillo said. He was 14 years old when he wrote “City Lights”, which he believes was his first decent song. He never released the song but is planning to in the next few months.

Hermosillo also keeps his ears open, finding inspiration in other artists for his own work, and piecing his own work together like a jigsaw.

"I just listen to different types of music so when I song write, all that inspiration [and] all that influence comes out naturally."

Growing up, his biggest musical inspiration was The Beatles.

"I feel like my melodies are influenced from them, and as I started getting more into music myself, Coldplay was huge. But recently there's been bands that have inspired me like The 1975 and Lany," he said.

However, BIBI advises that an artist must be careful and not duplicate or mimic sounds of other artists.

BIBI acknowledges the work it takes to pursue his dreams, while still maintaining his other obligations. Because he is still a student and helps run his family's business, it is hard for him to dedicate his day to just coming up with new songs, shooting music videos and promoting his passion.

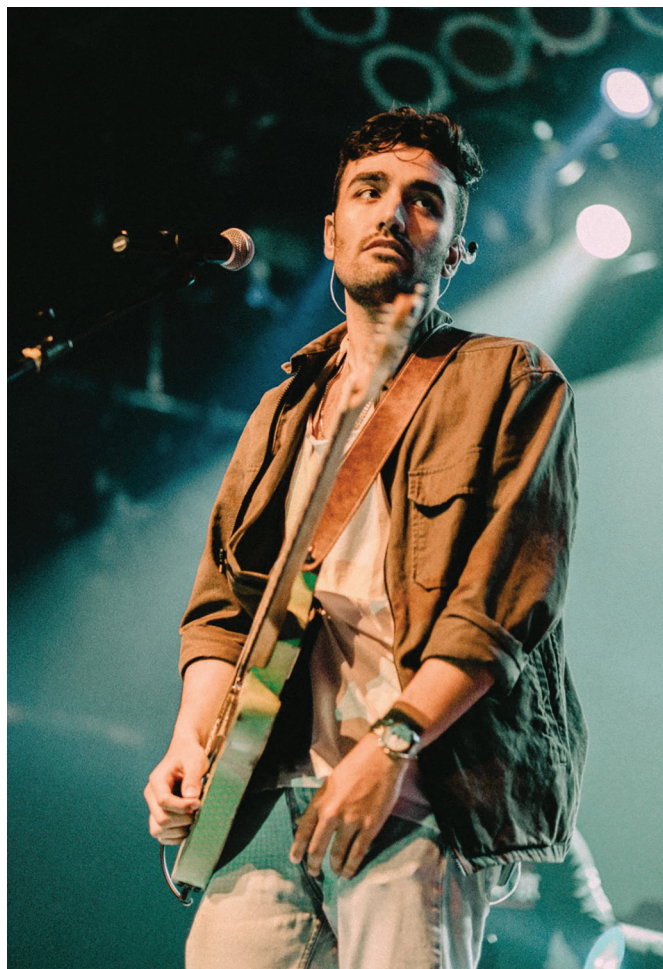
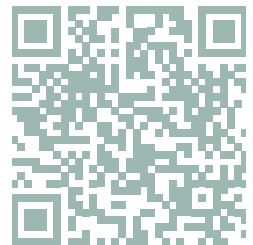
"You have to run into the right person that believes in you and is willing to help without changing you," said BIBI about finding a manager. He is also taking steps towards getting more comfortable with social media in order to promote his work and share his life with others.

When it comes to giving advice to aspiring musicians, BIBI said that honesty to one's self is key.

"My number one advice would be to stay true to yourself, and everyone says it but it's true. Do not try to be someone else, just be honest with your lyrics. Don't do it for the money, open your heart and just be honest about how you feel."

As for the future, BIBI is currently in talks with Sony Latin America about signing a publishing deal with them, which would make him one of the songwriters for the label. He will be going to Los Angeles to have a songwriting session with the band "Los Vázquez Sounds". His current goal consists of releasing his single titled "London" and releasing an album with a record label. His music is currently on Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube. You can scan the QR code to listen to his latest music.

**LISTEN TO
BIBI'S SONGS
ON SPOTIFY**





IN THE MIND OF **MANUEL "RAID" ZAMUDIO**

By: Michel Flores Tavizón

Photography: Manuel Gámez

Manuel "Raid" Zamudio is a McAllen-based artist whose art is a mix of fantastical themes and hyper-realistic visuals. He was born in Mexico City in 1988 and migrated to the Rio Grande Valley at the age of 5. Raid's art explores figurative, narrative and surrealist painting techniques mixed with urban and graffiti art styles. Raid's 10-year experience with painting, drawing, and spray painting is reflected in his work. Everything from life like portraits, to large illustrative murals, is what gives Raid his unique style and look. Raid's work is not only rising in the Valley, but his pieces have been shown in Hudson, N.Y., Los Angeles, and Cincinnati.

1

WHAT DROVE YOU TO START DOING ART AND HOW DID YOU LEARN TO DO SO?

It was a few things. My father painted as a hobby and would also draw a lot. He would never let me watch, so he never taught me how. But I think that was what really intrigued me. I would go to school and I would come back home, and there was a painting or drawing done. I thought he was lying to me, that he wasn't the one who had done it. I saw it as magic basically, because I was so young. He didn't like to do it around anyone, it was more for his relaxation. It was also for escapism. It really helped me escape the difficult situations, like coming from another country and not knowing anyone or even the language.



2

HOW DID MOVING TO A DIFFERENT COUNTRY INFLUENCE WHO YOU ARE AND YOUR ART?

Since art was a form of escapism for me, I followed it deeper and deeper into other worlds. The worlds of comic books, video games, and movies drew me in away from a reality I didn't want to deal with at a young age. Coming from another country, I didn't feel like I fit in for a long time. Then having lost my father and not finishing a full education... led me to feel like there was no path for me. I had to figure out everything on my own at first, [and] my work is all self-taught. It wasn't until later that I connected with other artists that helped me develop my abilities. Only recently have I come to the realization that there are a lot of things in my work that deal with apocalyptic visions, the world ending, or societal upheaval. That may be owed to being in poverty and the isolation of coming from another country. When you're in poverty and don't belong, you kind of hope a catastrophe happens. If society stopped functioning, then everybody's on the same level. In a catastrophic society, nobody's poor or rich, everybody's the same. So that may actually be the biggest effect it has had on me and my work.

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3

WHERE DOES YOUR INSPIRATION COME FROM?

I think it comes from a mixture of things. It comes from the storytelling I see in films, especially the lighting. Another influence is graffiti and mural art. I often mix both of those two styles, graffiti and cinematic lighting. There are a lot of combinations of influences at work.



4

WHAT DO YOU TRY TO REPRESENT IN YOUR ART?

I want to translate emotions and concepts in a different way. For example, using portraiture in a different way, juxtaposing the subject with a particular setting and translating that image effectively. What I'm trying to represent in my work is the struggle of the human condition; people going through hardship and the deterioration of culture.



5

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

When I was published in Hi-Fructose [the art magazine], that's the moment I cherish most. It kind of kickstarted everything for me, as far as feeling more secure to spread my work out into the world, to places outside the Valley. Since then I've had my work shown in national galleries. The gallery show that has meant the most to me has been "La Luz de Jesus" in Los Angeles. To have such a beloved gallery show my work means so much to me.

6

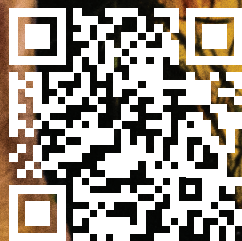
WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE YOUNG ASPIRING ARTISTS IN THE VALLEY?

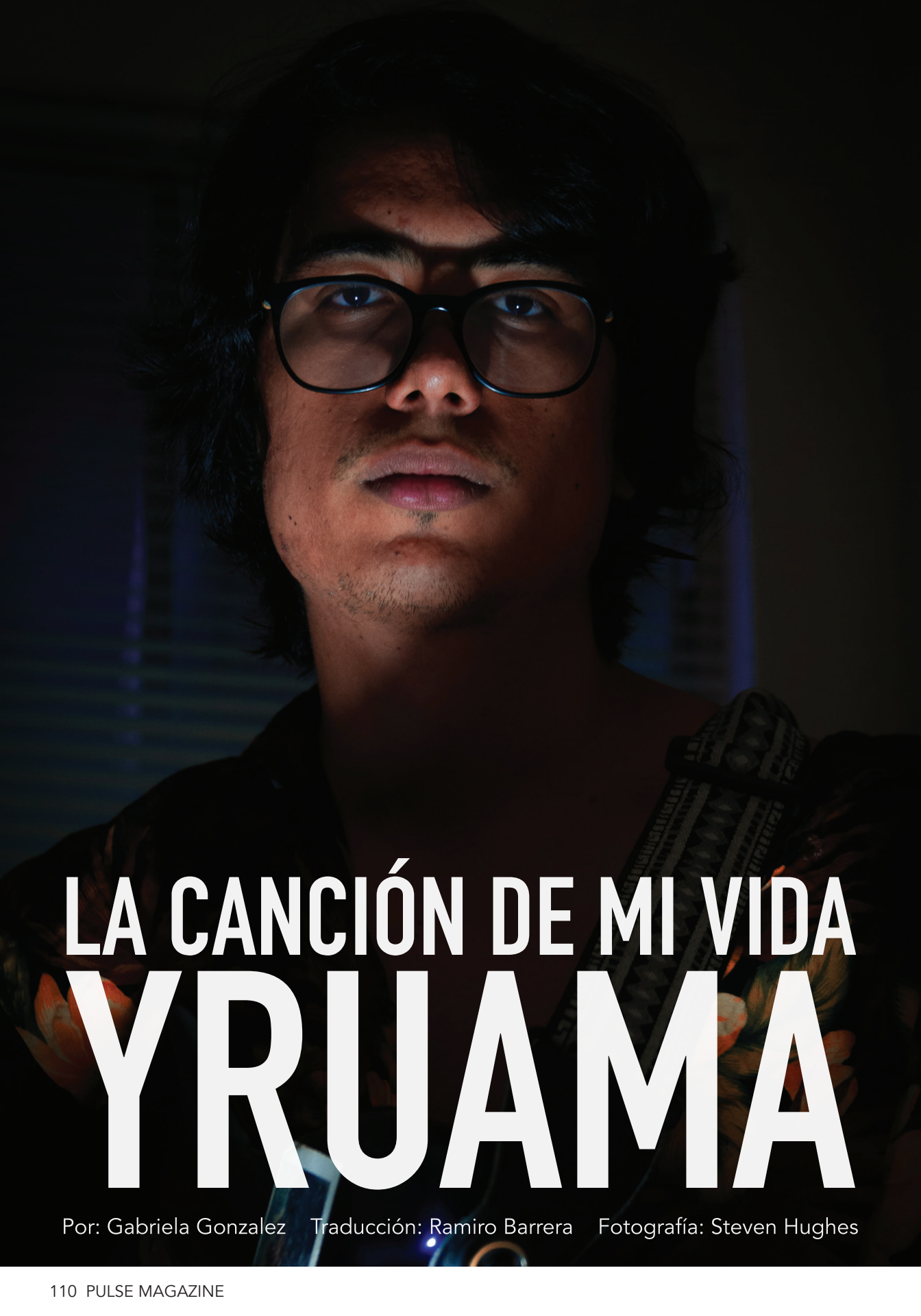
As corny as it may sound, follow your heart and follow your dreams, no matter what they may be and no matter how difficult your situation may be. Just keep going. And above all, work as hard as you possibly can. Then when you think you've worked hard enough, work harder.





VISIT RAID'S
INSTAGRAM
PAGE





LA CANCIÓN DE MI VIDA YRUAMA

Por: Gabriela Gonzalez Traducción: Ramiro Barrera Fotografía: Steven Hughes

Un niño pequeño, una mente inquisitiva y una sola pregunta. A los nueve años, la infancia de Amaury López consistió en crear instrumentos musicales jugando siempre con algo para crear un ritmo. Inspirado y apasionado desde una temprana edad, López tenía algo que preguntarle a su madre. Hay que mencionar que, la mente de un niño siempre va más allá de nuestra imaginación. Amaury, ansioso por pedirle a su madre que le obsequiara una batería, la madre de López le regaló lo que éste pedía. Cogió sus nuevas baquetas pulidas y dio un golpe. Este fue el comienzo de Yruama y su viaje musical.

Yruama, una banda alternativa de indie-rock con sede en el Valle del Río Grande, acuñó su nombre cuando López estaba en la escuela primaria. El nombre de Yruama resonó como ningún otro.

“En primaria, la gente generalmente escribe su nombre al revés por diversión. Lo probé y el nombre [Yruama] me quedó grabado. Mantuve el nombre de Yruama porque tenía sentido”, dijo López.

A los 14 años, López comenzó a implementar ritmos experimentales para crear discografía desde su iPod. Después de descubrir por curiosidad infantil el nombre de la que eventualmente sería su banda de rock, Yruama, y este sería utilizado como nombre de usuario oficial del grupo. Posteriormente, López comenzaría a subir música en línea.

“Seguí pensando,” ¡Esto es tan genial! “Seguí y seguí haciendo y tocando música”, dijo López.

López creció en Reynosa, Tamaulipas. Pasó toda su infancia y parte de su adolescencia en México, y ha crecido



con su ciudad natal, entorno que le dio la formación para ser la persona con inclinaciones musicales que es hoy en día. El camino de la vida de López tuvo un giro a sus 15 años de edad. Durante este tiempo, Reynosa, era conocida por sus altos índices de criminalidad y la guerra contra las drogas, empeoraba.

“Mi mamá vio que allí no había futuro [Reynosa]. No hay nada allí, y es realmente peligroso “, dijo López.

A raíz de todos estos eventos que ocurrían en México, la madre de López decidió que era mejor para él mudarse a los Estados Unidos y recrear una vida mejor en suelo estadounidense. Esto también abrió muchas más puertas para el que sería el cantante principal de Yruama.

A pesar de residir en E.U.A. López, sigue siendo fiel a sus raíces mexicanas. La música de Yruama combina elementos de letras en español con una fusión alternativa. Su último EP, Cravings, destaca sus sentimientos de nostalgia al extrañar a sus seres queridos.

“Entonces, todo el EP fue sobre cómo era mi vida en México, o cómo se sentía al no ser parte de eso”, dijo López.

El cantante principal escribió sobre extrañar a sus amigos, su ciudad natal y su madre, que actualmente reside en México mientras él vive en los Estados Unidos.

“Escribir [Cravings] me hizo comprender dónde estoy ahora. Tomé una definición amplia del título del álbum. Me di cuenta de que este, el Valle del Río Grande, es un hogar para mí “

Ahora con 22 años, López se ha asentado

al valle. Desde su llegada, ha crecido como artista y continúa creciendo en cada paso de su joven carrera musical a través de la forma en que crea y produce su propia música, hasta sus presentaciones en vivo. Yruama inicialmente comenzó como un proyecto en solitario cuando López vivía en México. Mientras se adaptaba a la vida en los Estados Unidos, López se hizo amigo de músicos locales con el mismo entusiasmo por crear música como un arte filosófico.

“ESCRIBO TODAS LAS CANCIONES, LOS ARREGLOS Y LAS GRABACIONES. LO HAGO TODO, SIN EMBARGO, NECESITO QUE LA GENTE TOQUE EN VIVO, ASÍ QUE LES PIDO A ALGUNOS DE MIS AMIGOS QUE ME AYUDEN A TOCAR EN VIVO Y ME PRESTAN SU TIEMPO”

Una batería que comenzó todo, un nuevo hogar, una recopilación de canciones, y una década después, Yruama debutaría en Yerberia Cultura, un lugar de música en vivo en McAllen. López aún se muestra resistente a lo largo de su viaje musical y continúa esforzándose por crear música que está orgulloso de producir.

Durante su viaje musical después de ingresar a los Estados Unidos, el joven cantante produjo siete canciones en dos servicios de transmisión de música, Bandcamp y Soundcloud. Ansioso por lanzar una compilación de música y poco después de lanzarse por impulso artístico es como se presentó la oportunidad de realizar su debut.

“A mi amigo Jorge parecía gustarle el álbum. Me preguntó si quería tocar en vivo [en Yerberia Cultura]. Dije “¡Sí, sí!”, afirmó López.

Desde su debut en Yerberia Cultura, Yruama ha reservado conciertos para espectáculos en lugares en el Valle de





Texas, desde Cine El Rey en el centro de McAllen, hasta Sauce House en San Juan. López ha tenido algunos éxitos dentro de su temprana carrera musical, como la apertura de artistas independientes populares.

“Un gran logro para mí fue tocar en Galax Z Fair. Fue un placer ver a todos mis amigos en la multitud volverse locos. Tuve la oportunidad de tocar con un grupo de artistas geniales como Katzu Oso e Inner Wave”, dijo López.

Yruama continúa sus conciertos en el Valle del Río Grande, al menos una actuación al mes, máximo dos. López elige este patrón de actuación ideal para aumentar la expectativa de cada concierto. Esto deja una oportunidad para que López se recupere, se inspire y trabaje en nuevos proyectos musicales. Yruama tiene dos EP 102 y Cravings.

López nos compartió que Cravings es uno de sus mayores logros como artista, adoptando un enfoque artístico más significativo.

“ME CENTRÉ MÁS EN EL TEMA DEL EP [CRAVINGS]. DEFINITIVAMENTE TOMÉ UNA DEFINICIÓN MÁS AMPLIA DEL TÍTULO DEL EP. HABLÉ SOBRE TEMAS RELACIONADOS CON LOS SENTIMIENTOS Y LA COMPRENSIÓN DE MIS SENTIMIENTOS “

Orgulloso de grabar todo por sí mismo y de su crecimiento como artista, López actualmente está trabajando en un nuevo proyecto de EP y anticipa lanzar la música en el verano de 2020.

**LISTEN TO
YRUAMA'S
SONGS ON
SPOTIFY**



PHOTO SERIES



BY LEAH T.

ARTIST

STATEMENT

MY CREATING PROCESS AND STYLE IS INSPIRED BY CINEMATIC FILM STILLS, A CAPTURED MOMENT IN TIME.

IN MY PHOTOGRAPHY, THERE'S A MOOD IN EVERY GIVEN IMAGE THAT IS PORTRAYED: DAYDREAM, PONDERING THOUGHTS, ALOOFNESS, AND DETACHMENT. I AM OFTEN ALOOF, LIKE AN AIR ELEMENT, ALWAYS IN THOUGHT, AND I RECREATE THOSE FEELINGS INTO PONDERING POSES THAT FEEL ALMOST "ALONE" BUT MOSTLY IN QUESTION OR DAZE.

MY MIND IS CONTINUOUSLY IN A NEVER-ENDING LOOP OF DAYDREAMS, [WHILE] MY EMOTIONAL STATE IS OFTEN DETACHED AND UNABLE TO COMPREHEND. I TYPICALLY FEEL AS THOUGH I AM IN A DREAM STATE OF MIND, DEFINING REALITY AND WHAT IT MEANS.

BECAUSE I AM A FREQUENT CLOUD WALKER, IN MY PHOTOGRAPHY I PORTRAY A CINEMATIC AND SOMEWHAT DREAMY TONE TO SET THE MOOD FOR WHAT I AM GOING FOR. I PORTRAY THESE DREAMY EPISODES OF MYSELF [AND] OTHERS DOING NORMAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SITTING IN THEIR ROOM, LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR, [OR] BEING IN THE COMFORT OF THEIR HOME.

THE SCENARIOS I CREATE ALMOST SEEM PERFECT, SURREAL AND DREAMY. BUT THE CHARACTER, MYSELF OR OTHER, IS RADIATING THIS ENERGY THAT GIVES THE VIEWER A MESSAGE THAT SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT. IT VISUALLY SEEMS LIKE A BEAUTIFUL WORLD, BUT THE CHARACTER ISN'T TRULY THERE WITHIN THE IMAGE, THEY ARE ELSEWHERE... IN DISSOCIATION WITHIN THEMSELVES.

[MY WORK GIVES] THE THOUGHT TO QUESTION, "WHO AM I?", "WHAT IS EVERYTHING SURROUNDING ME?" AND "DOES ANYTHING EXIST AT ALL?"







VISIT LEAHT'S
INSTAGRAM
PAGE



Marie Antoinette Ruiz

SPIRITUAL LEADER



By: Maria Teresa Ruiz and Patricia Monet Ramon

Photography: Steven Hughes

1 How does somebody learn to read tarot?

Basically, anyone can go out there and learn how to read tarot. You can go buy a box of cards. Buy them from Barnes and Noble or online and they have instructions, they have them all over YouTube. That can be fun and games and interesting conversational pieces for people to just talk about, but there's a difference. Anyone can learn [to read tarot], but as far as using tarot and having a gift with it, it helps [readers like] me channel into your energy and what's going on with you and maybe what spirit needs me to tell you.

2 Does Astrology ever play a part in your readings?

Astrology does. Just like the moon. The moon affects the ocean, right? You know we have high tide, low tide and fisherman go out there and depend on the moon, as far as what is going to happen. It affects all of us. So, if the moon affects our ocean, you can just imagine how the planets, going forwards and backwards, or how they're aligned can affect all of us. I apply that. I'm not an astrologer, but I'm learning a little bit more about it.

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3 What are your favorite decks to use?

I love my oracle cards by Doreen Virtue. [I also] have the golden tarot clips by Liz Dean, these are one of my favorites.

4 Do you use crystals in your readings?

I do use crystals. I use amethyst. It helps your energy, it helps your psychic ability. Of course, quartz crystals. It help me recharge my [tarot decks], helps the energy flow, and it helps me stay balanced. I have a long list of them, I have aventurine and selenite. They help me stay balanced, especially after seeing a lot of people.

5 What would you say to someone who is skeptical of tarot and spirit?

I don't like to really go there. Now if they're coming over and they're here to see me and they're going to sit here and dissect everything, as far as what I'm doing, I'd tell them "You know what? You have your belief system. There's the door, you can leave, I'm not here to prove myself."

6 What does a day in your life look like?

Well I get [to my shop] at about 10 o'clock in the morning. I put on my meditation music. I love sounds, they help me break up the energy and meditate. I do prayers to have a clear mind and to be able to receive whatever messages that I need to know or write down, so I do that. I love to burn incense, I like to clean the air, so I burn sage or palo santo. I like to turn on a candle, so I can feel relaxed before my first client. After that I'll help my clients booked for the day. Sometimes it's one back to back to back, or sometimes there's only one or two. Basically, first thing it's mediation. I see my clients and I end with burning incense and meditation, as well.

7 What called you to this practice?

I don't know, I was just born to... I was just fascinated by it, but it was because as a child, I guess I always had this ability of being very empathic, but to other people I was very sensitive. I was misunderstood a lot because I would cry a lot, or get angry. Then later on in life as I got older, I just felt like I became more awakened about my

surroundings. A lot of the dreams I had growing up, they would end up being kind of prophetic. One step at a time it kind of led me to where I'm at now. My mom had a lot to do with it that because she would read cards there on her bed and to me she was just so majestic. And I would just be like, "What is that?" and she'd say "Oh just some cards." And that was fascinating to me. That's why I kind of ended up going that route later on in life.

8 What is tarot to you?

I would say it's just like divination. Being able to see the unseen.

9 What are some misconceptions linked to the practices that you do?

Witchcraft. There's a lot of people that have a problem with it. Some of them are scared because some people think it's the devil's work. Growing up [half religious] I can understand how people cannot like it because of how God views that. There are people [say] "you shouldn't be looking into the future! You're doing witchcraft, you're a bruja!". But whatever, think what you want, that's okay.

10 What services do you provide?

I do tarot readings. I do runes, that's where you pick a stone and it gives you a message. I can do some palm readings. I do cleansings, where I use palo santo or sage. I also prepare cleansing waters with a lot of essential oils and other herbs and stuff that I use. I also prepare candles for people to help them their intentions. I go

and do home cleansings too. Of course, it's just a lot of spiritual guidance and counseling, as well. It's not just reading cards.

11 Do you have any advice for those interested in receiving divination, healing or tarot readings?

My advice is to try and go and get some extra help, spiritually. If you're not sure about one place or one reader and you just come out of there feeling worse, don't be stuck on it. Go and find someone who can really help you spiritually. It's to uplift you, not hurt you. If there's a warning that needs to be looked at, it's to help you, help yourself remove certain blocks in your life. Don't get stuck on what the reader says because there are some that can be pretty brutal, I think. And they do other kind of work, kind of dark, very negative. Don't stay in the negative. Find the right place, where it makes you feel better.

12 Do you have any advice for those who want to practice divination, healing and tarot?

My advice is to listen to yourself. Get in the state of meditation. Do a lot of reading, do some research. It'll help you understand yourself more, as far as getting into what I do. Start reading your cards, reading other people's cards or going into astrology. I think we all have the ability to help others, but it's about getting to know who you are as a person.

GOLDEN MIRROR FORTUNES



Story and photography by: Patricia Monet Ramon

Fernie Salinas is a school principal who also happens to run a small business in the Rio Grande Valley: reading tarot cards. He is the owner of Golden Mirror Fortunes, which he runs with the help of his sister Paloma Salinas, a school counselor.

Golden Mirror Fortunes first came to life during last year's Pride in the Park at the McAllen Convention Center when Salinas was experiencing heartbreak and an intense interest in wanting to help people.

"I'm a teacher, I'm a principal, and so it's always been my greatest desire to guide people, to help people, to give them the life that they've always wanted," said Fernie. "Golden Mirror Fortunes came from that desire."

Fernie has since grown a nice customer base and vends at four to five pop-up shops a month throughout the Valley. He also does individual sessions throughout the week, either at his home, local coffee shops or wherever the customer feels most comfortable. His sister Paloma runs their mystic shop, filled with crystals, rituals and kits while encouraging people to own the magic they have within.

"Can anybody do tarot? Of course, I think the more people are self-caring, the more people that are taking care of their own needs, the more people that are getting that therapy even if it's through themselves, I think that's beautiful and that's wonderful and I want to fill the world with love," said Fernie. "But I also think there's something to be said about doing the research, doing the work and really loving it."

For those who only wish to receive readings and guidance and not give them, Fernie offers an array of spiritual services and items to his customers to make sure they have everything they need to find the path that leads to the greatest version of themselves.

"My major service is really spiritual guidance, which I provide through tarot. We also have a mystic shop," said the principal. "In our mystic shop, I've created a lot of the rituals. We have banishing boxes to wipe away negativity or bad vibes or evil in someone's life. We have love boxes to bring love into someone's life. We have ritual jars for peace, for abundance or sensuousness. I also do cleansings and spiritual guidance beyond using just the tarot."

The Salinas siblings have had a very magical upbringing with their family. Their uncle was a known holistic healer in Rio Grande City and their family all have their own unique gifts, from hearing spirits to having prophetic dreams. However, Fernie is the only one who uses his gifts like his uncle did; to heal people.

"I'VE BEEN MAGICAL SORT OF MY WHOLE LIFE. I REMEMBER MY GRANDMA TELLING ME 'DON'T STARE INTO THE FIRE BECAUSE YOU'LL GO INTO ANOTHER WORLD.' OR 'DON'T WHISTLE AT NIGHT BECAUSE YOU'LL CALL THE SPIRITS.' AND IT ALWAYS MADE ME REALIZE THE WORLD WAS MORE THAN JUST WHAT WE SAW AND WHAT WE EXPERIENCED."

Though Fernie considers himself a fortune teller, he understands that there is a misconception of what fortune telling is.



"I think tarot can provide a window into the future and it can show you what's going on, but I think time is like a wheel and just because time is moving forward, we make choices every single day that can move our future and move our fortune," said Fernie. "The future isn't set in stone, [and] we make the future every day. I think another misconception is that only witches, or only devil worshippers or only evil people practice tarot. I'm a highly spiritual person and I also consider myself a practitioner of a lot of magical things. Tarot guides people in the way they need to be guided. Tarot isn't any of those [misconceptions]. Can it be those things? Yes, but is it any of those things? Not inherently."

Fernie and his sister Paloma often experience people who are skeptical of their magical services when they do pop-up shops. Paloma is usually the one to greet people and talk to them about Golden Mirror Fortunes while they sign up.

"The biggest misconception is that this is somehow evil and that we do evil things. And then I think it's also tied to a cultural aspect. So, in the Hispanic culture anything that is seen as mysticism is automatically evil. So, it's just breaking down those barriers and letting people know that it's not that, at least not for us," said Paloma. "We don't believe in that, we don't practice that and as [Fernie] was saying earlier it's much of that spiritual guidance and we like to call it magical advice."

Fernie likes to make it clear that although he calls himself a witch and practices magic, he isn't evil, doesn't cast spells, or makes anything happen, he just reads tarot.

"Anytime something goes wrong in your life, it's brujeria. Out of the thousands of readings I've done, [it] is less than .01% of the time that there is something external that is causing a person the pain and suffering they're experiencing," said

Fernie. "As cliché as it is, we are the makers of our own lives and so when things aren't going well or aren't going the way we want them to be, it's because we have to fix our [issues]. My sister has a background in counseling. I have a background in education. We're both working with tons of people every day and the same things I'm hearing from my kids, are the same things I'm hearing from adults who come to Golden Mirror Fortunes."

The school principal sees tarot as a way to unblock any barriers in your life and believes that often time, as hard as it may be to accept, those barriers are put up by ones own self.

"I think people have this really big misconception around their own agency. I think people don't believe that they can make their own future, don't believe that they can change the way that their lives are going," said Fernie. "This is actually the major reason behind our mystic shop. It is this idea that you can make the life that you want. You can create love, joy, serenity, peace. You can get rid of bad vibes on your own. I was a real good teacher and I'm a real good fortune teller

and my job isn't to get you by the hand and make you do something. My job is to teach you how to do it, so then you can do it on your own."

Though Fernie and Paloma both have jobs they love, they are hoping to make Golden Mirror Fortunes a full-time passion project.

"We both have jobs outside of Golden Mirror Fortunes. She's a teacher and I'm a school principal and so Golden Mirror Fortunes is our passion project. It's something that we do in order to fulfill this deep need that we know that we have in order to help people," said Fernie. "We have a five-year plan, by the time I'm 40, in five years by 2025, we are going to have a storefront and we are going to be the no. one prevailer of mystic items and fortune telling in the Valley."

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