

PULSE

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
PROBLEM IN THE VALLEY IS
LIKE THE WATER QUALITY
OBSERVATIONS HE MADE
ABOUT MEXICO AND NARCOTICS

THESE ARE A LOT OF COURAGEOUS
MEN AND WOMEN OF WHO WE
I KNOW IT MIGHT SOUND GLICHE IN A WAY BUT I JUST LIKE
INSPIRING SHE IS BREAKING GROUND
PEOPLE EVERYONE NEEDS
TRUMP, HEROES
IMMIGRATION POLICIES
ARE AN AFFRONT AND DIGNITY
TO HUMAN RIGHTS
GRANDE VALLEY CHICAGO
ARE MEXICAN AMERICAN ALVARES
LATINOS, PEOPLE SAID.

HE PORTRAYED HIMSELF AS THE ONLY CANDIDATE THAT LISTENED
TO THE PEOPLE OR THE "SILENT MAJORITY" AS THEY CALL THEMSELVES.



PULSE

MAGAZINE

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Letter from the Editor:

Every publication, every school, every town strives to unify its community under one distinct voice. That voice will attempt to represent the majority opinion while, at the same time, being inclusive of minorities. That dichotomy misses the point, however. There is no majority and minority opinion. People of the same color, from the same place, or of the same ideology don't all join together twice a month to discuss and agree on their public image or policy. Does that mean every publication, including ours, fails in its goal?

Maybe a little bit.

Every reporter, no matter how talented and hardworking, can only write about the people willing to talk to them. Every photographer, no matter how sneaky they try to be with their camera, can only capture the people who put themselves out there. Several times this year Pulse staff members have been told "Keep this off the record" or "Don't use my name" or "You may not take a photo of me."

People have a right to privacy, especially when they have legitimate reasons for concern. People crossing the border for illegal medical marijuana- like in Jorge Hinojosa's story, "Texas Taboo," or people who are still on the rocky path to legal citizenship- like a portion of our Colonia residents in Gustavo Huerta's "Rebuilding a Community," story are worried about their safety and wellbeing. Yet the majority of our citizens don't speak up simply because they have other priorities. As a result the people who end up being quoted in Pulse are often of a very particular class. They are the politically active, the culturally conscious or the extroverted segment of our community.

These people speak for us because they're the few among us willing to. Is that a good thing? A bad thing? I'm not sure. Political apathy is often denigrated, but I don't think it should be. Many of us simply want to live our lives without hassle. There's nothing wrong with that.

All I know is, while reading past issues of Panorama- this magazine's predecessor- our staff noticed a disquieting pattern. Panorama's content was often drenched in liberal arts students from all over the valley. Students and alumni who were artists, musicians, fashionistas, or social science majors. Did past reporters and editors purposely exclude the STEM side of campus? Of course not. But the majority of the magazine staff was made up of liberal arts students. Our staff is still assembled that way today. We all associate with and befriend other liberal arts students from a wide range of fields, fields well beyond our own, while shying away from the STEM. Perhaps, unconsciously, we find liberal arts students easier to write about and understand.

Yet last year's Editor in Chief, Betzaida Rivera, wanted to include a Science & Technology section in Pulse to make up for the imbalance, but we all failed to make it a reality. Still, we updated our policy so that, as a publication, we will try to be as inclusive and diverse as possible in every Pulse issue. With that in mind I'm happy to announce a full fledged Science & Technology section has made it into this year's addition. However, I have to admit that we couldn't have done it on our own. Half the articles were supplied by contributing writers. In order to maintain this new section, or others like it, I'd like to include contributors to the magazine every year. We'll need your help for that.

If you feel there is a crucial story we've missed email us at pulse.magazine@utrgv.edu. To write a story yourself, about any topic of concern to Pulse magazine readers, send it to the same email or to andelizdel@gmail.com by December 2, 2017.

But before all that, enjoy this year's issue of Pulse magazine.

Andy De Llano
Editor in Chief

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COMMUNITY



Rebuilding a Community

Colonias in South Texas

By Gustavo Huerta • Photos: Gustavo Huerta



18 minutes east from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, taking Highway 107, is one of the hundreds of colonias that are scattered throughout Hidalgo county: Vecinos Avanzando Unidos. It's an area with subpar roads and dogs roaming around looking for shade to hide against the blazing 90+ degree sun. Two residents, Emma Alaniz and Maria Eva Garcia, have been politically and socially active for their small community in Vecinos Avanzando Unido on the border of San Carlos/Edinburg, Texas.

THE TEXAS SECRETARY OF STATE WEBSITE DEFINES COLONIAS AS "RESIDENTIAL AREAS ALONG THE TEXAS-MEXICO BORDER THAT MAY LACK SOME OF THE MOST BASIC LIVING NECESSITIES."

They are concerned by the poor infrastructure in their area. Although the City of Edinburg and surrounding cities in the upper valley have grown exponentially in regards to business these small communities are still fighting for their day-to-day survival.

Colonias were first introduced in the 1950's when landowners would sell agriculturally worthless land to low income families who were seeking affordable housing. The landowners sold individual plots of land to residents without supplying adequate infrastructure, drainage or sewage. Residents were often faced with a confusing combination of local and state governmental programs and policies. Often times, colonias are within a legal gray area; they are faced with private landowners who want little to no interference from the government, but are in need of city and county benefits to improve their standard of living.

The Texas Secretary of State website defines colonias as "residential areas along the Texas-Mexico border that may lack some of the most basic living necessities, such as potable water and sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, and safe and sanitary housing." It also states that an estimated 400,000 Texas residents live in colonias. Hidalgo county has the largest number of colonias and colonia residents in the state. An estimated 1,000 colonias are sprinkled throughout the county according to a study conducted by The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development in 2007.

Colonias are typically found in the rural areas of Texas but in some cases have been found in the outskirts

of Houston. Homes in colonias are often made up of scraps of metal and wood. Large families live in these areas with parents, grandparents and children inside a roughly 755 square-foot abode.

39-year-old Garcia has been a resident of her colonia for over 13 years. She has actively volunteered with LUPE - La Union Del Pueblo Entero for four years. In that time she's learned how to talk to county commissioners and voice her concerns in the courtrooms. Garcia's largest contribution to her community is her expertise in healthcare access. She's an advocate for accessible health reform, especially in Vecinos Avanzando Unidos, which has had inadequate health care services for years. Colonia residents have been forced to travel to other cities for treatment, but few of these cities themselves- despite their solid infrastructure- have facilities that are able to provide care for patients with rare illnesses.

Garcia is now the health coordinator in Vecinos Avanzando Unidos, where she has mobilized a movement to bring mobile clinics to her colonia. With high rates of diabetes and cancer within the RGV, and a large proportion of colonia residents without the means to travel, many people are left deprived of a doctor when needed. Most residents of Vecinos Avanzando Unidos have no health insurance coverage, so when Proposition 1 was rejected in November of 2016 it was a huge blow to people who wanted to bring a health district closer to home. Under Proposition 1 taxpayer funds would have been directed to creating a medical district, which could have directly brought more medical professionals into the area. Instead, the nearest medical district is currently San Antonio. When people seek treatment for specific uncommon diseases that can't be treated elsewhere they must drive 3 ½ hours north to find a facility that will accept them. People who are undocumented are stuck within the vicinity of the RGV because of checkpoints that are spread throughout the northern parts of the Valley.

"We've been trying to take the concerns of myself and other residents on a national level," Garcia said. "Most people locally know of our issues but it would be good to be heard nationally because most people don't know what a colonia is."

One of the many issues the Edinburg colonia faced was flooding. Alaniz led the petition to gain proper drainage for her colonia. The drainage system was installed in Vecinos Avanzando Unidos after a four year process that involved surveying the land,

approving the application and speaking with the County Commissioner, Joseph Palacios.

County Commissioners are directly elected by voters every four years. In the state of Texas, one county commissioner represents one of the four precincts in the county. The job of a county commissioner is to enact local ordinances and administer them, to approve budgets, oversee spending and hire county officials. 52-year-old Alaniz is one of the residents of her colonia that regularly attended county commissioner meetings to let it be known that flooding was a big issue in the area. Although the issue of drainage was solved in 2015, Alaniz continues to fight for infrastructure improvements in her colonia.

"We have to be persistent and every time we see them we say, 'Hey commissioner, we're in need of this' and they always respond saying 'Yes,' but never tell us when," Alaniz said. "We would love to have sidewalks and to have a nearby park for the kids to play, but we are also conscious that we cannot have everything at once."

Within Vecinos Avanzando Unido, most issues are solved through Hidalgo county because they're located outside of Edinburg city limits. Depending on where certain colonias are located they must go through either city hall or the county administration.

aims to help translate the struggles of colonia residents to a wider public awareness.

"Our work brings the issues of a number of neighborhoods to a level where the county and city has to take action. Individual colonias will identify the problems they see and the strength that they have as a neighborhood and work with those strengths to address those challenges," Torres said. "Often times there are small issues that can be taken care of at the individual colonia level. But other times there are issues that'll take multiple colonias getting together to raise their voice, to make it an issue, that the county makes a priority."

In the Hidalgo county, roughly a third of the population lives outside of city limits, leaving them without the benefits of normal governance. Because Texas is a state where governmental power is limited, the county commissioners don't have enough authority to assist the colonias and their populations. LUPE has pushed for legislation to solve this problem. "We have situations where the majority of county landowners across the state of Texas are big landowners; ranchers or developers. They push the state of Texas to limit the power the county can have over their land because they want to have the authority themselves," Torres said. "That doesn't work for areas like the Valley where you

"UNFORTUNATELY, POLITICIANS THINK THAT THE COLONIAS ARE FILLED WITH UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO CAN'T VOTE SO MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T TURN TO LOOK AT US. THAT'S CHANGED SINCE WE KEPT MAKING NOISE AND ASKING FOR ATTENTION FROM POLITICIANS."

"Unfortunately, politicians think that the colonias are filled with undocumented people, people who can't vote so maybe that's why they didn't turn to look at us. That's changed since we kept making noise and asking for attention from politicians," the 52-year-old said. "At first, there weren't many colonia residents involved in changing those issues but as time passed, there were more people involved."

John-Michael Torres, Communications Coordinator for LUPE, has worked alongside colonia residents since May of 2010. His role within the organization involves utilizing mass media. Torres

have neighborhoods, whole housing developments, outside of city limits. Over the years, we've pushed the state legislator to make exemptions for border counties in order for the counties or housing developers to institute a little more authority on how they could implement programs like street-lights." After county commissioners were granted legal authority to improve infrastructure in the area, LUPE gathered both colonia and city residents to pressure politicians into recognizing the problematic living conditions that still persist in the colonias today. "The biggest problem we have right now is having

no public lights in our colonia,” Alaniz said. “The only lights we have are on our homes and when it’s dark we aren’t able to go into the streets.”

Children playing outdoors are told to come in after the 7pm sun drops below the horizon because passing vehicles are seen speeding through the single street that wraps around the neighborhood. Although crime is not frequent at Vecinos Avanzando Unidos, residents have noticed an increase of robberies. They blame the increase on the lengthy process of installing lighting fixtures.

Josue Ramirez, the co-director of Texas Low Income Housing Information Service in the lower Rio Grande Valley, has been a part of the non-profit organization since 2013. Ramirez’s group works alongside other grassroot groups as a resource organization. Through Ramirez’s work in TLIHIS, and a program named Rapido, he’s been able to work on projects that are meant to help colonia residents cope with natural disasters.

“Rapido is a pilot program that rethinks the way disaster recovery is done in the state; so when hurricane Dolly hit it took eight years for the state of Texas to begin building homes for the people that were affected by it,” Ramirez said. “The idea is to not just look at what’s taking so long to rebuild but together with Arise and LUPE they created a new model on disaster recovery housing. One of the biggest issues now with disaster recovery is that they use trailers that aren’t permanent housing but rather they come back and take away so the idea is why don’t we build something that becomes permanent.”

Along the Texas-Mexico border, colonias generally have no water, sewage service or drainage. So when natural disasters such as hurricanes or storms hit it typically results in damaged homes or stagnant water that sits for days. Stagnant water sitting in areas for three days or more can breed mosquitoes. Diseases spread by these mosquitoes affect colonia residents disproportionately compared with citizens living in areas with proper sewage and drainage systems. In 2015, during a survey conducted by the Texas Water Development Board, 274 colonias were found to having issues with drainage after storms rolled through.

“Even the most minimum rain would have the entrance flooded. Cars would break down in the middle of the floods even if they were passing cautiously,” Garcia said. “The mosquitoes were the worst; It got to the point that buses were not able to pick up the kids and we’d have to call the county to come poison the area.”

Hidalgo county has been proactive in providing pumps to residents to push out water damaging their street and homes. If predicted weather shows consecutive signs of rain county officials would leave the pumps readily available for use. The entire community works together on these occasions to combat the stagnant water and other weather damage.

Every year colonia residents dance and line up for food at the posada hosted on Navarro lane. December of 2016 parents were sitting at tables playing lotería while their children gathered for photos with Santa. Studio lights were put up on both ends of the road, allowing party-goers to see as the sun dipped behind the clouds. A mascot for the Hidalgo police department also attended the posada and was seen posing with residents for selfies. Alaniz was passing plates of food to her peers. Later she was dancing with Zumba instructors. Finally she ended the night with a speech to her neighbors and friends. She spoke of the future challenges they would face. However, on that night they were be able to enjoy each other’s company, momentarily putting aside the obstacles that they knew would lie ahead.





CONTROLLED CHAOS

IDK: A COMPETITIVE PAINTBALL TEAM

By Sage Bazan • Photos: Sage Bazan

Victor Juarez sat in the bunker next to me, our backs against the wall. All that could be heard from a 50-foot radius were pellet shots and then, a crunch.

I looked over and Juarez had lifted his helmet to take a bite out of a jumbo size pickle that he had been hiding under his shirt.

“Do you think that’s safe?” I asked.

“Nope,” Juarez replied.

He quickly put his mask back on, hid the pickle and leaned on his side, completely exposing himself. Two quick shots and on the third one you could hear contact.

“Got him,” the 20-year-old said.

About 30 seconds later, Miguel Diaz came running around the corner and slid next to me.

“Go check the left side to see if we have any people,” Diaz said.

I crawled around the left cubicle and made my way to the farthest wall. No one. I quickly tried to make my way back without being seen. Unfortunately, pink hair isn’t very discrete. Halfway through my squatted sprint, I took a hard shot to the forehead and another three to my stomach and chest; I was dead. The impact of the shot stung and stayed with me for a few minutes. I prayed that I wouldn’t be left with a goose

egg in between my eyes.

Diaz always says the best place to get shot is in the back and the absolute worst is the neck.

“It knocks the air out of your windpipe and you can’t breathe,” the Mission native said. “If I ever have beef with someone I aim for the neck.”

Originally from Mission, Texas, Diaz is a civil engineering student at the University of Texas El Paso who has a passion for strategy games; his favorite by far being paintball. While he is considered a seasoned player in the paintball community, Diaz only started playing three years ago.

“I got into paintball because of my friend Victor,” Diaz said. “He brought me out to try it once and I have been in love with it ever since. It’s funny to think that three years ago I didn’t even know what paintball was.”

I also started playing paintball six months ago because of Victor Juarez; like Diaz, after the first time I was hooked.

As the “newer” player, I am referred to by my teammates as noob, idiot, rookie, pansy and my personal favorite, jolly green giant. While Juarez and Diaz never participate in name calling, teammate Nathan Jasso and the team captain, David Martinez, don’t hold back.

Once I became so frustrated I confronted them.

"You have to be tough, I don't care that you're a girl," Martinez said. "I'm gonna treat you like everyone else out here. I name call, it's my thing."

Causal paintball I could handle, it was a lot slower and more manageable for someone my speed. Competitive style was a whole different animal.

"I like causal style paintball, okay." Martinez said. "It's just a lot slower paced and the course is different."

During casual games of paintball, teams are split up into two equal groups. Games can have anywhere from 4 to even 10 players on each side, depending on how many people are at the field that day. The field is usually set with random walls, huts, tires, bunkers and barrels that can be used as protection or to lure your opponent. Teams play on opposite sides of each other, gradually moving closer and closer to the opponent's side. If you get hit once, anywhere, you are out of the game.

"You can get hit on the foot and be out, it doesn't matter," Diaz said. "The most

annoying is getting hit on the gun, because it technically doesn't hit you but it still counts as an out."

THE LAST PLAYER STANDING WINS THE GAME FOR HIS OR HER TEAM.

The last player standing wins the game for his or her team.

Competitive style paintball is different. Unlike causal course paintball, these fields contain inflatable barriers that are always consistent yet different on each side. On the right, you will always see triangular inflatables that are called "doritos." On the left, there is one single long inflatable tube called "the snake." Closer to the middle of the field, you will see randomly scattered inflated cylinders, all surrounding one giant inflatable mass called the "W" located in the center of the field. Shooting rules are the same as casual paintball, with the last player being the winner for the team. The style all together is faster, more difficult and scarier.

On each team there are a total of nine players, but only five players are in each game. Before the game, teams always discuss their positions and strategy in order to efficiently defeat their opponent. Players are swapped out every other game, depending on the stamina of the shooter. Some team members may not get any playing time at all.

"If someone is having an off day and we notice by the first game, we usually just make him sit out for the rest of the tournament or we give him one more chance," Juarez said. "If he doesn't have it together by then, then we definitely make him sit out."

During one of their "reunion" games, I wanted to get some closer shots of them in action. I expected them to be considerate of me holding a camera with no protective gear. I stood next to the snake under the false pretense that nothing would hurt me. As the game commenced in full speed, multi-colored bullets began flying left and right across my face. I admit that at first I did get distracted, the overall intensity of game this close was incredible.

I could see every single shot made, the anticipation



and the strategy of each team. Almost as if I'd stepped into the mind of each player I focused on. Paint splatters graced both inflatables and jerseys in slow motion. After receiving one hit on my shin, I was transported back to reality and welcomed with nothing but pain.

I began backing myself up closer to the gate, before I knew it I had been shot on the entire left side of my body. The only thing I was physically able to do at this point was to tuck myself in a fetal position to protect my camera equipment.

"Well I mean, you are still gonna get hit, like we can't just not hit you. You understand?" Juarez said. "It's a lot of adrenaline so if you get hit you get hit, it's not our fault."

As angry as I was, I did enjoy watching them play. Jasso, Martinez, Juarez and Diaz made it look like a breeze. They always seem to play together in-sync, with perfect communication on the field. I asked Jasso what their secret was; my first guess was telepathy. He explained that while they work well together now, it took them years of practice to achieve their level of teamwork.

"We aren't always as perfect as we seem," Jasso said.

Martinez and Jasso originally started the team back in 2011. Before IDK became a Valley paintball legacy, they called themselves "Bros."

"What a douchebag name, like what the hell were we thinking," Martinez laughed as he recalled the original name of the group. "I remember when we first won with that name and they announced us, I looked at Nate and was like dude we need to fucking change it because we look like total dumbasses."

After the name change, IDK persevered with limited resources and a small team. As the team began gaining popularity, more and more people wanted to join.

"Yeah I remember we had all these young kids come and join," Martinez said. "They told us they had played against us before."

Juarez and Diaz didn't join the picture until 2013, it



wasn't until then that the team's missing links were found.

"Victor, we stole him from another team down here called Nemesis. I remember one time we were playing against him and he bunkered me. I was so pissed, like I didn't even know what to do with myself I was so mad because here's this kid and he comes out of nowhere," Jasso said. "So after the game me and David were like, let's get this kid on IDK."

After playing on IDK for a little over a year, Juarez introduced Miguel Diaz to the team.

"I couldn't keep up with these guys at first, it was so fast," Diaz said. "I was like the shy kid on the team that couldn't shoot for shit."

**"I COULDN'T KEEP UP WITH
THESE GUYS AT FIRST, IT WAS
SO FAST...."**

According to Diaz, Juarez was the one who helped him really understand the sport.

"Miguel picked it up quick, and he practiced a lot," Juarez said. "We were proud that he was so committed."

Any member of IDK Paintball will say that when they first started playing together, they needed work.

"We were always fighting and getting in each other's faces during practice," Diaz said. "Especially David, he gets in your face really bad if you mess up."

Like any relationship, communication was key. Diaz said that once they calmed down and listened to each other during the game, it made a huge difference. IDK improved so much in their playing they were moved up to Division 3, the semi-professional level.

LIKE ANY RELATIONSHIP, COMMUNICATION WAS KEY.

"Teams are ranked into divisions from five to one, five is lowest and one is the highest. Division one are the teams that are at the verge of becoming pro," Juarez said. "Division three is right there in the middle."

In 2014, IDK competed in the PSP (Paintball Sports Promotions) World Cup where they advanced all the way to semi-finals. Every member of their team recalls their week of battles as bittersweet after they lost to the team Absolute Chaos in the ocho-final rounds.

"It was a good game," Jasso said. "We played well."

With years of playing time together, I asked the guys what they thought of each other on the field. When they described their captain, one word in particular came to mind.

"David [Martinez]...he is an asshole on the field," Juarez said.

Players Jasso and Diaz both agreed.

"But it's the reason why he's so good," Diaz said. "He gets in the opponent's head."

When they described their teammate Jasso, they all agreed that he is very calculated but has a quick temper.

"I mean yeah, you lose your temper a little bit," Jasso said. "But then you realize alright, I'll play better afterwards."

Juarez has a deadly shot but was unpredictable in his direction.

"I am kind of a wild card," Juarez said.

Diaz has a good understanding of the game and learns quickly. However, he doesn't verbally communicate.

"Oh yeah... I'm just quiet," Diaz said.

While these guys are badasses on the field, in their everyday lives they described themselves as "self-declared nerds." Along with being an engineering major, Diaz is a cashier at an Albertson's supermarket who fancies playing Defense of the Ancients 2 (DotA 2) during his free time. Juarez, who is also an engineering major, is a math tutor at a Mathnasium in McAllen, Texas. He enjoys long and rigorous games of chess and considers himself to be a video game connoisseur. Jasso loves anime and has watched every season of Dragonball-Z three times; he occasionally sports a Goku costume minus the wig. Martinez likes playing with nunchucks and is obsessed with the game Pokemon Go.

Juarez says that even though he and his teammates are goofballs, paintball is strictly a game of smarts. Brain over brawn is what he always tells people. It takes planned out and premeditated attacks to stay ahead of the other team.

"You can't be a dumbass and play this sport. It's all about planning five moves ahead so you can take out your enemy," Juarez said. "Most [of] these assholes that come in here trigger happy don't last two minutes in the field."

Sadly, during the summer of 2015, IDK disbanded. While it was a difficult breakup for the entire team, Martinez said it was just life.

"Look of course I was disappointed, I fucking love paintball, but you know things happen." Martinez said. "It's an expensive sport and I had to save up for my wedding. Miguel [Diaz] moved, Nate [Jasso] has his gym. The other guys had their own things. It's just life."

When Diaz moved to El Paso, he tried to find another team to play with but couldn't bring himself to do it.

"I don't know, the course in El Paso, I mean it's alright and the El Paso team... they are cool I guess but they never really wanna go every weekend or they would flake," the engineering student said. "I just stopped going because it wasn't the same."

Nathan Jasso looked at the ground and shrugged when I asked him about the team's breakup.

"I just... I really miss it. Getting back out there and playing these past couple times just for the hell of it made me remember how much I love this sport," he said.

Juarez said that even though he stopped playing, the sport never left him.

"You have no idea how much I love paintball, I still watch all the professional games online and all our old videos," he said. "If David [Martinez] called me and told me that the team was back together tomorrow, I would be just as committed as I was two years ago."

When Martinez was asked about the current state of the team, he showed nothing but dedication.

"Would I want us to get back together? Absolutely," Martinez said. "This year I'm gonna try everything in my power to help us reconnect so we can be a team again."

At first glance paintball does not appear to be an inviting sport. It's loud, it's messy, the waiting area outside the field smells sour from sweat, most of the people that play it are rough and almost all of them have a mean streak. No one apologizes for shooting you and no one feels sorry about getting hit. It is altogether intimidating. However, after giving it a try most people find the sport to be calming and a great way to release frustration.

"I think everyone should play, even if you aren't an aggressive person, you know, just

give it a try," Diaz said. "If you don't think you're coordinated or athletic still give it a try. I promise you that you won't regret it."

Martinez nodded in agreement and looked at me.

"I THINK EVERYONE SHOULD PLAY, EVEN IF YOU AREN'T AN AGGRESSIVE PERSON, YOU KNOW, JUST GIVE IT A TRY..."

"I mean yeah, you're like six feet tall and super awkward and you do okay," Martinez said. "Like not good but you stay alive most of the time and you're kind of a big target."

I shook my head and laughed. I wish someone had told me to prepare for both verbal and literal hits.





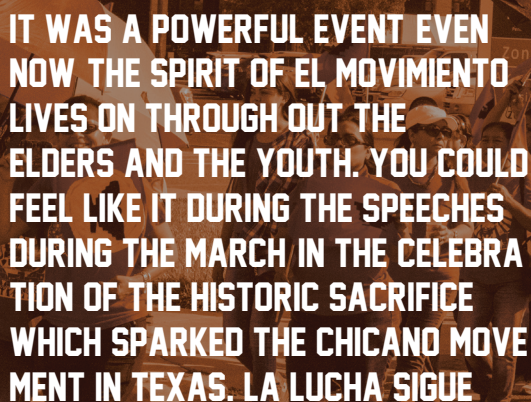
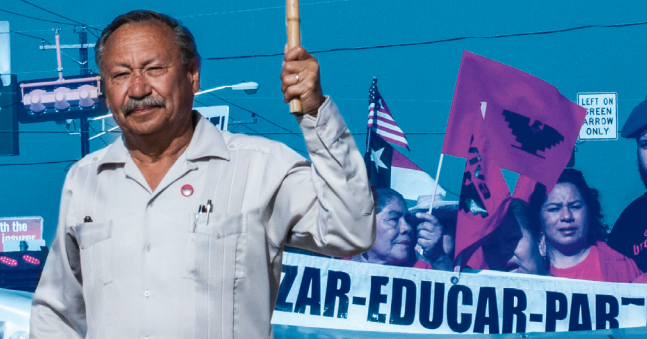
Rallies for farm workers and climate change

The following is a documentation of social activism in the Rio Grande Valley. Presenting the Farm Worker Commemoration meeting for the 50th anniversary of the “1966 Rio Grande City Melon Strike” held in Edinburg, September 9, 2016, and the Brownsville Climate March on February 18, 2017.



Borderland ACTIVISM

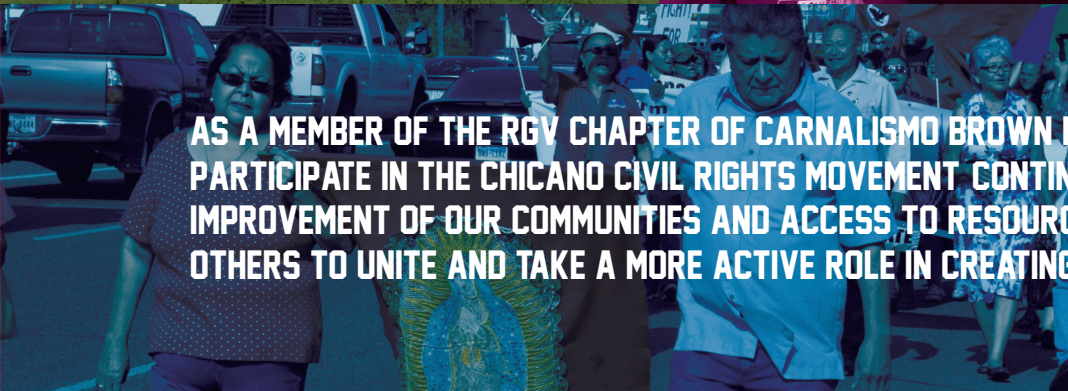
Photography and Design: Arael Meza



IT WAS A POWERFUL EVENT EVEN
NOW THE SPIRIT OF EL MOVIMIENTO
LIVES ON THROUGH OUT THE
ELDERS AND THE YOUTH. YOU COULD
FEEL LIKE IT DURING THE SPEECHES
DURING THE MARCH IN THE CELEBRA
TION OF THE HISTORIC SACRIFICE
WHICH SPARKED THE CHICANO MOVE
MENT IN TEXAS. LA LUCHA SIGUE

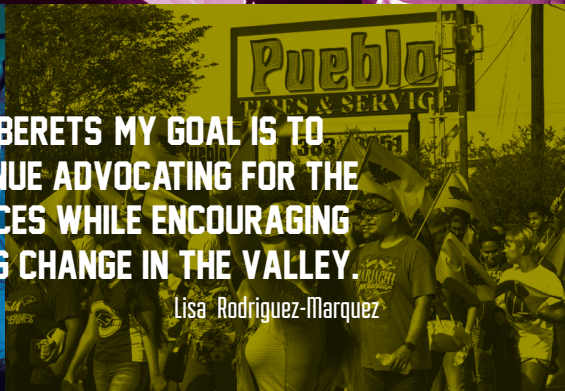
Arnulfo Daniel Segovia





AS A MEMBER OF THE RGV CHAPTER OF CARNALISMO BROWN BERETS MY GOAL IS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CHICANO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES WHILE ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO UNITE AND TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN CREATING CHANGE IN THE VALLEY.

Lisa Rodriguez-Marquez

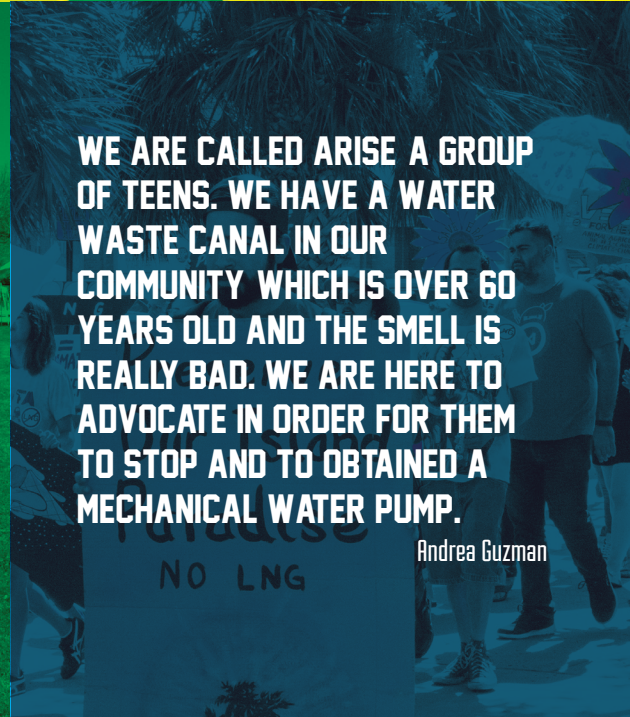


SIENTO QUE ES NECESARIO ESTAR EN SOLIDARIDAD COMO COMUNIDAD. RECORDAR Y DAR HONRA AL TRABAJO EN LA LABOR QUE ES NECESARIO DURO Y MUCHOS NO QUIEREN HACER.

I FEEL IS NECESSARY TO UNIFY OUR COMMUNITY. TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE WORK IN THE CROP FIELDS WHICH IS A HARD WORK THAT IS NECESSARY AND THAT MOST PEOPLE AREN'T WILLING TO DO.

Nahiel "Pinky" Garcia





WE ARE CALLED ARISE A GROUP OF TEENS. WE HAVE A WATER WASTE CANAL IN OUR COMMUNITY WHICH IS OVER 60 YEARS OLD AND THE SMELL IS REALLY BAD. WE ARE HERE TO ADVOCATE IN ORDER FOR THEM TO STOP AND TO OBTAINED A MECHANICAL WATER PUMP.

Andrea Guzman



WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE WE WANT A WORLD WHERE OUR KIDS CAN LIVE IN AND WE WANT TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL WORLD HERE IN RGV. WE WANT OUR POLITICIANS TO TAKE ACTION AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT BECAUSE WE THINK IS URGENT.

Melissa Benavides



WE SEND OUR VOICES THIS WAY
TO LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT IS
REALLY GOING ON. WE WANT TO
FIGHT THE IGNORANCE WE WANT
TO EDUCATE OURSELVES EDUCATE
OUR OWN PEOPLE TO BE MORE
AWARE OF WHAT LIFE IS.

'PAYASE'L BYEMA'
WHICH MEANS GIVE LIFE.

Juan B. Mancias

Tribal chair of Carrizo-Comecrudo Nation of Texas



WE ARE HERE TO SHOW THAT WE
ARE UNHAPPY WITH WHAT THEY
HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTING AND
THAT WE WANT SOME CHANGE
AND HOPEFULLY THEY CAN DO
THAT FOR US.

Roxann Lerma



THE TEXAS

Taboo



Fighting for Legalized Medical Marijuana
By Jorge A. Hinojosa • Graphics: Arael Meza

Michael was 23 when he died from sarcoma in October 2016. He'd been struggling with complications of cancerous tumors for nine years. After treatment with chemotherapy ended last September, he was told he had a month to live.

So, he turned to a last resort to combat the pain: cannabis oil.

Because cannabis is not approved for cancer treatment in Texas, Michael chose to cross the border into Mexico to obtain what he needed. Due to the illegality of the alternative treatment, Michael's family has chosen to remain anonymous.

A tumor was first discovered in Michael's leg in 2007 when he was 14. It was quickly removed and he recovered. Afterward, his friends called him *abuelito*, or grandpa in Spanish, since he had little to no hair as a consequence of the chemotherapy he had gone through.

Eventually his hair grew back and Michael thought he could move on with his life. He graduated from high school in 2012 and enrolled in legacy institution UT Pan American to major in political science. While attending college Michael visited his doctor every month.

"At a 2014 appointment, there [was] something weird in the lung," Michael said. "Nobody thought it was cancer. No doctor in México. And they thought it may have been a fungus. It was really weird, they didn't think it was cancer."

The tumor was between the inside and outside of his lung. When the tumor was taken apart it created nodules, or other small tumors inside his lung, worsening his symptoms.

"What I have, even though it may not look like so," the Sharyland graduate said. "[It's] one of the deadliest diseases of young people."

Michael wasn't officially diagnosed as having sarcoma until 2015 and he began missing classes to receive treatment at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. It was his second time in chemotherapy.

Even though he started chemotherapy for his lung tumors, there was another unpleasant surprise in store for him.

"Since there had been studies done in my leg and lung, it had been thought that those were the only tumors," Michael said. "Also, since the full body scan doesn't start at the head, nothing else would come up."

Michael came back from Houston mid September of 2016 with news that he only had a month to live. He was tired from all the chemotherapy. He was ready to enjoy the rest of his time. Doctors advised him to say goodbye to his friends.

He tried to keep a positive attitude. Yet it was evident there was not much hope left. Michael's use of the cannabis based oil was his last resort.

Sarcoma is a rare kind of cancer, as it occurs in different kinds of tissue.

It was eventually revealed that Michael had five tumors in total: two on the left side of his brain and three on his right lung. He, like many cancer patients, was pushed into trying alternative medicine in the hopes of finding a cure for his illness.

About 24 percent of Texans have no medical insurance -- the highest percentage of uninsured in the nation -- according to the Public Broadcasting Service. Because of this, many Texans travel to Mexico to buy cheaper medication.

Michael traveled to Reynosa to pick up a special oil

for his new treatment. He referred to it as “The Green One.”

HIS PARENTS WOULD BUY SIX SYRINGES FILLED WITH CANNABIS OIL FOR HIS TREATMENT FROM REYNOSA, MEXICO.

His parents would buy six syringes filled with cannabis oil for his treatment from Reynosa, Mexico. Each syringe cost \$100. For the oil to be effective, Michael would put a drop on an almond and eat it after first having a big meal. He took three almonds in the morning and three at night using a similar oil to moisturize his hands.

The syringes he used for the oil were small. His mother said that only about 1 milliliter of marijuana oil filled the container.

Cannabis has been legalized for medical usage in other states such as California, Colorado, District of Columbia and Alaska. Still, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency’s website, marijuana is still considered a Schedule I drug or a drug “with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.”

Cancer.org from the American Cancer Society explores cannabis usage: “A few studies have found that inhaled [smoked or vaporized] marijuana can be helpful treatment of neuropathic pain [pain caused by damaged nerves.]”

A University of Michigan study found that people who took marijuana extracts in clinical trials tended to rely on less pain medication. Scientists have reported that THC and other cannabinoids such as CBD “slow growth and/or cause death in certain types of cancer cells growing in laboratory dishes.”

His parents found out about the new treatment in December 2010. At first they weren’t open to the idea

and neither was Michael.

“It wasn’t an option,” said his father. “We weren’t convinced.”

They said that Michael didn’t want anything to do with illegal substances. That it wasn’t what he would’ve wanted.

“He was very linear,” said his mother.

“Against the use of drugs,” added his father.

But as the parents researched and heard stories of other people who had gone through a similar experience they began to feel differently.

“WE WERE OPEN TO ANY CURE FOR OUR SON...”

“We were open to any cure for our son,” Michael’s father said.

Michael’s parents consulted a homeopathic doctor, someone who treats diseases by administering minute doses of a remedy that could in bigger amounts produce in healthy person’s symptoms like of those of the disease. The doctor made the oil and brought it to Reynosa from Monterrey for Michael’s parents to take back with them to the United States.

The product? A small bottle, similar in size and shape to the average eye dropper container. Inside the oil was thick. A dab on the tongue tasted spicy.

CANNABIS USAGE IN TEXAS IS STILL ILLEGAL.

Cannabis usage in Texas is still illegal. However, the Texas Compassionate Use Act signed by Gov. Greg Abbott has opened the door to some kind of medical usage. This bill allows physicians to prescribe low-THC cannabis to patients who have severe forms

of epilepsy. Since Michael's case was different, his parents had to run the risk of crossing the product illegally from Reynosa to treat their son's illness.

His parents knew someone who sold cannabis products from Colorado. They stopped buying the syringes from México and started buying sealed medical products from a Texan who received his products from a Denver laboratory. The bottle cost \$40.

Michael always tried to look at the bright side. He went out with his friends to have a good time as much as he could. During the month of October, he had shown improvement. Michael felt that there were changes thanks to his treatment.

"My quality of life has improved," Michael said. "I feel better. I see the changes."

His color came back. His voice showed improvement in an incredible manner. Even when Michael started using a cane to walk, he believed his strength had improved too.

He diligently took the treatment every two weeks and said it worked not only on his physical appearance, but that it also caused one of his tumors to shrink slightly. He and his doctor started referring to the oil as the "black gold."

"Why? Because of the results, and we're now comparing it to gold," said Michael with a smile.

Michael wanted to be an example to others going through the same situation.

"I want to go in there [M.D. Anderson] and give them a short book about how to manage your time," Michael said. "Tell them that they don't have to give up. How to go on in life."

Alvaro Restrepo, medical oncologist at Texas Oncology in McAllen said that certain forms of cannabis, or



cannabis extracts, have been used in medical procedures during cancer treatments.

“As an additive- let’s say- it’s used for treating body pain,” Restrepo said. “And that helps [patients] go through treatment.”

... CANNABIS USAGE COULD
HELP BUT IT HAS ALSO
BEEN KNOWN TO CAUSE
COMPLICATIONS...

Restrepo said that cannabis usage could help but that it has also been known to cause complications during procedures.

“Cannabis can also cause problems of memory, hyperactivity, sedation,” Restrepo said. “And it could potentiate side effects of medication that are being used.”

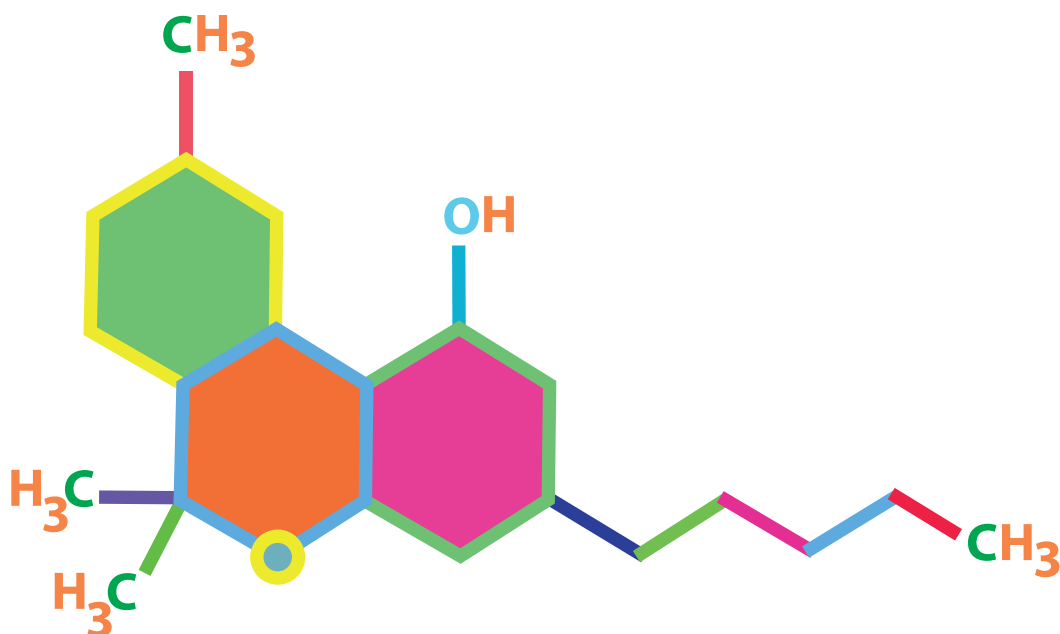
People do tend to use cannabis or vitamins along with other natural health sources during treatment, but Restrepo believes it can be better for a patient not to use those extra treatments.

“In general, we recommend not to use it,” Restrepo said. “Sometimes we don’t know the interactions or the problems that can happen... but it depends. Who, under what circumstances, and what dose.”

There is an FDA-approved medication, Marinol, that has a compound from cannabis and has been used to manage nausea and loss of appetite.

“Cannabis has a taboo of being too bad,” said Restrepo. “When you compare cannabis to tobacco and alcohol, they are most likely worse- cannabis less than the others. Research is still pending. But the difference is that one is legal and the other illegal.”

The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana



TETRAHYDROCANNABINOL

Laws is a non-profit organization seeking to change the current laws that govern Cannabis. RGV NORML, a chapter of the Washington based organization, advocates for repealed marijuana prohibition to allow safe access to marijuana by adults. They believe the criminalization of marijuana is connected to the failure of the war on drugs and its negative impact on Valley residents.

Javier Tobias, the executive director of RGV NORML, has been part of that advocacy for marijuana law reform. Tobias emphasized the patients who need cannabis to treat themselves. He believes it is important for the entire state of Texas, but also for the Rio Grande Valley, to embrace medical marijuana for citizens with medical conditions.

“What we see is people across the state who are trying to get medicine safely,” Tobias said. “That’s what we need to start seeing here, and it will definitely cut down on the cartel business.”

Many people feel that they have to leave the state to be able to get treatment, as Michael did.

“We talk about it all the time: about Texas refugees or medical refugees,” Tobias said. “People having to leave the state and go to Colorado trying to see doctors.”

Due to the illegality of cannabis in Texas those who get a cannabis-based oil or medication, if caught by the authorities, will be legally disciplined.

“Where are people going to get their medicine if it’s not legal in the state? They’re going to want to leave and they should be able to stay here in the state,” the 37-year-old said. “It turns regular people, regular citizens -- patients -- into criminals. Even though they don’t feel it’s so wrong, the current laws keep you from medicating yourself the way you choose to.”

Aside from cancer and epilepsy there are other

problems, such as Alzheimer’s and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, that can be treated with cannabis. Yet in Texas only one disease can be treated legally with cannabis.

“The only illness treatable by the Compassionate Use Program, is one form: intractable epilepsy,” Tobias said. “You’d think they would allow a broader use for the different illnesses. But the current program is limited to 0.5 percent THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol, the active ingredient in marijuana), so what we’ve learned in cannabis advocacy is that throughout Texas, patients need the whole plant, so limiting THC to 0.5 doesn’t really help the patient.”

**IF THE LAWS REGARDING
CANNABIS REMAIN AS THEY
ARE, TOBIAS WARNS, THOSE
WHO NEED CANNABIS WILL
GET IT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER..**

If the laws regarding cannabis remain as they are, Tobias warns, those who need cannabis will get it one way or another.

“We’re seeing that people aren’t able to do anything here in the state,” said Tobias. “So they have to find these alternate ways of getting their treatment or getting their medicine. By having to leave [Texas] we’re kind of avoiding the issue here.”

NORML advocates for those in need of cannabis treatment to be able to obtain it legally. They also struggle against the social fear of cannabis.

“All we’re saying is: let the patients treat themselves, let people treat themselves,” the advocate said. “But many still find the stigma or the way it’s seen. That might be something that they’re afraid coming out about.”

Though cannabis is legal for medical use in 28 states, Greg Abbott is still fighting against its legality

in Texas. As reported by Dallas Morning News, Abbott said that he doesn't think "decriminalizing marijuana is going to happen this session."

According to a poll made by The University of Texas and the Texas Tribune, opposition to the legalization of marijuana has dropped. Fewer than one in five respondents of the poll said that they opposed any

type of legalization of marijuana.

Also stated at the Texas Tribune site, the February 2017 poll showed that "83 percent of Texans support legalizing marijuana for some use; 53 percent would go beyond legal medical marijuana to allow possession for any use."





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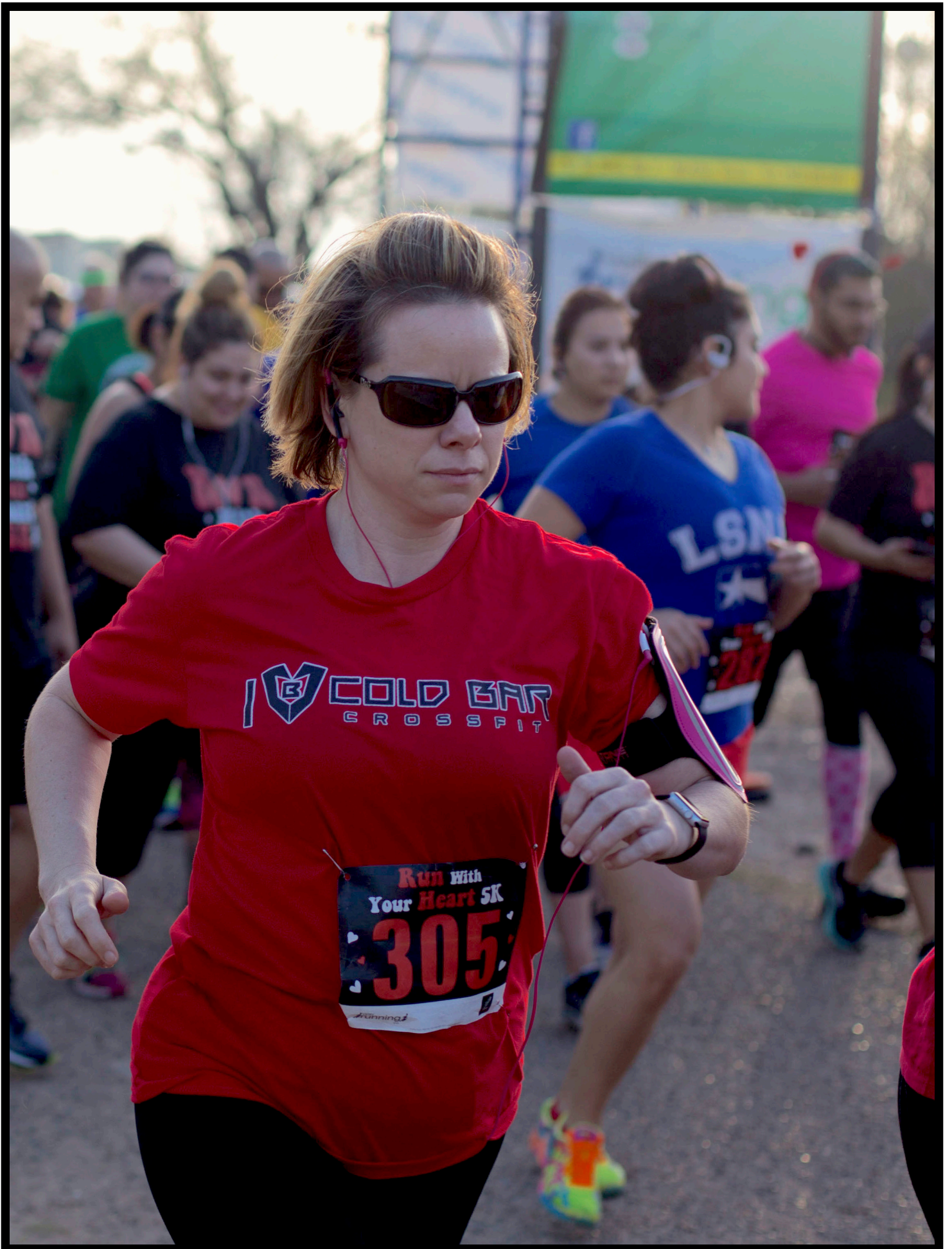
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SOUL RACING

A COMMUNITY GATHERS FOR THEIR LOVE OF RUNNING //

By Jose Garcia • Photos: Gustavo Huerta

54,560 yards stretched out in front of the enormous crowd.

"ON YOUR MARKS..." THE INTERCOM BOOMED.

Rows of people clustered together in suspense counting every passing second.

"GET SET..."

They had trained for months. Some of them had trained for years. They were ready to test their strength and to push themselves to reach new records.

"GO!"

They ran straight ahead without looking back. It was their moment to shine.

The organizer of this Valentine's-Day-related event, "Run With Your Heart," is Sole Racing, a trail and road running events company. It was founded by three Rio Valley Grande runners in 2013. The company hosts a variety of different races. They even hold an ultramarathon each March, called "Mesquite Fire," which consists of 50 kilometers or approximately 31 miles. There are also 25K and 10K distances in the race, held at Mission Hike and Bike trails. It is currently the only annual ultramarathon in the Rio Grande Valley..

Robert Ruiz is one of the founders. He is a 2010 graduate from the former University of Texas Pan American, earning a master's in English as a second language.

Ruiz and the other founders are friends first, running buddies second, and business partners third. Ruiz says the foundation of friendship has allowed them to work together successfully.

"When we started it, we were just looking to fill the 'no trail races in the Rio Grande Valley' void," Ruiz said. "We wanted people from here to experience, on a somewhat smaller scale, what we were experiencing with trail racing north of the Valley."

Once the founders established Sole Racing, they kept coming up with races they would want to run.

"This allows us to better think of fun, challenging races. Mesquite Fire came from that line of thinking," the McAllen native said. "Sole Racing came from a play on the word soul and sole; running requires an involvement of the sole of the runner's foot and the soul of the runner."

When Sole Racing was first founded, they were not too sure how things would work out. There were a few challenges early on, such as races getting postponed and rain delays.

"Despite those early struggles, we knew if we stuck to our principle of delivering quality races, we'd find a way to succeed," Ruiz said. "We have thankfully had a very dedicated network of sponsors and volunteers from the start."

The McAllen native believes they have been lucky in that regard. He says many people have helped them starting with their family to a wide range of friends and people from the community.

“Even though our races are run in a matter of a few hours, there’s a lot of effort going into the day to day operation of Sole Racing,” Ruiz said. “It’s an extremely rewarding vocation, but it can be very time consuming.”

Up until recently, the Rio Grande Valley was ranked as the United States’ most obese region. And according to “The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America,” Texas has the 10th highest adult obesity rate in the nation since 2016.

“I think we’ve contributed in changing that,” Ruiz said. “We just love seeing people get into running, whether it’s through our races or others.”

Sole Racing takes a lot of pride in hosting the Valley’s only ultramarathon, and comes with a great deal of responsibility. Therefore, Ruiz wants to put the word out everywhere, including UTRGV.

“I believe college students are great leaders and examples in the community. Their participation could be a big influence for other participants looking to

get into running,” Ruiz said. “It’s growing slowly, but surely. I think the word is getting out on trail running and ultramarathons.”

Silvia Cepeda from McAllen has been running Sole Racing 5K races for three years in a row. She has won first place three years in a row. She won second place on this year’s “Run With Your Heart” 5K.

“After I finish a race, it feels exhilarating,” Cepeda said. “I did better time this year than I did last year.”

Joe Viegas started running competitively when he was 27 years old. He placed first on this year’s “Run With Your Heart” 5K.

“I feel tired after I run a race,” the 37-year-old said. “But it’s a big pay off when you run all these miles during the week. At the end of the day you get something out of it. It’s a good feeling to have some kind of reward in the end.”

The Mesquite Fire, which took place on March 18, 2017, was the first ultramarathon Viegas had



participated in. Viegas has been dreaming about being an ultra marathon racer for the longest time.

“Before I could give it a good shot, I had to a lot of other types of conditioning other than running,” Viegas said. “I’ve been working on that to make sure everything works out. If you want to run 31 miles, to me, you need to do more than just running.”

Viegas is strict with his training, but he does not train every day. He carefully decides when to train by listening to what his body says. If Viegas needs a day off he will take a day off.

“The thing is, when I was in my 20s, I was afraid of the 30- year-olds and 40- year- olds because they were the better runners,” Viegas said. “When you are in your 20s you are still out and about. Guys in their 30s and 40s are a little bit more stable, have a better routine, and they know how to take care of their bodies a little more.”

He thinks that is where he is right now. Instead of being a 20-year-old “knucklehead” he is now a

disciplined 37-year-old. Viegas believes that is why marathon racing works out for him.

“ONE THING I REALLY LIKE ABOUT MARATHON RACING, IT IS THAT THERE IS PEOPLE OF ALL DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES...”

“One thing I really like about marathon racing, it is that there is people of all different shapes and sizes,” Viegas said. “There is short and tall people. People from different places and different backgrounds. People that are barely beginning. People with lots of experience. They are all joined together with one common interest. And that is the beauty of these marathons. Anyone can do it, even you.”

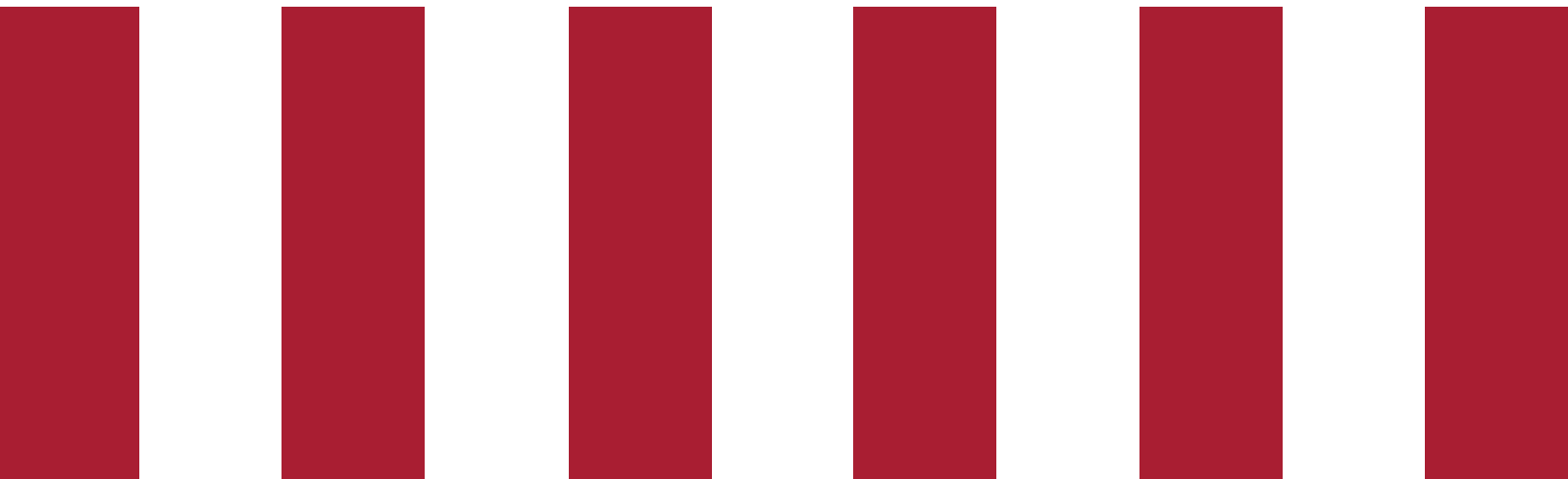
Adviser’s Note: This story topic came from the magazine’s editorial staff. The magazine’s adviser, Donna Pazdera, is acquainted with the three principals of Sole Racing, but had no involvement in assigning or suggesting this story.





PARTISAN POLITICS

Opinions on Trump from two political activists
By Sage Bazan • Graphics: Celeste Strange





The 2016 presidential election ended in November, sealing the United States' political fate for the next four years. Donald J. Trump will now be referred to as "Mr. President," and his supporters will jump for joy while Social Justice Warriors cry themselves to sleep. All jokes aside, this past election has split our nation in half. Two political activists on campus have shared their views in the wake of this election. Jose Garcia is the president of the Young Republicans Club. Mimosa Thomas is a leader of the Young Democrats Club,

Q: Do you think that both candidates during the election were represented equally and fairly by the media?

Garcia: I don't believe that the candidates were covered equally as one candidate definitely got more coverage than any other candidate either in the primaries or in the general election. As for whether the candidates were represented fairly that would be subjective but there were instances that information was presented that portrayed certain candidates a certain way.

Thomas: No, I don't. In order to seem unbiased, the media made an effort to present both candidates as equals. In this particular case, that resulted in biased reporting, because the two were not equals in any way. Their experience was not comparable; their respective scandals were not comparable - in trying to give both candidates fair treatment the media created an inflated image of Donald Trump that did not reflect reality.

Q: How do you think both candidates represented themselves?

Garcia: Personally, I believe that Secretary Clinton presented herself as a continuation to the last eight years, to conservatives that was something they would not be willing to live under. As for candidate Trump he portrayed himself as the only candidate that listened to the people or the "silent majority" as they called themselves. His supporters and his campaign style were populist and made his supporters feel as if they were a part of something much bigger than themselves. Hillary Clinton at times came off as if she had already won the election.

Thomas: I think Hillary Clinton represented herself as best she could after a decades long smear campaign against her. I think Donald Trump presented himself as a malicious toddler.

Q: Do you think that Trump is a Republican, or would you classify him in a different political party?

Garcia: Personally, President Trump is not a Republican. Typically, Republicans will advocate for smaller government, less taxes, more power to the states, and a stronger military. However, during the election cycle his policies would lead to big government and more taxes. He would definitely not call him a Republican by ideals but he is a Republican now as he was elected as a Republican.

Thomas: He ran as a republican. The republicans voted for him. So yes, he's republican. I do think that's he's very different from the old guard republicans of the Reagan Era (many of whom voted against him), but parties change. It's clear that the Republican Party has undergone drastic changes recently, and he is the face of its new form.

Q: Were you surprised by the outcome of the election?

Garcia: I was surprised by the results of the election. Going into Election Day there was a 93% chance of Secretary Clinton winning the election and somehow Donald Trump was able to pick up the states that matter the most and win. I was, personally, hoping we didn't lose the Senate.

Thomas: I was very surprised. I did not think that Americans were still so bigoted. I was very wrong.

Q: How do you feel about a Trump presidency?

Garcia: If he stopped tweeting I would certainly feel a lot better about it. Most of the policies he's pushed for, particularly issues such as immigration have already been advocated for by both Republican and Democrat presidents. What makes this presidency different is that a lot of old wounds were opened. I am not opposed to a Trump presidency and like

the idea of a Republican administration in the White House.

Thomas: Every morning is like waking up from a nightmare and then realizing that it's reality.

Q: What do you think about his plans and his policies (immigration, health care, women's health issues, etc.)?

Garcia: In regards to immigration, President Clinton said the exact same thing in a State of the Union address and President Obama deported the most individuals out of any other presidents. So to say that President Trump is the first to demonstrate a general dislike of immigrants is rather ignorant. I do, however, dislike his methods for pushing policy. The role of the President is to enforce the law, not to make it. Congress should write legislation, not the President. I am not particularly fond of the American Health Care Act or "TrumpCare" as it's being called now as it is not repealing Obamacare and is going to hurt people already on the plans to begin with. The Heritage Foundation advocated for healthcare reform at a state by state basis. Governor Mitt Romney, in 2006, pushed the legislation and Massachusetts was the first state to offer all citizens healthcare. This same approach should be taken now and "TrumpCare" is still pushing healthcare at a national level and this in essence is not a Republican ideal.

Thomas: His immigration policies are an affront to human rights and dignity. Already we are seeing families torn apart, even though they are guilty of no crimes and would not have been a deportation priority under Obama. Immigrant communities are scared of their own neighbors. It's horrible. As far as health care, his plan to repeal the affordable care act will kill tens of thousands of Americans every year, and I might be one of them (due to a chronic illness). He does not understand how health insurance works, and does not seem to care about the human lives that will be lost without access to health insurance.

Q: Do you think our nation needed this type of political awakening?

Garcia: It certainly depends on what side of the aisle one stands on. If you're a democrat, you will certainly

feel that the election is the worst thing to happen to the United States ever. If you're a Republican, you will most likely think that this election was a good thing. I do think this election was a wakeup call for the political parties. They both have left the American public feeling as if they were not being listened to in Washington. Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump both had a populist feeling in their movement which hasn't occurred in a while in the United States. The Republicans were shown that career politicians need to earn their voters' trust and the Democrats were shown that they need to get rid of the "elitism" aspect of their party.

Thomas: I'm glad to see people getting more involved since the election, but no, it was not worth it. Our nation did not need this, and will be worse off for it.

Q: Should we support our President, even if we don't like him, respect him, or agree with him?

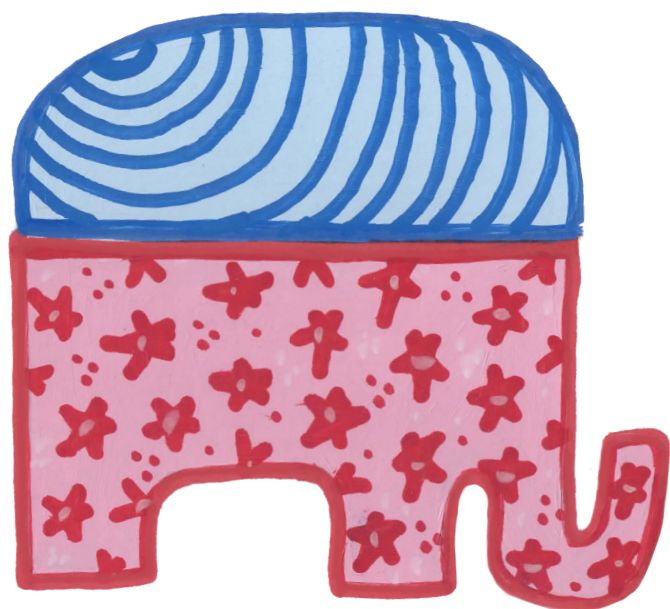
Garcia: As Americans, we should hope that the president is able to make the best decisions for our country. We do not have to agree with him on every issue and we certainly have the right to criticize the president. However, we should support the President, not for who he is, but for the position he holds.

Thomas: No. Our president is a racist, a misogynist, and a fascist. I will never support someone who is those things. This isn't about disagreements over policy, it's about disagreements over whether or not certain people have a right to exist.

Q: What do you think a Trump presidency means for the future of the United States?

Garcia: It is still too early to tell exactly what a Trump presidency means for the future of the United States. It still hasn't been 100 days into his term as president. We will just have to continue seeing what he and his administration do.

Thomas: I am genuinely worried about the human rights of certain groups in the United States going forward. I think the next four years will result in tragedy and death for immigrants, sick people, women seeking reproductive care, Muslims, and so many more.




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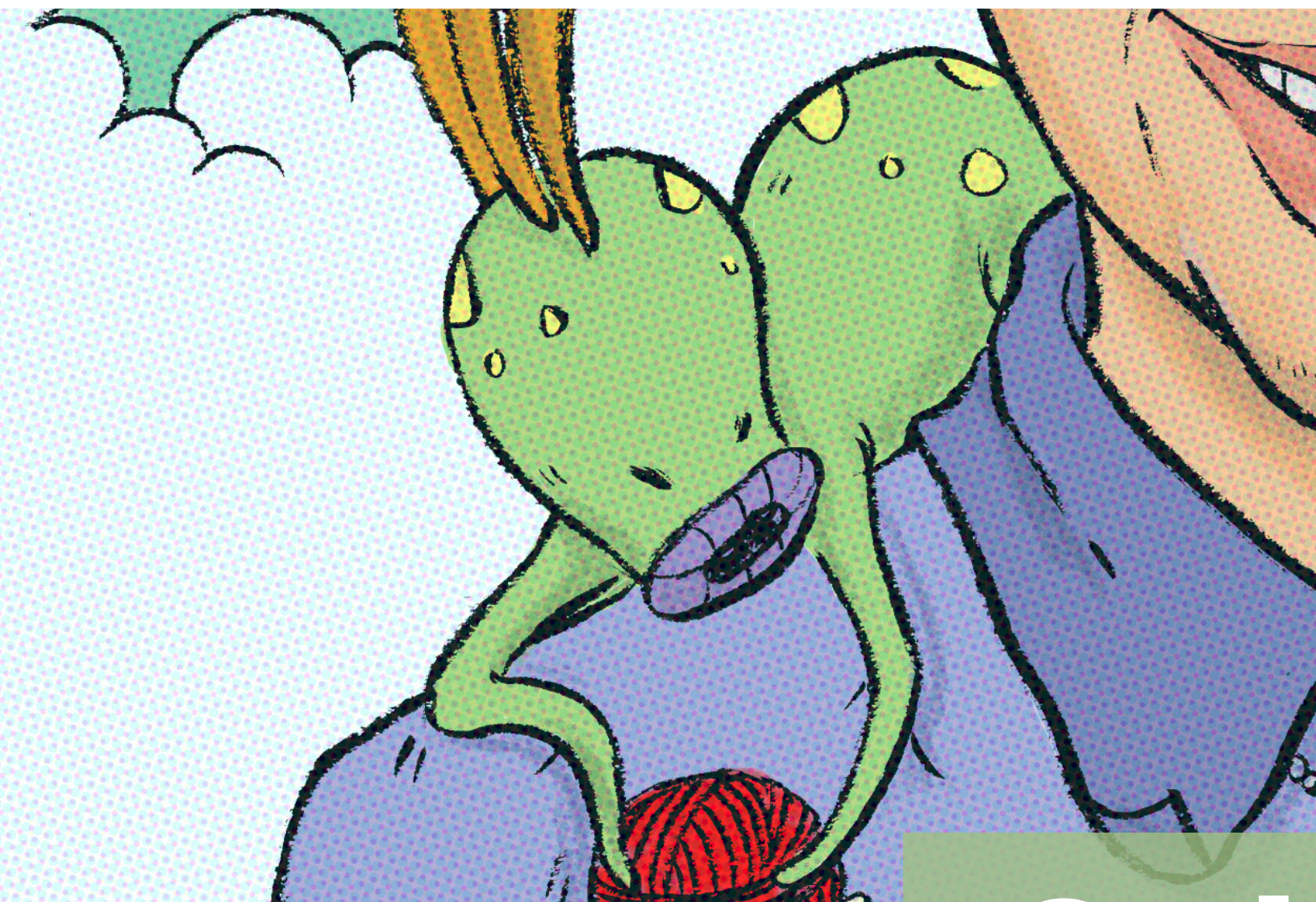
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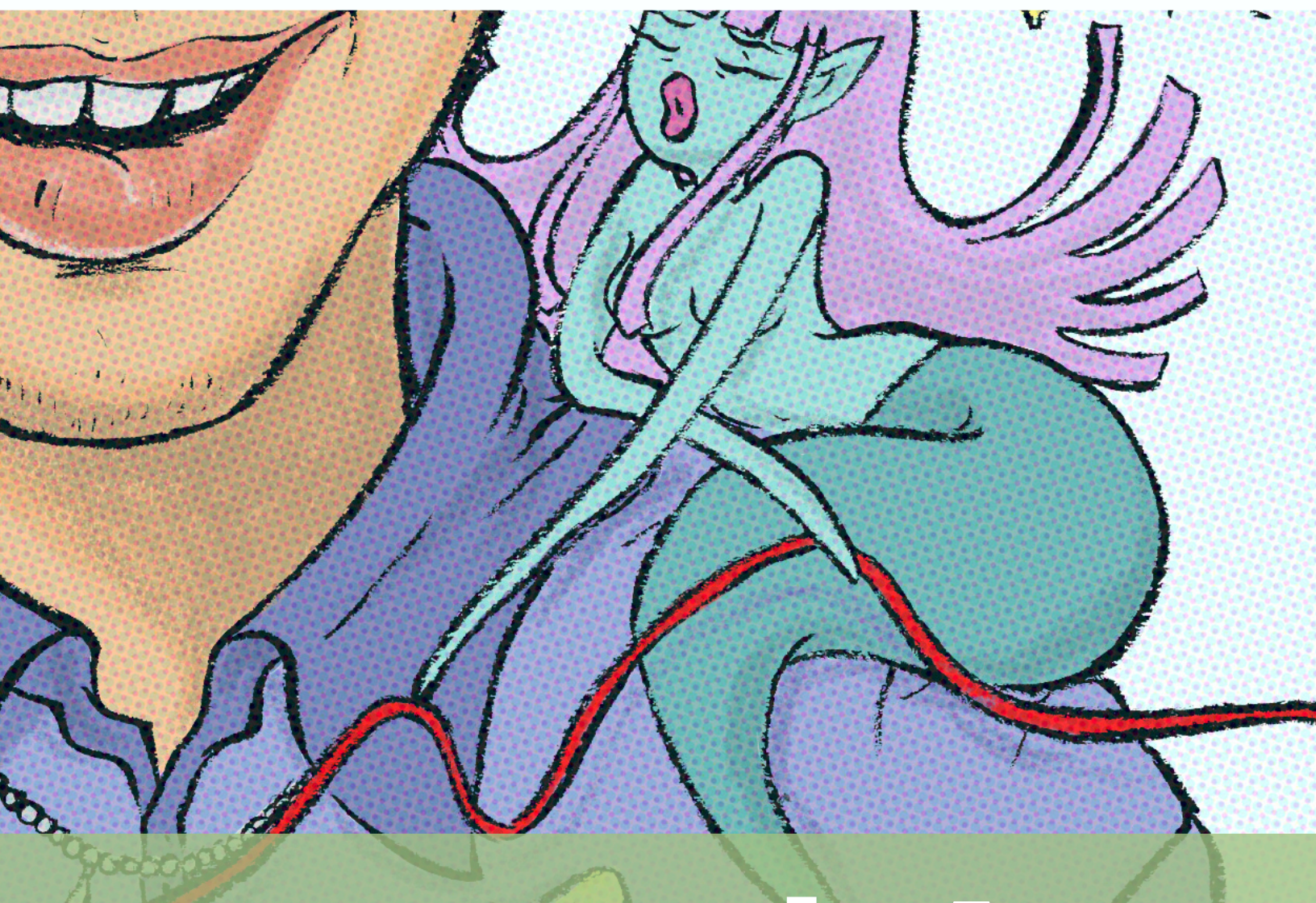
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Cult



ture and Art



SECOND STAR TO THE RIGHT

UTRGV student interns at Disneyland
By Melissa Alatorre • Photos courtesy of Melissa Alatorre

"Look mom! Mickey!" Families rush toward the familiar characters as the band begins to play. Kids are dancing along in their own private children's parade. The castle's shadow is cast down on my shoulder as the smell of warm sugar wafts around me. I take the next guest's order and smile toward the couple who just got engaged next to my cart. I flew to the second star to the right and straight on till California. My internship with the Disneyland College Program began at the end of August 2016. For those precious five months I was living a dream come true.

Working at Disney was like moving to a new country. I had to adapt to an entirely new lifestyle and culture. People are not customers. They're guests. When I needed to direct someone somewhere I would point with two fingers or my entire hand. I wasn't an employee. I was a cast member creating magic for the people of the kingdom. Memories are magic. They fuel the park and set cast members up as a key element of Disneyland. We helped bring dreams alive.

"Excuse me, can we stand here to watch the parade?" a woman asked.

I did parade control everyday, as I was located right next to the parade location. I constantly had to get after people for crossing the street when it was unsafe. Not because I was assigned to it, but because it was simply part of my duty as a cast member to look out for the well-being of our guests.

"Sure," I told her. "Just make sure that no one crosses

over this rope and you can stay standing here, it's a really great spot for the parade! Enjoy!"

Since I was alone at the cart, it was incredibly difficult to multitask selling food and looking out for people. So when I turn around and saw that this particular family was actually helping me out by telling others not to cross I realize I had to do something for them. They were just so sweet!

"Here you go, free churros for you and your family!" I said.

"Are you serious? Oh my, thank you so much! The parade view was great, and now we get free food? You're the best thank you!" the lady said as she walked away. Even from a distance she continued to whisper her thank you's in my direction. It's moments like those that families take home with them. I reminded myself of that everyday.

Making magic was what my trainer emphasized during my first week working at Disneyland. Disney staff members like to go out of their way just to see that their guests leave content and full of pixie dust. I got placed in one of the best and most memorable locations in the park: the carts in front of the castle that belonged to the Plaza Inn family. They are one of the oldest and most cherished restaurants in Disneyland. Walt Disney himself loved going there with his wife. Guests and cast members alike could feel the warm and welcoming vibe surrounding the place.

My trainer, Nicole, would tell me about the wonderful history behind my location.

“The Plaza Inn is always going to be a part of Disneyland. Walt wanted a nice family restaurant,” Nicole said. “It was originally called the Red Wagon, which is actually where the Little Red Wagon (the corn dog cart) gets its name. The Plaza Inn is actually half of a plantation home that Lillian (Walt’s wife) fell in love with so Walt had it cut in half and brought to California. It opened 10 years after the park did.”

This location therefore had a large staff of its own and they soon became family to me. Even though I only saw them during my breaks, they soon got to know me and shared their home. If I ever had a personal issue or if I simply needed someone to talk to, there was always someone at Plaza willing to listen or give a helping hand. Everybody was so nice and caring, but I definitely enjoyed working outside with my cart crew the most. The carts had a history of their own!

“The history behind the vending carts is fun,” Nicole said. “You actually get to work on “Walt’s Popcorn Cart” the very first one in the park!”

I worked the Popcorn, Turkey Leg and Churro carts. The carts are so well known for their popular Disney snacks that enthusiasts have even gone out of their

way to make pins of them. The Churros being one of the biggest hits seemed hilarious to me, a Mexican and Valley-native. I hadn’t realized people would go crazy over a snack from my country.

“More history, not Walt, but my original head manager Jim Lowman was the man who brought Churros to the park,” Nicole said. “Proving to Walt little ovens could be profitable.”

“THE CHURROS BEING ONE OF THE BIGGEST HITS SEEMED HILARIOUS TO ME, A MEXICAN AND VALLEY-NATIVE.”

If only Walt could see how amazingly profitable these Churros are today more than ever! I loved seeing the guest’s reactions whenever they received a Churro. They would chant “Churro, churro, churro!” until I finished preparing them. As soon as I handed them their treat, I would say, “Enjoy your Churro!” with an emphasis on the “rr” because that’s simply how it’s pronounced. People would lose their minds every time I rolled my Rs.

“Do it again! Did you hear her? She rolled her Rs! That’s amazing! Do it again!”

That reaction always caught me off guard since to



me I was doing something completely normal. It was small comments like those that reminded me that I was no longer in the Valley. At Disneyland I would see all kinds of people from all over the world. I was surrounded by people who spoke many different kinds of languages. That sweet sound was like nectar to my ears, because even though I knew I wasn't home anymore, I could tell that we all at least shared a love for Disneyland.

Almost all of the peers that I worked with were from California, so we didn't have much background in common. However, two of my co-workers also originated from Mexico. My lead- a role a step above mine, but below the managers- Marco and I would have long conversations during slow hours at work comparing our experiences. We talked about moving from Mexico to the States and how we came to learn English. It was really nice being able to connect with someone far from home who had an almost identical background story as I even though we were states away.

Even better was meeting Maria, who happened to be from the same hometown in Mexico as I, Culiacan, Sinaloa! I was overjoyed in finding out that we were from the same hometown. As she was an older lady, it felt to me as if she was my Disney mom. She was always looking out for me and had my back whenever I needed it. If we were ever overly busy she would

always lend me a helping hand and would accompany me to get supplies. She even drove me home one night when I got out late and had no ride home. Her gentle words would make me feel like I truly had made a home away from home. Parting with the wonderful people of Disneyland was probably the hardest thing I had to do.

"Adios mi niña, acuérdate de tu hogar cuando regreses a casa, y que la magia nunca se te desvanezca," Maria said when we parted. Goodbye my girl, remember your second home when you return home, and may the magic never dwindle.

"ON MY FLIGHT BACK I FELT JUST LIKE WENDY DID AFTER RETURNING HOME FROM NEVERLAND."

On my flight back I felt just like Wendy did after returning home from Neverland. With a heart full of joy, happiness, and magic, yet with a sense of maturity and inspiration that I did not have to this scale before. More than goodbye, see you later and thank you Disneyland.

"Never say goodbye because goodbye means going away and going away means forgetting." -Peter Pan



A TRUMP

*A documentary photographer
criticizes Trump's immigration policy*
By Véronica Cárdenas

Cardenas is an alumna of legacy institution UT Pan American. Her work was showcased in the article “Un Retrato” featured in last year’s issue of Pulse. We’ve elected to spotlight a select section of her photo essay “A Trump.”

“In this series, the group opts for adopting the most powerful person in the world. Wearing the mask ensures that their identity is protected from what is coming these four years and possible changes thereafter. The noun ‘undocumented immigrant’ has been replaced by ‘trump’ to further protect their identity.”

TO BE CONTINUED

On Véronica Gabriela Cárdenaz’s
website.

<http://veronicagabriela.com/a-trump/>









A Trump crossing the United States border through Donna, Texas.



*A young potential Trump collecting cans in a landfill in border town
Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico*

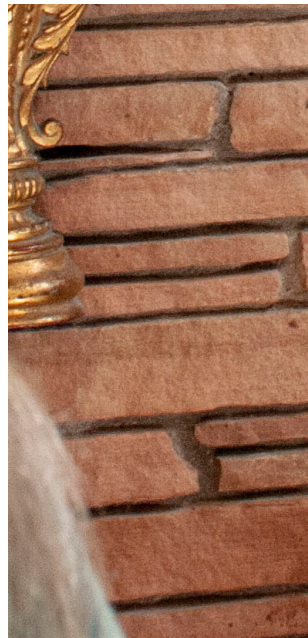
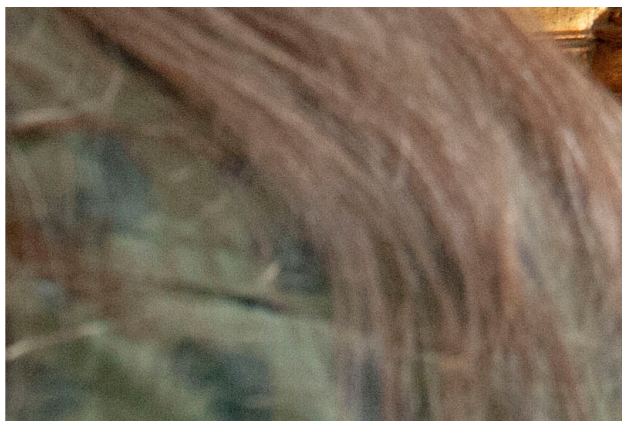
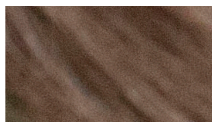
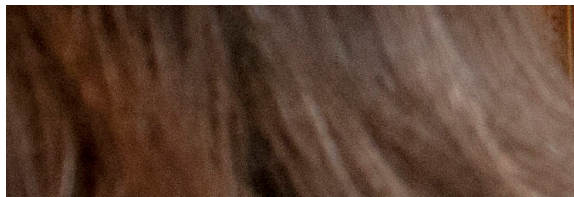
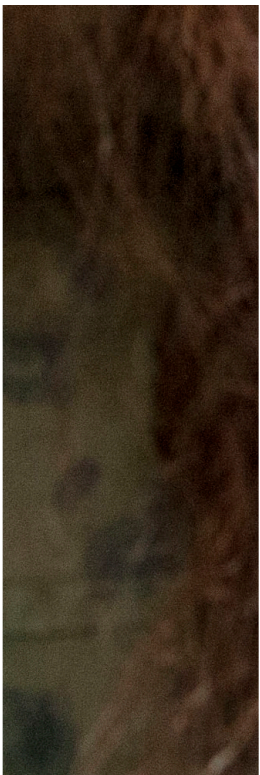
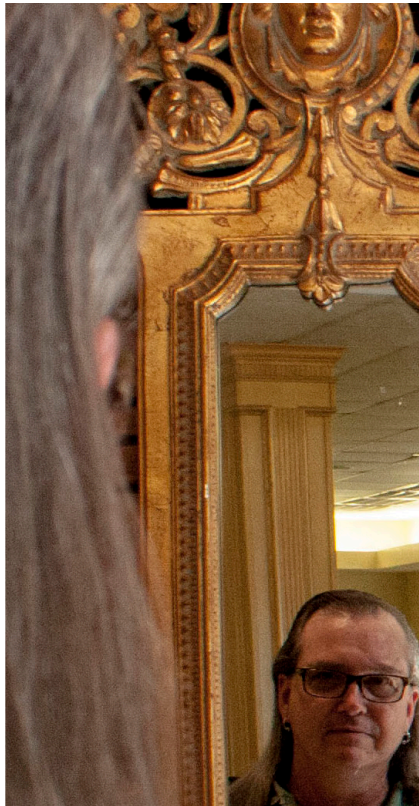
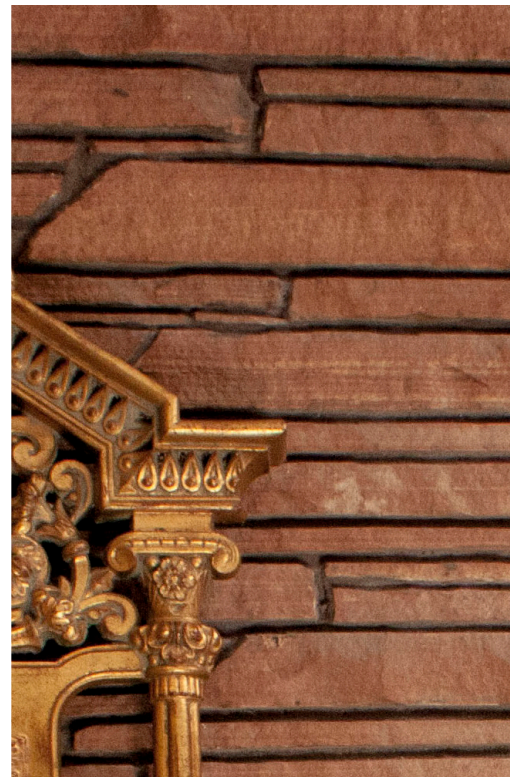


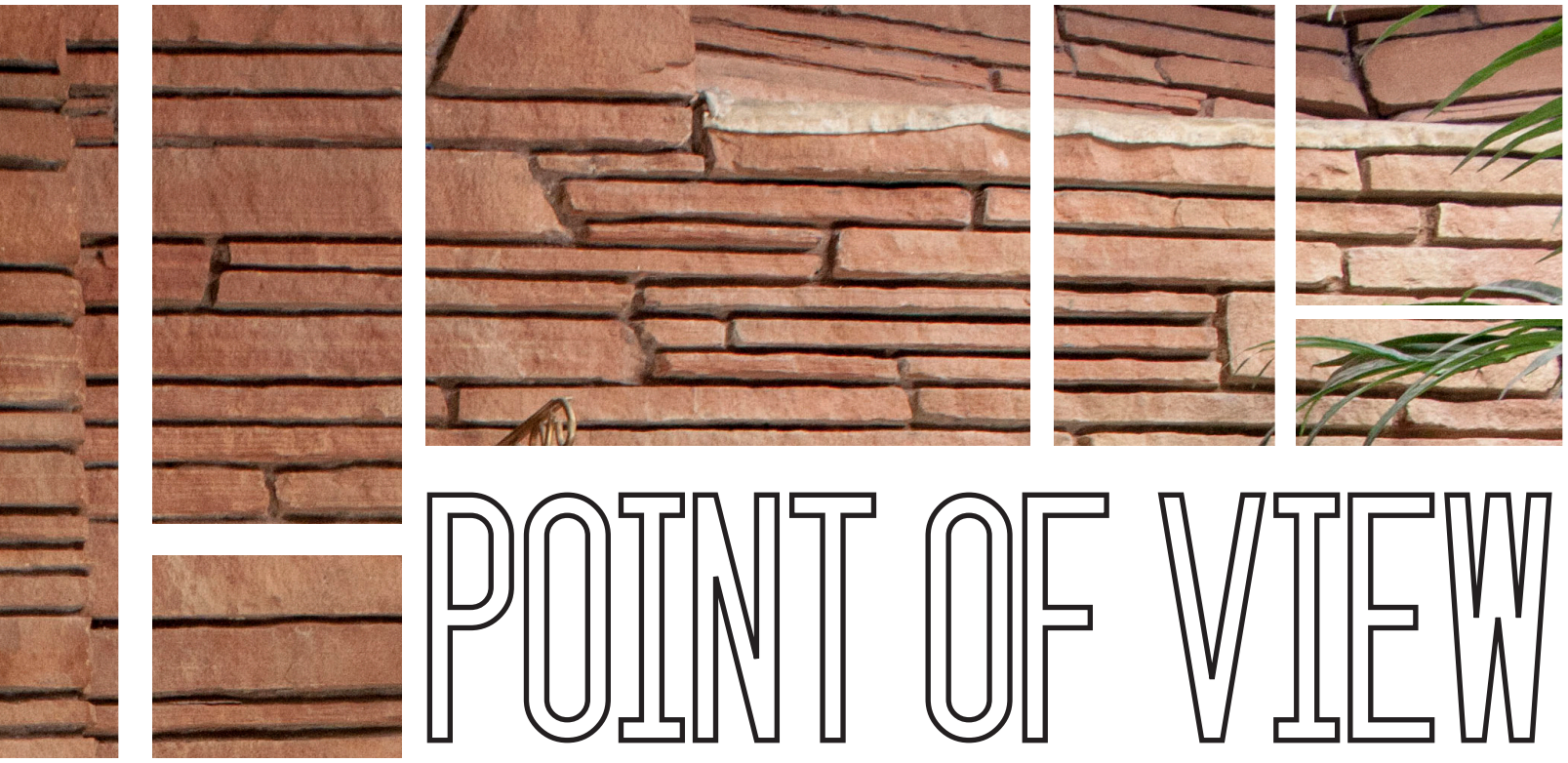
A potential Trump dispensing gasoline in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico





A Trump working in the fields in San Juan, Texas.





POINT OF VIEW

By Cari Villarreal
Photos: Arael Meza





Professor studies RGV writers

Dr. Rob Johnson has a different demeanor than most university professors. He's more laid back, like a novelist or a musician. He strolls around campus with a coffee and book in hand, shuffling past loud swarms of students in his own peaceful bubble. Sometimes he wears a bolo tie to class and plays YouTube videos of 70s classics like Janis Joplin's "Ball and Chain" for his students. You may see him driving around McAllen in a silver Sedan with a black bumper sticker that reads "Howl," windows rolled down that expose his long hair and unbothered expression, despite the Rio Grande Valley's heavy summer heat. Johnson is a professor of Literatures and Cultural Studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and has been teaching at UTRGV since the mid-90s, when it was known as the University of Texas Pan-American.

"It's the same story as most academics," the Pasadena, Texas native said. "There are very few jobs and most of us end up taking whatever is offered. I was frankly lucky enough to get a job here you know. I like this place. It's been a great experience. I like the university a lot and the students. Taking a job here was and still is a great option." Johnson smiled and joked that how he got the job "is still kind of a mysterious thing to this day."



As part of his Course ENGL 4316 01 - Beat Generation Dr. Rob Johnson takes his class to the historical Ebony Golf course in Edinburg Texas to teach and show his students the life of William S. Burroughs's time in the valley, a famous Beat generation writer.

Writing was always a part of Johnson's life. As a boy, he would write detective stories and he even completed a novel before he left elementary school. In middle school, Johnson became the editor of the school newspaper and yearbook, and continued these positions into high school. As a high school student interested in writing and making a few dollars, he took a job at Houston City Magazine. The professor said working at Houston City Magazine was a challenge, but he learned useful editing and fact checking skills from his co-workers.

"I worked for a bunch of Texas Monthly alumni," Johnson said. "Occasionally they gave me a little story but mainly I was a fact checker. They were hardcore about fact checking." The writer once had to call the Houston Astrodome's groundskeeper to confirm the number of steps from the first level of the Astrodome to the field for a story about a baseball game. Looking back, Johnson said that he's "more loose" about facts

in his work than his former bosses were.

JOHNSON TEACHES AMERICAN LITERATURE, SOUTH TEXAS LITERATURE AND BEAT GENERATION LITERATURE AT UTRGV.

Johnson teaches American Literature, South Texas Literature and Beat Generation Literature at UTRGV. He has researched the Beat Generation for over a decade. The professor's first encounter with Beat Literature occurred when he picked up "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac, as an undergraduate student. He enjoyed the novel but the Beats weren't the focus of his studies at the time. Johnson focused on more traditional thesis subjects such as Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, and Southern women writers like Flannery O'Connor, for his dissertations. The next time the Beats intersected with Johnson's college life was during an idle summer break while attending the University of Texas at Austin.

"I didn't have class. I didn't have anything to do. So I went to the library looking for something to read and I saw a summer reading list that had a book by William S. Burroughs called "The Place of Dead Roads," Johnson said. "The cover made it look like it was a western, which it was, it was set in a western landscape. I had no idea about "Junky" or "Queer" or "Naked Lunch," but I had heard of Burroughs and I wanted to read something by him so I picked it up and started reading it."

The book started off fairly westerny. A cowboy rode into town and met a guy at a bar, with one unexpected twist. "Before you knew it, the two cowboys were having sex," he chuckled. "It blew my mind." Johnson didn't get around to reading more Beat Generation literature until 1999.

"The Facts On File encyclopedia series was looking for someone to edit an encyclopedia about the Beat Generation of writers and I was asked to do it," the UT Austin graduate said. "Back then I said yes to everything in order to publish, and there was money involved. It was a pretty good advance. And so, stupidly, without really knowing the extent, the depth of the Beat Generation, the number of writers, artists, filmmakers, everybody associated with the

Beat Generation, I said yes. I read all of Burroughs, Kerouac, [Allen] Ginsberg. And 1,000 manuscript pages later I said I couldn't do it anymore." Johnson was bogged down by the encyclopedia and turned it over to his friend, editor and english professor Kurt Hemmer, who finished the manuscript and published the "Encyclopedia of Beat Literature". Despite the exhaustive amount of work Johnson had completed, his intrigue with the Beats was far from over.

While the professor researched Beat Generation novelist William S. Burroughs for the encyclopedia, he came across small passages about South Texas. A few pages from "Junky" spoke about the Rio Grande Valley. Johnson also read Burroughs's personal letters and noticed a Pharr, Texas return address. The letters caused Johnson to rekindle his relationship to the Beats and embark on new research: uncovering what happened during William S. Burroughs's time in the valley.

JOHNSON COLLECTED SO MANY INTERESTING STO- RIES AND INFORMATION ABOUT "BILLY BURROUGHS" AS FRIENDS IN SOUTH TEXAS DUBBED HIM, THAT HIS RESEARCH INEVITABLY TOOK ON THE FORM OF A BOOK....

Johnson collected so many interesting stories and information about "Billy Burroughs" as friends in South Texas dubbed him, that his research inevitably took on the form of a book, "The Lost Years of William S. Burroughs: Beats in South Texas." The book chronicles the years William S. Burroughs spent in the RGV and the unusual characters he met along the way.

"Nobody had visited this area and nobody knew about his time here and the importance of it. He wrote about it and it turned out to be a pivotal part of his life," Johnson said. "This is where he left the United States. He didn't come back until 1973. Twenty three years. He was disgusted with the United States and went over to live in Mexico City where he subsequently killed his wife, but the valley was a huge chapter in all that and nobody had researched it."

For this reason, Johnson labels “The Lost Years” his most influential work so far. His research on Burroughs and the Beat Generation’s links to Texas continues to this day. “In fact, I was supposed to fly to Los Angeles this summer,” the writer sighed, “but I’m not going to be able to do it.” He intended to interview a 93-year-old man who had known Burroughs but the nonagenarian’s health deteriorated over the summer and interviewing him was no longer feasible. “Most of the people I interviewed are dead now. In some cases they were people who lived down the street from me. Like one of them was a woman named Pat Paris. Lived five blocks from me. She had lots of great stories. She helped me track down people who really knew Burroughs quite well.”

When doing research in East Texas, Johnson went undercover. “I wore a hat and put my hair up and took my earrings out,” Johnson laughed, “I would talk to them the way they talked, and they would talk to me!” That wasn’t the most clever trick under the writer’s sleeve. Some of the subject matter in his research was dark or revealed unflattering details about people’s identities. He experienced reluctant interviewees but quickly devised a solution that radiated trustworthiness. “My son was about ten at the time I was doing a lot of my research. I would take him to a lot of my interviews because when you bring a little kid with you it disarms people,” Johnson said. “They think you’re a nice person. And maybe I am but maybe I’m not but I’ve got this little cute kid with me. So they’d talk to me.”

The writer’s favorite outcome of researching Burroughs is that he has met and befriended many interesting people. Johnson befriended his former student Juan Ochoa, author of the novel “Mariguano,” after Ochoa offered to assist him with his Burroughs research. Ochoa facilitated Johnson’s research in Reynosa, Mexico’s Zona Rosa where Burroughs was remembered by locals as “Willie el Puto.” Juan Ochoa is an English instructor at South Texas College in McAllen, Texas who formerly practiced law in Mexico. He described Johnson as a valuable friend and mentor, “Mi amigo en todo el sentido de la palabra.” The instructor said assisting Johnson with his William S. Burroughs research was a positive experience and spoke about Burroughs’ writing from a postcolonial perspective.

“I grew up in Reynosa and knew my way around pretty good and of course there wasn’t so much violence then,” Ochoa said. “I was at [Johnson’s] house one evening with a bunch of other students and he was talking about the research he was doing on Burroughs and how he had problems—language and logistics mostly—finding info on Burroughs in Mexico. I knew I could find out more than [Johnson] could because like I said, I knew the town and still had some influence in the Zona [Rosa]. Once I started learning more about Burroughs, I could see the talent and I liked the observations he made about Mexico and junk [narcotics]. I didn’t totally agree with everything because let’s face it, Burroughs is a white looking in from the outside on life in Mexico. And [narcotics] is a lot different for white people than it is for minorities in the sense that it is not always a road to doom—my family came out of poverty because of [narcotics].”

Ochoa explores this perspective in his novel “Mariguano,” which tells the story of Don Julio Cortina’s involvement with the drug trade in Reynosa and the remarkable situations he and his son, “El Johnny” faced in their line of work. The dynamics of a father-son relationship, Mexican narcoculture and man’s ability to adapt are discussed in the gripping narrative. Ochoa credits Johnson for motivating him to write and share his stories.

“I have often said that Johnson is the reason I am not talking to my family through some prison glass. But of course that idea is based on speculations and probability. We will never know what might have become of me if I hadn’t met Rob Johnson,” Ochoa said. “But we do know what did happen after we met. We published and presented together. He encouraged me to start my own writing career, which I did and am still working to improve.”

Johnson said that despite the experiences he’s had researching Burroughs and the Beat Generation, his favorite subject to teach is South Texas Literature. The professor said that while he wrote “The Lost Years,” he read works by South Texas writers from the same period to compare their views of the Rio Grande Valley to Burroughs’ views. Johnson emphasizes the importance of comparing different texts to students, stating that Burroughs had an interesting but limited

perspective of the valley.

"In 'Junky,' Burroughs says the dying cell gravitates to the Valley. He thought it was a place where people came to die," Johnson said. "Burroughs was very depressed when he lived here. He didn't like the weather, didn't like the food, felt constricted by farming regulations and he was always on the verge of being arrested from charges in Louisiana. He was an outlaw. He needed to be able to jump across the border in case of being chased down."

The professor's students insisted that to people whose families have lived in the RGV forever and people who've migrated from the South, the valley represents life rather than death. Johnson encourages his students to express their opinions in class and through their writing projects, motivating them to research topics that interest them. "He sees his students as capable and intelligent and appreciates every contribution," former student Juan Ochoa said.

The UTRGV professor edited "New Border Voices: An Anthology" through Texas A&M University Press in March 2014 with Brandon D. Shuler and Erika Garza-Johnson. "New Border Voices" features works by border writers from El Paso to Brownsville. Johnson said some of his former student's works are featured in the anthology, as well as in the 2016 anthology "The Beatest State in the Union: an Anthology of Beat Texas Writing," which Johnson edited as well. It includes an unpublished Burroughs story set in east Texas and many other works by Beat writers who wrote about Texas. "It also features contemporary Texas writers influenced by the Beats, including my former students Christopher Carmona, Erika Garza-Johnson, Veronica Sandoval, Brian Carr, and Juan Ochoa," Johnson said, "I mention these publications less for myself than the UTRGV students whose works are included in these university press anthologies. I've always tried to get my students into print."

Dr. Christopher Carmona is an Assistant Professor of Mexican American Studies at UTRGV, poet and author. He took the Beat Generation course taught by Johnson as an undergraduate student and went on to write his Master's thesis on the life of Joan Vollmer and her influence on the Beat Generation. Vollmer's death was particularly gruesome. Her story became diluted to headlines that still pop up after a Google search of her

"I DIDN'T TOTALLY AGREE WITH EVERYTHING BECAUSE LET'S FACE IT, BURROUGHS IS A WHITE LOOKING IN FROM THE OUTSIDE ON LIFE IN MEXICO. AND [NARCOTICS] IS A LOT DIFFERENT FOR WHITE PEOPLE THAN IT IS FOR MINORITIES IN THE SENSE THAT IT IS NOT ALWAYS A ROAD TO DOOM—MY FAMILY CAME OUT OF POVERTY BECAUSE OF [NARCOTICS]."



name: wife of William S. Burroughs killed in Mexico City after a game of William Tell gone wrong. "The Beats influenced my writings immensely," Carmona said. "It changed my entire perspective as a writer and my outlook on life."

Carmona expressed that the qualities of Beat Literature that interested him were the "freedom to write from your experiences and in your voice, to be socially aware and politically active and a willingness to challenge notions of literacy and create new forms and styles of writing." He teaches the writing of Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac in his creative writing classes, emphasizing the roles of practice, process, and research in writing. Carmona has published two collections of poems, "Beat" and "I Have Always Been Here,"

and most recently his short stories collection "The Road to Llorona Park." The poet also hosted Beat Poetry and Arts Festivals in Texas.

"We held three Beat Poetry and Arts Festivals," Carmona said, "one in Bryan, Texas, one in Austin, Texas, and one in Edinburg. They were completely free festivals filled with Beat characters from all over the world."

The assistant professor also edited "The Beatest State in the Union: an Anthology of Beat Texas Writing." He described the process of choosing content and working on the anthology. "To make a long story short...I was approached by someone who worked with UT Press and he asked me to work on an anthology of Beat Texas writings, which is where that book

had its genesis about eight years ago," Carmona said, "I then asked Rob Johnson and Chuck Taylor to help me with the editing of this book, which spans 70 years worth of writings. As for the selection, half of it was done by research of writers who were part of the Beat Generation who wrote about or in Texas, then writers that wrote in Beat style or were connected to the Beat Generation. For the second half we had an open call for Beat Texas writers today and we had a blind reading submission for that."

Johnson expressed that despite the influence his Beat Generation class has had, his South Texas Literature class tends to have a greater impact on students. He said some of the works read in that class are the type that





students use for more than just completing assignments. Students are more likely to share the books with friends and family because they're interesting and significant to the region. The subject matter discussed in the South Texas Literature class has played a part in former student's writing and education careers.

"[Johnson] introduced us to our own history through writers like Hinojosa Smith, Paredes, Anzaldua, Montejano, Rivera, and of course the Beats. I for one had never heard of these writers save for Paredes," English instructor and author Juan Ochoa said. "Knowing that there were others putting pen to paper and getting published under harsher circumstances than we were experiencing at the time, really empowered me to tell my

story. I guess I can say that my experience was life changing—which is what a good educator should be doing with their students."

Ochoa explained the personal effect Johnson's class had on him as a Mexican-American student. He believes that introducing South Texas Literature into the classroom is necessary to show a different side of history that is often deleted or ignored in mainstream texts.

"There are a lot of courageous men and women in our collective history that have gone for the most part oppressed or omitted from our History books. Everyone needs heroes. I think for my whole Academic career, I never once heard anything about Mexicans other than that they slaughtered

'Texan heroes' at the Alamo and then were soundly defeated at San Jacinto for being lazy and taking a nap in the middle of the day," Ochoa said. "There is just so much distortion in the way our Mexican-American culture is negatively portrayed all the way down to our Mexican roots, that instead of instilling pride, most Mexican-Americans learn to disassociate themselves from the culture and do crazy things like support Donald Trump."

Ochoa said the books he read in Johnson's class helped to shape his view of the Rio Grande Valley in the sense that he learned he had a responsibility to contribute to the discussion of what life is along the South Texas border. The rest of the country often misunderstands this region. The RGV needs local

voices to provide its narrative through writing and publishing.

"I wanted people to have a face, a character to put on the statistics," Ochoa said. "The books we read in Johnson's class made me realize that there were people trying to do just that, show the Valley in an honest light, but of course those writers had far more limitations than I did, but they were still able to advance a point, which of course, allowed me to take that point a little further in my writing. At least that's what I shoot for when I write."

Ochoa believes that anyone who is working to earn their degree and planning on making a contribution to the local community, should take the South Texas Literature class. On the first day of class, Johnson always says that he teaches South Texas Literature because he wants one of his students to take his job so the class can continue in the future. Johnson proudly stated that three of his former students now teach their own courses that feature works from the South Texas Literature class.

One of these former students is Dr. Noreen Rivera, Assistant Professor in the Department of Literatures and Cultural Studies and Mexican American Studies Affiliate Faculty at UTRGV. Rivera took the South Texas Literature course over 10 years ago as a graduate student enrolled in the English Master of Arts program at UTPA. She described Johnson's demeanor as intellectual and easy going, which she said was effective with students and the delivery of the subject matter.

"It was a wonderful academic experience to be exposed to a body of literature that addresses the social, political, historical, cultural and ethnic concerns of our region," Rivera said. "I've felt a sense of regional pride and respect for the RGV well before taking South Texas Literature as a graduate student. I accredit this to the oral family stories I listened too as a child and young adult. However, studying these stories in Dr. Johnson's course alerted me to the fact that the literature of our region mattered in higher education, and that I could make a living researching and teaching narratives of the people and land that means so much to me."

Rivera teaches a graduate level course on the Brownsville native, author, and folklorist Americo Paredes, whose book "George Washington Gomez" is discussed in Johnson's South Texas Literature course. Rivera described reading Paredes' work as uplifting and empowering. She says that people who are aware of the historical and present-day concerns of the RGV and its people will likely feel a personal connection to Paredes' writing. She believes students of all majors should consider taking her class and any class where Paredes is taught.

"We can not divorce the need to learn and study about the populations we more than likely will serve in our careers," Rivera said. "Paredes' literature affords many the opportunity to take a closer look at Mexican American communities, analyze them through literary representation, and ideally come to a more culturally enriching understanding. After all, literature is life."

Johnson's literature classes create a space for students to express their individuality through writing. The Beat Generation class dares students to think outside the box about literature and even their role as people in the world beyond the page. South Texas Literature encourages students to become more historically aware of South Texas societies and observe how things have or have not changed and set goals as future leaders in the local community. The class offers multidimensional perspectives about literature and its role in South Texas life. Students experience the Rio Grande Valley through the minds of outsiders, insiders, and others in-between whose writing highlights the region's diversity in a way that is hard to forget.

"That class opens a lot of ties to the history of this place, and that in turn makes some students want to learn more about the place. Value it. Like it," Johnson said. "There's a lot of beauty here. It's a great place and has a lot of stories that need to be told. You know, reading about a place in fiction can in some cases make it more real. I never anticipated that class would have that effect."



CULTURAL



BY MARK MORENO PHOTOS: MARK MORENO

TIES



SAND ART FOR DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



A holiday like Day of the Dead or Dia De Los Muertos is celebrated on November 1st and 2nd in Mexico. In the United States, it is often combined with All Soul's Day and All Saint's Day. The holiday celebrates the life of someone who has died with gatherings where the living can reminisce about their loved ones. Day of the Dead has crossed over to the United States with those residents who have migrated over to this country. Although the tradition has diminished to some, many families still celebrate the holiday each year with the practices that their relatives have instilled in them.

Day of the Dead is still a popular tradition amongst residents in the Rio Grande Valley. This past November, the City of San Juan, in-collaboration with the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle National Shrine and the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley has continued a

yearly tradition by creating a new type of artistry from Mexico. This has been the third year the city of San Juan has held the celebration. In previous years it was held at the International Museum of Arts and Science in McAllen, Texas.

The City of San Juan with the Basilica bought artists from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico to contribute their talent and skills to make Sand Art. This year's Sand Art was located at the Basilica, San Juan Memorial Library and Carman Elementary, which is part of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District. The project began on Monday, October 31st until the festive celebration on Saturday, November 5th.

The Sand Art was made by UTRGV Center for Mexican-American Studies students in collaboration with primary



and secondary Pharr-San Juan-Alamo students. The artists worked eight to ten hours per day for the city and community residents to enjoy and revive the history within the culture here in South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley.

Benjamin Martinez Alvarez, a former curator for the International Museum of Art and Science and now the coordinator for the San Juan Day of the Dead festivities, said he began this event because the holiday was fading from the public eye. Alvarez wanted to restore this popular holiday within the RGV because so many of its citizens have roots in Mexican culture.

"It is the idea to provide more elements in terms of history of roots and reality for the community that is living here in the Rio Grande Valley of who we are. Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, Latinos, Chicanos – People," Alvarez said. "The







idea is for them to establish this communication with their parents and also with friends looking for more information it's the idea."

Leonel Villegas, a sand artist, has been creating sand art for three years and believes collaboration is a key feature of the event. Villegas graduated from University of Oaxaca with a degree in conceptual art and visual art.

"The idea of making a sand tapestry is primarily to spread, transmit culture, the knowledge of transmitting culture," Villegas said. "All these processes of making art is to form cultural ties with the Oaxacan artists."

Oaxacan Sand Artists:

Francisco Leonel López Villegas
 Inocencio López Villegas
 Dulce Aquino Monterrey
 Benjamín Martínez Álvarez
 Israel Nazario
 Martha Guadalupe Jiménez Muñoz
 Carlos Jaret León González

UTRGV Center for Mexican-American Studies
 Professor - Dr. Stephanie Alvarez
 UTRGV CMAS Graduate Assistant: Monica Alvarez



(Left to Right) Leonel Villegas, Inocencio Villegas, Dulce Aquino Monterrey, Carlos Gonzalez, Israel Nazario, Martha Munoz, and Benjamin Martinez Alvarez, Oaxacan artists pose at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, San Juan, Texas.



CULTURAL SHOCK

Pulse staff out of place in Washington D.C

By Andy De Llano • Photos: Gustavo Huerta

Matthew Sustaita was trusted to drive the rental car because he was the oldest among us. As we pulled out of the airport parking garage we stared out the car windows. The open skyline we'd been so accustomed to was now crowded by tall buildings. The streets were cluttered with pedestrians and slow moving cars. On the 40-minute drive from the airport to our hotel we collectively groaned at the traffic and perpetual honking. Yet it was a great opportunity to gawk at Washington D.C. and marvel at the diversity of the city.

"Hey, look there's something in Spanish on that sign over there," Sage Bazan said.

We all perk up. Though none of us are fluent speakers, the familiar language was a comfort in that strange environment. We're all from the Rio Grande Valley, a border region in South Texas with a 90 percent Hispanic population.

"Iglesias ni Cristo... It's a church!" Gustavo Huerta said.

"There's another one," I said.

We saw a handful of iglesias before we reached the hotel. Each church was lined up along the same street and they were practically on top of each other. Were they all catering to the same Hispanic neighborhood?

"Is there a big Hispanic community in D.C.?" Bazan asked.

"No... I think there's a lot of black people?" Huerta said.

"Lot of Asians," Sustaita said.

"Uh... and white people," I said.

"So Hispanics are the biggest minority here," Bazan said.

Her remark is tough to discern. The US Census does not categorize Hispanics as a race. Instead, Hispanics must self identify as white or black. That said blacks, or African Americans, made up 48 percent of the population in the District of Columbia in 2015. Whites made up 44 percent of the district's population for

the same time period.

The traffic in D.C was hard to get used to.

"It took us 30 minutes to drive 7 miles?" Huerta said. "Seven miles?!"

"D.C drivers are really rude," Sustaita said. "They kept trying to cut me off and crowd me in. I didn't think you could have such bad drivers while going 30 miles per hour..."

"I miss the freeway," Huerta said. "Why don't they have a freeway?"

"Where would they put it?" I said.

"The city is filled with super old historical buildings and stuff," Bazan said. "I mean, it's really pretty, and it was built before freeways were a thing..."

"I miss Texas," Huerta said. "I want to go home."

"We just got here," I said.

We were in Washington D.C. for the Associated Collegiate Press conference, or ACP, a student media journalism conference, and feeling particularly dwarfed by the environment.

"I'd always thought I was pretty tall," Sustaita said. "Well, back home I am anyway..."

At 5-feet-10, he was the tallest of our group, but in D.C. it seemed nearly everyone- black or white- was much, much taller. Not that anyone within the hotel where the conference was being held was from D.C. We had speakers and students from all over the country, apparently, yet it seemed the entire country looked the same.

"They're all super white," Bazan said.

"I used to think you were white, but now that I see the real thing, I understand my mistake," Huerta said. "Also I thought you were naturally blonde."

"Haha, no I dyed it. But, I mean, I'm half white," Bazan said. "My mom is from Canada."

Almost without realizing it, we scanned the crowds for familiar faces. Within the conference workshops and keynote speeches, we felt small, out of place, and ethnic. Yet when we walked around D.C.- visiting the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument- we were startled by the large African-American population. In the Rio Grande Valley, they were a rarer sight than Anglos.

“Look, look!” Bazan said, pointing at a joint barber shop and bakery we were driving by. “See that lady in there? She looks Mexican! You see her? And that man in the barber shop!”

Later, as we walked toward the tourist sights in D.C, my co-workers lamented their desire for raspas and other Mexican desserts. When we stood in front of the gates of the White House we noticed that the majority of the tourists around us were Arab and Muslim families- with women covering their heads in traditional scarves- taking photos in front of the building. It was our first and last time seeing them. Though they seemed impressed with the sights to us walking past the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and the White House was anticlimactic.

“It looks... smaller in person,” Bazan said.

Huerta, as our student magazine’s photo editor, and Bazan, a reporter and photographer, wanted to practice with their camera equipment while we were in D.C. They took portraits of each other, of me and Sustaita, and of one particular journalism student we met at the conference.

We were walking through the revolving door when we met Eve Moreno, who was going in the other direction. Moreno saw Huerta’s sweater, which said Maricón, and said “Eeey, love that sweater!”

Though Maricón, meaning ‘gay’ or ‘fag’ in Spanish, was originally an insulting word, a lot of gay Hispanic men have adopted it as a badge of pride. Huerta enjoyed wearing the sweater to broadcast his identity. Though non-Spanish speakers could also guess he was gay by noting his blue and purple hair or his colorful clothes and accessories.

We’d been walking in opposite directions, but Huerta urged us to turn around and talk to the guy who had



complimented his shirt. “We’ve found my people!” he said.

I was also intrigued. Compelled to talk with one of ‘my people’: a Hispanic and an LGBT person.

We easily located Moreno and learned their name as well as their pronouns ‘they, them, their.’ They identified as trans non-binary queer Latinx. Moreno was also a photographer, in D.C. for the same conference, visiting from California.

We walked around D.C with Moreno for a while. We all took turns posing for them and then Moreno allowed Huerta to take photos of them. Moreno was almost as

small as me- the dwarf of the group at 4-foot-10, and it was a relief to finally get to talk to someone who was at our level.

“How do you identify?” Moreno asked me. “Latina or...?”

“I guess I’m technically Latina,” I said. “But I’ve never referred to myself that way. Both my parents were born in Mexico, but I wasn’t and I don’t speak Spanish.”

“And your orientation?”

“I’m bisexual,” I said.

Moreno asked everyone the same questions.

“I’m bi-racial,” Sage explained to them. “And I’m straight.”

“Oh...” Moreno seemed to roll their eyes when hearing ‘straight’ as if they were disappointed.

On our last day in D.C. Bazan and I were posing for Huerta outside of an outlet mall strip. We were sitting at a table in what we thought was a public plaza, when an African American cop walked up to us.

“Hey, guys I’m really sorry to bother you, but you can’t be taking photos here,” he said apologetically. “I know it’s a silly rule, but since this is private property you’re going to have to stop. Normally it wouldn’t be a big deal, but since you’ve got a professional camera...”

We might have been chagrined by this rule if it weren’t for the man’s polite way of speaking to us. Huerta thanked him for informing us and began to put his equipment away.

“You guys tourists? Where y’all from?” the cop asked us.

“South Texas,” Sustaita said.

“Texas!” the cop said. “I’m from Texas too!”

“Oh, hey!” Bazan said.

“Yeah, man, I miss Texas,” the cop continued. “I’m



going to move back over there as soon as I can.”

“The traffic is terrible here,” Huerta said.

“Yeah, and the cost of living is just ridiculous,” the cop said.

“Yeah, the food here is so expensive,” Sustaita said.

“Just imagine the cost of rent,” the cop shook his head. “Just ridiculous.”

After amiably chatting with us for a few minutes, the cop walked away. Unfortunately we didn’t think to ask his name. When we’d returned to the conference

hotel Huerta said, “Guys, I never believed in Southern hospitality before. But now I believe it!”

“That was the nicest guy we’ve met here,” Bazan said.

“That southern hospitality,” Sustaita agreed. “I can’t wait to go back.”

Were we four spoiled by our homogeneous home in the Rio Grande Valley? Maybe, but I believe it is human nature to look for kindred spirits. When you see someone with the same background as you, or from the same place, there is an instinct to open your arms and warmly greet them with “Simpatico!”



RBT

Duty Free

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(956) 485-9418

Pharr

9801 S. Cage Blvd. Suite 4
Pharr, TX 78577
(956) 787-2050

Brownsville

1343 E. Elizabeth St. Suite A
Brownsville, TX 78520
(956) 801-3039

Laredo

1315 Iturbide
Laredo, TX 78040
(956) 712-9231

Rio Grande City

4027 E. Hwy 83 Suite 104
Rio Grande City, TX 78582
(956) 488-0989

Progreso

1127 S. International Blvd.
Progreso Lakes, TX 78596
(956) 825-9565

Hidalgo

711 W. Joe Pate Blvd.
Hidalgo, TX 78557
(956) 843-7287



JESSIE SUPREME



"I peel my Stickers like your Snake Skin"

Artist Spotlight

By Melissa Alatorre • Art by Jessie Rodriguez

Jessie Rodriguez is a surrealist artist who concentrates in drawing/illustration. He obtained his bachelor's in Fine Arts from UTRGV in the summer of 2016. Born and raised in China Nuevo Leon, Mexico, Rodriguez moved to the valley when he was 12.

How would you describe your work and why did you choose this profession?

Most of my artwork is very surreal/dreamlike because it mostly focuses on things I imagine or dream of. My work is heavily concentrated on line work, I like working with watercolor paper to ink my drawings just because I like the texture you get from the lines, it's kind of like the lines you would get from writing on a chalkboard or drawing with crayons; that's the type of line work I want. My intuition led me in the path I am currently on. Sometimes you don't question it and you just embrace it.

Describe your earlier works. How did they help you get to where you are?

Oh gosh my earlier works were horrible and it's funny because I keep all of my older sketches just as a constant reminder of how far I have come as an artist. My earlier works consisted of replicating old school cartoons and anime. When I started college, my whole view on drawing changed once I started taking life-drawing courses. I started experimenting with different techniques in inking. The constant experimentation with inking led me to refine my current art style.

What themes do you pursue in your work?

I am not politically versed so most of my work focuses on dreams and life experiences. My earlier work focused heavily on imagination, I created this character named Fishbowl- a depiction of myself- that is in an alien boy that doesn't quite fit into this imaginary world called the Wonderer world but his mission is to find a purpose in life. Since the Wonderer series is an ongoing project I tend to work on several series at once; the Infinite series



"He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not"



focuses on repetition between growing stages in life, while my Cosmic series solemnly focuses on my fascination with space and fruits. Nothing too serious. Currently, I am working on a series called Fashion Boys; Fashion has always been a big influence in the way I approach anything, always looking for creative ways to channel my creativity by borrowing certain ideas or trends.

What is your workspace like and what are your favorite tools to work with?

I have a small studio space at home, I have a drafting table, there is also drawers full of colored pencils, pens, paints, markers that I have collected throughout the years as a student and just opposite, there's a white table with my sewing machine which I usually use to experiment and make bags or plush-toys but to be honest I like working in my bedroom with my small portable drawing board.

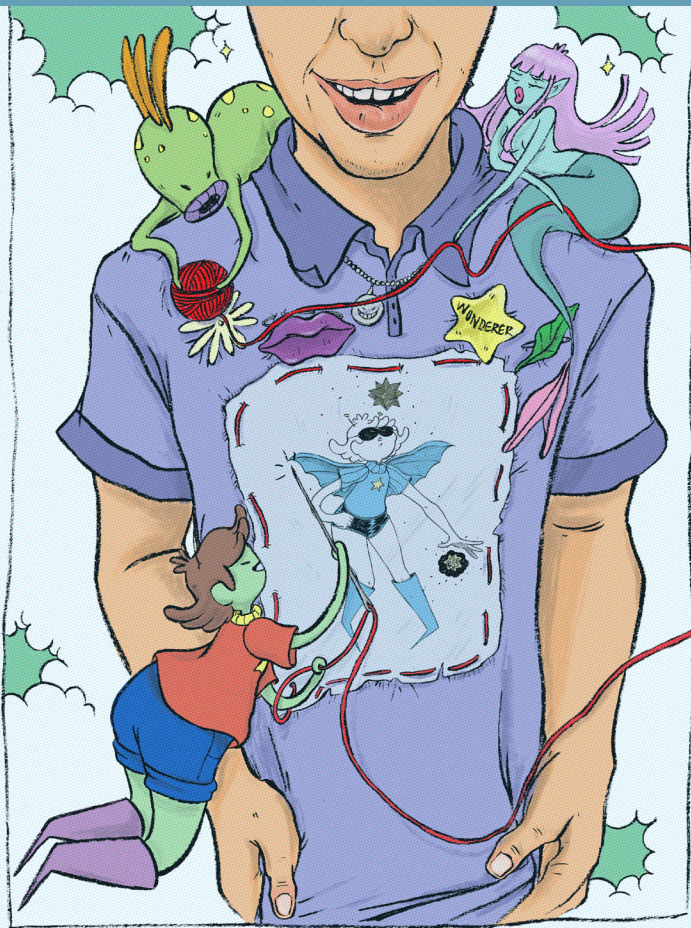
Here is a list of my favorite go to materials: A non-photo blue colored pencil that I use to sketch my drawings before inking them (does not show up when scanned), Canson watercolor paper-cold press (300mg), Pentel ink brush pens usually I buy them online, watercolors any brand (tubes or cake pans), Epson Perfection scanner, a Wacom bamboo create tablet (very inexpensive) and a version of Photoshop that I usually pay monthly.

Why do you do what you do?

I know it might sound clichéd in a way but I just like inspiring people, encourage the younger generation that it is OK to have an imagination and not take everything so serious.

What role do you have in the RGV as an artist?

Recently I have tried getting more involved in the art scene by exhibiting in more local art shows but I am usually very isolated because I spend most of my time working on personal projects or commissions.



What's your favorite piece and why?

Personally I don't like getting attached to the work I create but I think my favorite piece so far has to come from the Fashion Boy series titled "Pink hair." I think what attracts me to it is the simplicity of the male form, it is not very detailed but the limited color pallet gives the piece a whimsical/mysterious appeal that I am a fan of.

What research do you do?

When it comes to specific projects, I like to do as much research as possible. Usually what I ask my clients when I work on commissioned work is to provide me with examples of the type of imagery and color schemes they are looking for.

What is your dream project?

A dream project of mine is working on a series of children's books based on my character Fishbowl and his many adventures.

What place, within the RGV, inspires your work?

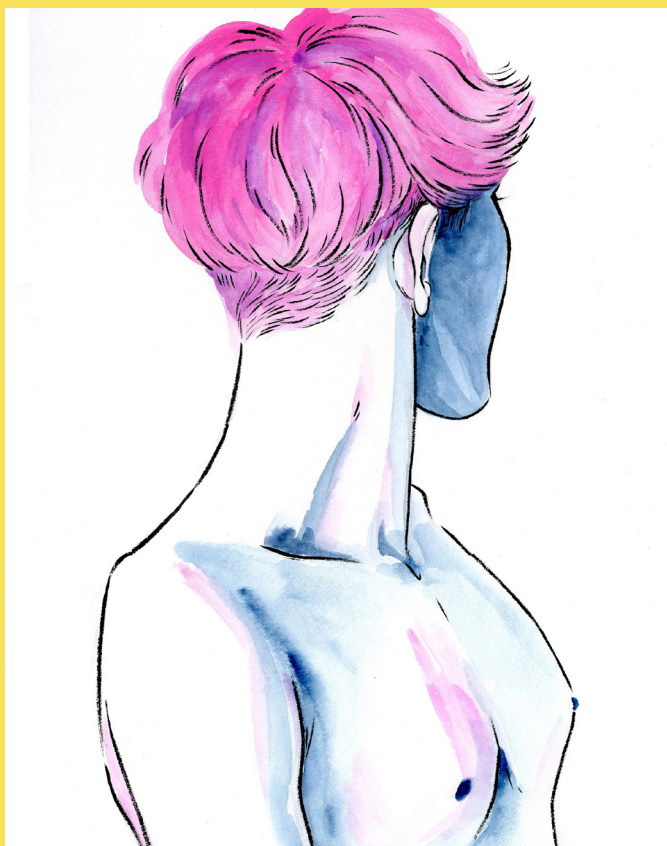
Most inspirational place I have been lately would have to be Bentsen Park. I like the whole ambiance and peaceful vibe you get just by walking through it. Sometimes I like to get disconnected from everything and just enjoy some alone time and appreciate nature.

Where is your art headed now. In terms of style, how have grown?

I like to think that my art is heading into a more mature stage; having life experiences such as success and failures humbles you as an artist. We all know that practice make perfect but if you don't go through stages in life there is no essence in the artwork itself.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

"Success is walking from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm" – I always remember this quote as a constant reminder that all the hard work would eventually pay off. It is better to try and fail at it, then not to try at all and regret it the rest of your life.



Inktober Day 23: Fashion Boy 25 "Pink Hair"

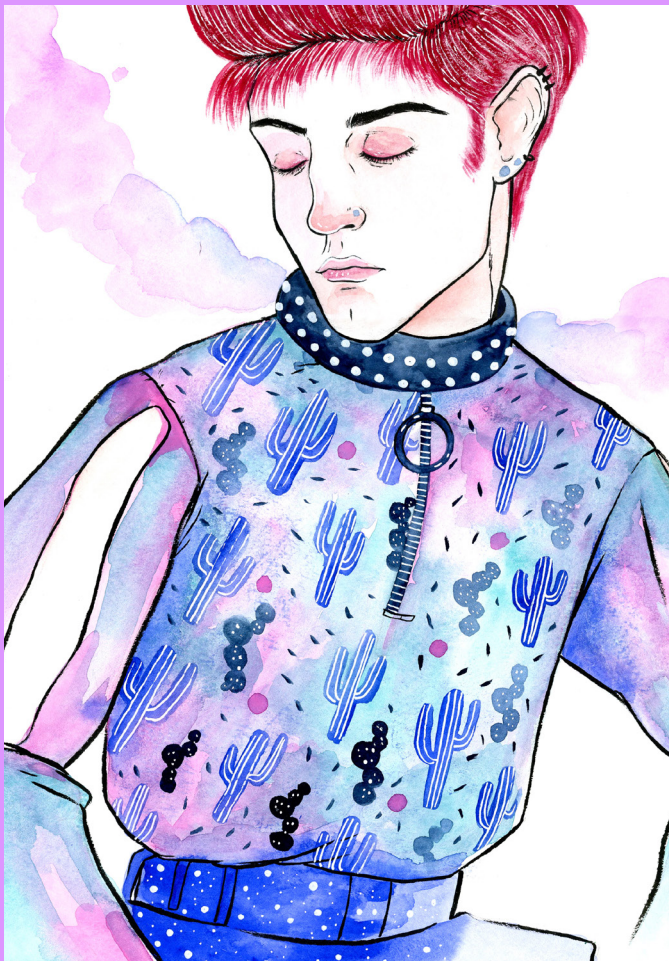


Inktober Day 8: Fashion Boy 10 "Pretty Aviator"

Professionally, what's your goal?

My goal in life is to be working as an in-house illustrator for a major magazine publication (preferably Vogue or the New York Times) where I am allowed to have creative freedom.

Also, owning a home in the country away from the big city and raising chickens with my partner.



Inktober Day 27: Fashion Boy 29 "Dreamy Cactus"



Inktober Day24: Fashion Boy 25 "Flower power"

You can find more of Jessie
Rodriguez' artwork on his Instagram:
www.instagram.com/jessiesupreme



"Head above water"

JESTER WEST

AND THE



SLUT GAME

An excerpt from The Man-Slut Chronicles

By Frank Lozano-Jaramillo

Graphics: Arael Meza

That weird summer before college seemed to go on forever. By then, the affair I'd been having with one of my high school instructors was pretty much over. Ordinarily, Mrs. Pendleton* wouldn't have minded me dating someone my own age, but when it turned out that my girlfriend's mom randomly and desperately confided to Mrs. Pendleton that I'd made a pass at her, things got weird.

Kelly's* mom actually kissed me back, though. For a while. I kissed her face, her lips and her neck in the dark hallway behind her kitchen, smelling this mixture of sweat and perfume and Chardonnay and cigarettes across her skin, across her hair. She stroked the back of my neck, losing herself, pulling me closer to her.

There's no telling what we might have done---but suddenly, we heard the low, mechanical rumble of the garage door booming through the wall behind us, and Kelly's mom caught herself all at once, pushing me away as she walked calmly but briskly to the refrigerator. She pulled out a bowl of Niagara grapes as I passed her, as I moved quickly back up the steps to Kelly's room, perching myself back in front of the paused Nintendo game.

A few minutes later, Kelly bounded up the steps and into the bedroom with me, throwing herself into my lap. She giggled and kissed me, running the ice cold bottle of Cherry Coke across my neck like a frozen finger, messing up my combination attack.

"I got your Coke," she snickered, trying to play keep away. "Did I take too long?"

Mrs. Pendleton was still friendly for a while, but she immediately stopped inviting me places. She would drive by and see me at my fake job doing "telemarketing" for a sham company, and we would drive off to make out briefly, enough to work me up--but then she would tell me she needed to bail all of a sudden, instructing me to call her later. When I would, she would act annoyed, as if I were interrupting her doing something more important.

It got to be a drag, so I started going out with Kelly

more often. I played the role of her boyfriend. We would go to the beach and smoke joints and drink all day while pretending to go to work. Then I got too tan to reasonably explain to my parents how I could look so good while working indoors all day, so I told them Kelly had a membership at a tanning salon and pretended to go there. Occasionally we would run into Erika*---Kelly's mom---and Erika and I would chat and make small talk, but mainly we would pretend nothing ever happened between us.

That summer before my freshman year at UT Austin was really nothing more than one game of pretend after another. Before long, I got really sick of it. I longed to be left alone to my own devices, without any direct parental influences. At first I just had a vague

desire to disappear, to just go missing; but then a real idea slowly started to emerge. It became clearer and clearer to me over the seemingly vast expanse of those three summer months that I had a mission. I was determined, resolute: When I go away, I must absolutely seize the opportunity to lose my fucking mind.

The Jester Complex at UT Austin had a reputation for being "The Party Center of the Universe." Jester West was considered "The Core," and the 12th floor at Jester West---where I was assigned--- was considered "The Nucleus."

In fact, both Jester West and East looked fairly dismal and imposing, twin buildings made of red brick, crafted to look like one massive insane asylum.

Right away I felt at home.

When the elevator doors split open, a brash wave of house music poured in, welcoming me to my new home as I stepped out into the 12th floor lobby.

A terrified older couple rushed past me into the elevator, looking harried, eager to leave.

There was a lot of horseplay. Lots of yelling and merriment and good-looking 18 year-olds swarming around each other. Dudes were giving girls ostrich rides down the hall, barely wearing clothes, screaming and laughing. Everybody's door was open, and people milled around aimlessly from room to

room, most clutching exercise bottles filled with ice and rum-drinks.

Huge Joy Division posters went up, Echo and The Bunnymen, Jack Nicholson's grinning face through an axe-chopped door. Everybody put up these black bumper-stickers with stark white letters stenciled in crudely, spelling out: SLACKER.

Seeing that my unidentified roommate hadn't arrived yet, I started to fish the key out of my pocket to unlock the door when I heard this girl's voice approach from down the hall, growing more hushed the closer she moved toward me.

"LOOK---HAVE YOU DONE 'THE SLUT GAME?'" SHE ASKED ME URGENTLY, FISHING THIS BOOKLET OF STAPLED PAGES OUT OF HER PURSE. SHE WROTE HER TELEPHONE NUMBER ON IT.

She whispered: "Oh he's gorgeous, but I just couldn't---" right before whomever she was with pushed her toward me. She slid against my door, looking up at me with these sweet, dreamy eyes as her friend giggled and continued on down the hall.

I wanted to laugh at this bold gesture, but I really couldn't bring myself to. She was so pretty, and I instantly felt like I recognized her from dreams I've had. The kind of dreams that just vanish when you come out of sleep. The dreams that flash off past the point of memory. I longed to see her every morning when I woke up. Irrational desires leapt all across me and I felt an ache in my chest. It was literally love at first sight, and when she blinked and giggled, saying "Hi" in that scratchy, Kirstie Alley-voice, I lost all control and just kissed her.

Her lips and her soft little tongue tasted like Red Hots and she groaned weakly as she reached up to stroke my hair, tiptoeing to reach up and kiss my neck.

"You smell like a God," she whispered. "What are you wearing?"

"Calvin Klein," I answered hastily, finding her lips again. Her tongue darted into my mouth, licking the edges of my teeth, flicking against the tip of my tongue. "Obsession for Men."

"Abigail Kaplan! It's time to motor!"

"Oh God," her lips actually trembled when she pulled away, calling out to her friend in her sexy, scratchy voice: "I'll be there in a minute!"

I kissed her again, dropping my backpack at my feet. She laughed and groaned at the same time, not wanting to leave. I didn't want her to leave either.

"Abbey!"

"I've got to go," she sighed, asking: "What's your name?"

"Paul," I answered her, asking her: "Why do you have to go?"

"Long story," she bit her lip, kissing me quickly. "I'll be back Sunday."

"Sunday?"

"I'm leaving, Abbey. See you in Houston."

"Look---have you done 'The Slut Game?'" she asked me urgently, fishing this booklet of stapled pages out of her purse. She wrote her telephone number on it.

"The Slut Game?" I looked at the booklet curiously. Typed in capital letters at the top of the first page of what looked like a questionnaire was the title: THE SLUT GAME.

"Take it, do it," she urged, pressing the booklet into my chest, kissing me, leaving. "I want to see what I'm getting myself into."

Later on that first night at the dorm, I met my next door neighbor Jack LaRusso*, this doe-eyed Italian kid who played sax and was as thirsty for beer as I was. He asked to bum a smoke, and I tossed him this extra pack of Marlboros I'd just bought, telling him to get me back later. Taken with my generosity,

Jack invited me into his room to help him kill a case of Milwaukee's Best beer that filled the entirety of his mini-fridge. Within an hour, we'd become best friends. Halfway finished with what was in the fridge, we decided to get rowdy and jam. I played guitar, so I brought over my Gibson and my Marshall and we decided to try busking just for shits and giggles. We set an upturned top hat outside his door next to a sign that had the words THIRSTY MUSICIANS written in magic marker.

I played "Foxy Lady" all slow and psychedelic with this Univibe effect while he wailed away Coltrane-style with his sax. Some people laughed and waved us off, but then all of a sudden we looked up and there was a small crowd standing around the doorway, checking us out, throwing money in the top hat.

We had made \$17 in change and singles when Jack's foppish, red-headed roommate, Christian*, barreled through the crowd and into the room. He was attached

to this hot girl in a tank-top and Daisy-dukes, sucking on her tongue drunkenly as she gripped his skinny ass and threw him onto the bed, mounting him as she flung her shirt off her body, unhooking the clasp of her strapless bra.

Jack and I didn't stop playing, and the people who'd stopped at the open door to watch us play all of a sudden started getting a totally different kind of show.

Christian's girl peeled his jersey up to his neck, exposing his skinny abdomen, his taut, hairless chest, and started licking it, sucking on his nipples as she unsnapped his button-fly expertly. He arched his back, crossing his arms above his head as he





moaned, eyes pressed shut, lifting his ass so the girl could peel his Guess jeans down his bony hips, exposing his bright orange pubes.

Some girls in the doorway left when his long thick cock jutted up out from underneath his grey Calvins suddenly, but they were quickly replaced when two or three more stepped cautiously but curiously further into the room along with several dudes.

I started playing a slow 12-bar blues riff and Jack laughed, changing it up to follow me on the sax, blowing smooth, sensual licks that punctuated the goings-on, like a porn soundtrack. The girl on top of Christian didn't seem concerned in the slightest. To her, we didn't exist.

She licked her palms and wrapped both of them around Christian's cock tightly, stroking it slowly but firmly, whispering things to him as he moaned and writhed around drunkenly on the thin bunk mattress. All at once she dove down, holding his hips still as she took his 10-inch dick into her mouth, down into her throat quickly, easily, pressing her lips flush against his pubes, pulling her mouth back up again, grinning up at him, spitting on the tip messily before

deep-throating him again.

Jack stopped playing and collapsed back on his own bunk with this sax dangling from its tether around his neck, kind of looking stunned as more co-eds pushed into the room to watch.

I plucked quiet, bassy notes in a calm progression, not wanting to break the vibe, watching the display with rapt attention. Just like everyone else.

Suddenly Christian gasped and reached up to clasp his fingers haphazardly across the corner of his desk, which doubled as a headboard. A pen fell onto the tiled floor as he let out a series of urgent wails, air hissing between his teeth as he inhaled wetly. The girl slid both of her hands underneath his buttocks, gripping him forward as she pushed her face into his pelvis, nodding her head in quick movements as he started to come, jerking his hips forward to fuck her mouth in hard, slow strokes.

It poured out across his pubes from the corners of her mouth, spurting out in thick sheets every time she pulled her mouth tightly up his shaft, sucking on the head of his cock before diving down again, taking his significant length into her throat. She made soft choking sounds, but would pull him out from between her lips and giggle, swallowing to clear her throat, giggling some more, squeezing the last of it out of him.

Christian's left arm was draped over his eyes, making him look like a car accident victim, and when the girl whispered up at him, calling him, he started to snore loudly.

The weird, quiet tension that had built up in the room suddenly unsnapped, like a loose rubber band, and one girl started to snicker, then another, and then the girl on top of Christian turned around and laughed along with them, jerking her thumb at him comically. Jack blew a barrage of exaggerated notes on his sax, and this tore everyone up so that a couple of spectators actually fell onto the floor.

The commotion had no effect on Christian. He snored and snored.

Shaking her head in stunned amazement, the girl got up, using Christian's white Polo V-neck to wipe

off her face, her hands. She flung the lousy shirt at him there on the bed, the wet and fouled garment solidly landing all over his arm and face. The snores continued on relentlessly.

"Stains to explain!" Some dude in the small crowd bellowed, sending everyone into hysterics once again. Picking themselves off the floor, the crowd started out into the hallway, giggling and whispering, off to do the next thing.

"Can I have a sip of this?" Christian's girl asked, standing in front of me as she put her bra back on, nodding at my beer.

"Go on, yeah," I nodded, switching back to "Foxy Lady," leaning back against Jack's headrest, playing the song quietly. I looked over at Jack, who was standing in the hallway, talking intently to two blonde girls who claimed they'd met him at a show in Dallas. When I looked back at Christian's girl, she was watching me out of the corner of her eye, head tilted back to drain the half-full can of Beast.

Finishing the beer, she looked at me thoughtfully for a moment.

"I'm Jamie*," she said, leaning forward to place the empty can back on the table.

"Hi, Jamie," I replied, watching her tuck her hair behind her ear as she went back to looking at me thoughtfully. I kept playing quietly as I stared into her smooth and tan face, flushed and beautiful. We kept looking at each other and all at once the silence turned awkward. She rolled her eyes at me, shaking her head, pursing her lips. Connecting the dots, I laughed nervously, quickly, suddenly aware she was waiting for me to finish the introduction.

"Oh...I'm Paul," I said, finishing, feeling embarrassed, clearing my throat, saying, "Hi."

She coiled a long strand of her light brown hair around her finger dreamily. She gazed at me there for a long time before she slowly leaning forward to whisper into my ear: "I like the way you play."

Then she kissed me on the lips and left, tossing a handful of Ecstasy tabs into the top hat before sidling up behind one of Jack's blondes, sliding her hands down both the girl's front pockets, kissing her, taking her hand, and disappearing down the hallway with her.

*Names have been changed to protect identities

TO BE CONTINUED

On "The Man-Slut Chronicles" blog @ Wordpress
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SCIEN



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY





HERO
OF
THE RIO
GRANDE



“ALL OF THESE PATHOGENS, ALL THIS BACTERIA, OR PESTICIDE THEY GO INTO THE RUNOFF AFTER A STORM EVENT. THEY ALL KIND OF GATHER AND THEY FLOW INTO THE RIVER. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM BECAUSE OUR MAIN DRINKING WATER SOURCE IS THE RIO GRANDE.”

Engineering professor tackles water quality issues in RGV

By Jose Pena

Photos: Arael Meza

Jungseok Ho doesn't wear a cape. He does not possess super powers like heroes in books or film. At the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, this unsung hero sits at his desk surrounded by stacks of documents. With the power of research, he aims to tackle the bacteria issues plaguing local water resources.

Since his arrival to the Valley in 2010 Ho, an assistant professor for the Civil Engineering Department at UTRGV, has focused on researching way to improve water quality for the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

“The most significant problem in the Valley is water quality,” Ho said. “It's got lots of bacteria and bacteria-related issues. So I was very interested in these kinds of problems affecting the river.”

Ho moved from South Korea to the United States in 1999. Having earned his bachelor's and master's degree in civil engineering, he moved to New Mexico in 2006 where he worked toward completing his doctoral degree. It was there that his research to clean the Rio Grande River began. “In New Mexico, it's the same Rio Grande,” the assistant professor said. “Where I was living, the city of Albuquerque, they use a lot of water from the river. The problem in the upper-level was sediment deposits. But now, down here on the downstream of the river, the problem isn't sediment; it's bacteria.”

The two issues, however, seem to have a connection. Ho described how dirty water from states located along the river makes its way down to the Valley.

“We have bad water quality because the states further up north have already used much of the water,” the South Korea native said. “And then after they use it, they're just dumping it back. Even though they clean up the water before that dumping, it does not change the fact that it has been used.”

But Valley residents are not free of fault. Local farmers and agriculture companies have used harmful chemicals that end up flowing into the river, further exacerbating the problem.

“Water quality is a huge issue because lots of waste in the

Valley comes from agricultural uses,” Ho said. “All of these pathogens, all this bacteria, or pesticide they go into the runoff after a storm event. They all kind of gather and they flow into the river. This is a significant problem because our main drinking water source is the Rio Grande.”

As Ho continues to study the issues affecting the river, his students focus on a different threat facing the Valley.

Adan Garza, a research assistant for the civil engineering department, has been working with Ho on developing systems that would help predict how hurricanes might affect the Valley and its residents.

“We’re working on a hydrodynamic model. A hurricane tracking model,” Garza said. “I’ve been working with him on this for about two years now.”

A model like this would be especially beneficial to people living in coastal areas along the Gulf of Mexico.

“So anytime a hurricane occurs you get about a one meter tide increase,” the civil engineering major said. “That is what we call a storm surge. By us being able to predict how high a storm surge will be, we can find out what areas will flood more significantly. In coastal areas like Cameron County, it helps avoid natural disasters.”

While developing the hydrodynamic model, Garza has had the opportunity to work closely with Ho.

“Working with Dr. Ho has been really great,” Garza said. “He really cares about you. He’s always there for career advice. He just lets you go at a problem and learn as you go. He’s not holding your hand the whole time. He guides you on how to figure things out, but doesn’t give you the solution directly.”

Cronos Oros, a civil engineering student, echoed Garza’s sentiment.

“I think he’s a great teacher,” Oros said. “Probably one of the best in the Civil Engineering Department. I can definitely say that it is a good thing we have Dr. Ho here in the Valley. Together, Ho and his sidekicks continue to research ways to improve the quality of life in the Valley. And even though Ho might not possess the superpower to exterminate waterborne bacteria with a flick of his finger, his passion to solve problems will endure through the work of his students for generations to come.”



Professor Jungseok Ho in the UTRGV engineering lab working closely with students to test the water’s HP levels.



Dr. Uddin and the **TECHNOLOGICAL** Dream-shirt

Refining Energy by Jared Jaksik Photo courtesy of Jared Jaksik

A UTRGV science professor is close to creating what some would consider the shirt of our dreams: self-cleaning, protecting the wearer from harmful UV rays, and the front pocket will charge your smartphone.

The Surface and Interface Science lab led by Dr. M. Jasim Uddin is concerned with the development of fabric that has self cleaning, anti-microbial, and anti-radiation properties.

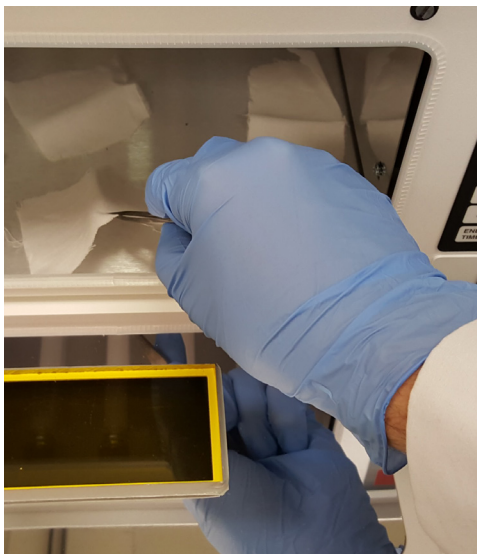
Fiber-type dye-sensitized solar cells, which convert sunlight into electricity, will be sewn into the fabric to provide integrated electrical power generation. The team is also researching piezoelectric and triboelectric materials that generate electricity when placed under physical or frictional stress, such as when being pressed down on or wrinkled, to find new efficient ways to generate power.

One of the most effective ways to convert solar energy into electricity is by using photovoltaic cells which convert visible, UV, and infrared radiation into a direct current, much like that of a battery, for electrical power. Solar cells based on crystalline silicon have been under development for the last six decades in other countries such as Australia and China and are now widely commercialized, but possibilities to increase their performance is limited.

An alternative to traditional silicon-based solar cells are new third generation photovoltaic devices, which work by using photons (provided by sunlight) to excite negatively charged electrons in a semiconductive material. This would leave behind a positively charged electron hole where the electron used to be. However the electron and the hole remain bound together. Special materials are then used to separate the electron-hole pair and allow the opposite charges to migrate to separate electrodes and provide electrical current.

International graduate student Istiak Hussain, who has been working under Uddin as a research assistant since January, believes the search for renewable energy is a priority at The Surface and interface Science lab.

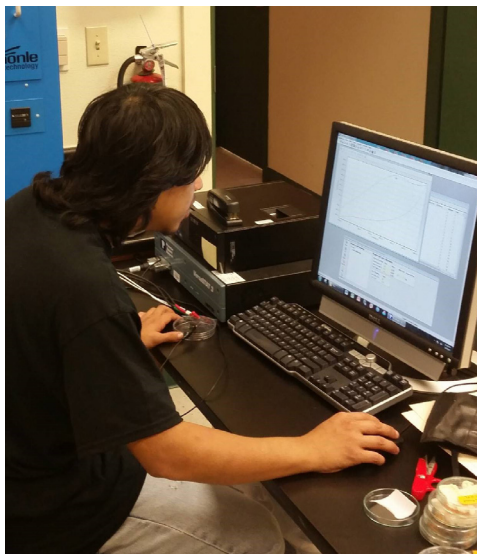




"Harnessing these excited electrons and passing them through a circuit effectively generates electricity," Hussain said. "Discovering efficient, practical, and environmentally friendly ways to harness solar energy is what we're researching and developing in our lab."

Photovoltaic devices have been developed from a variety of materials, including organic (carbon and hydrogen containing) and hybrid (carbon and hydrogen containing materials integrated with inorganic materials). Among these materials, perovskites (organic-inorganic) have reached top position within the past five years. This is due to the substantial improvement in the amount of light actually being converted to electricity in the cells, and comparatively low processing costs.

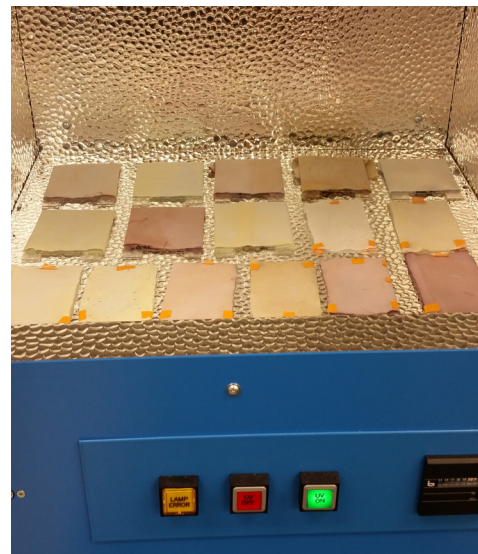
"[We work] with green and efficient materials for renewable energy to challenge the future energy crisis," Hussain said. "Researchers today seek to utilize solar radiation directly by converting it into useful heat or electricity, which can be commercially used."



Unlike most research programs, the Surface and Interface Surface Lab allows undergraduate students to help out. Isaac Martinez, a chemistry major, is one of them.

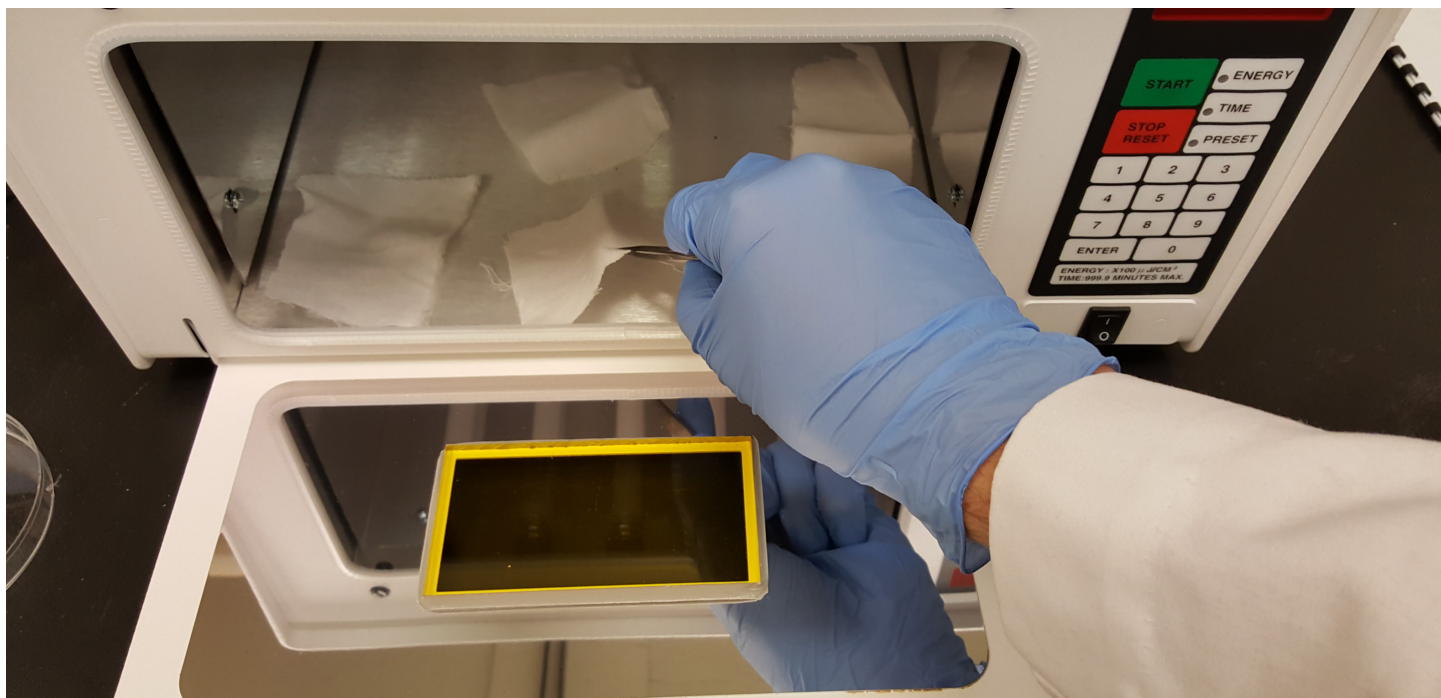
"I always knew that I needed research experience on my resume for graduate school, however approaching professors about it was always crushingly intimidating," Martinez said. "All I did was approach my organic chemistry professor one day, briefly explained my future goals and that I was a chemistry major, and was immediately invited to visit his research group. I'm sure many students have the same problem I initially had when approaching professors. However, I believe that the first step to getting into research is realizing that most professors aren't so mean as to totally blow you off and refuse to help if you ask about research. You just need to be sincere in your interest and request."

The lab's principal investigator, Mohammed J. Uddin, began the project in September 2015 in an effort to combat our country's harmful dependence on fossil fuels.



He is inspired by the principles put forth by Dr. Okenwa Okoli, the Associate Director of Florida State University's High-Performance Materials Institute, who he quotes as saying "Research should strive toward finding practical solutions for day-to-day problems." Uddin is concerned with the danger to our society if we continue to rely on non-renewable energy.

"We are running out of our fossil fuel reserve. We need a sustainable source of alternate and green energy," Uddin said. "Solar energy shows promise to become far more than a mere stopgap measure to escape from the present environmental crisis caused by fossil fuels. Selective multifunctional materials are considered as nanomachines to produce energy with high reaction selectivity. I envision future solar energy and sustainable clean fuel production based on artificial photosynthesis and the discovery of functional storage materials for aerospace, automotive and daily life applications."



“[WE WORK] WITH GREEN AND EFFICIENT MATERIALS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY TO CHALLENGE THE FUTURE ENERGY CRISIS,” HUSSAIN SAID.



A close-up photograph of a large, dark, metallic industrial component, likely a wheel or bearing assembly, with a complex circular structure and visible bolts. The image is used as a background for the title text.

WHEELS AND BEARINGS

UTRGV engineers collecting energy to improve railways
By Brianna Navarro • Photos: Gustavo Huerta

The University Transportation Center for Railway Safety (UTCRS) is working to help improve safety on railways. They aim to improve the overall efficiency of the railways and prevent costly derailments and delays in the future.

The project is led by Dr. Heinrich Foltz, with the help of Dr. Constantine Tarawneh and Jazmin Ley from the mechanical engineering department.

The director of UTCRS, Tarawneh, has emphasized that the project's main interest lies with energy harvesting.

"What we're using is a material that is called Terfenol-D," Tarawneh said. "This material, when you apply a load to it, it generates a magnetic field and if you place a setup that has magnets, you can take advantage of this magnetic field and turn it into an electric field that can power small electronics."

Bearings are an integral component of the railcar system. The wheels are not attached to the cars, rather the train's wheels and bearings are attached to axles. The railcar sits on top of the axles and is supported by the bearings. The bearings are able to handle the weight of the car, but allow free rotation of the axles and wheels so that the train may travel. The status of the bearing is important because if a bearing becomes damaged, it may not allow rotation of the wheel, which can cause the train to derail.

To help with their research, the U.S. Department of Transportation's University Transportation Center granted the engineering department \$63,417; while UTRGV gave \$33,423 in cost share funds for a total of \$96,840. This project will provide a new and innovative way to use metals to power electronics.

The team is trying to design sensors that can go on top of each bearing and monitor temperature, vibration and load. However, the sensors require a great deal of power. Batteries could be used, but the bearings are integral to alerting engineers of any problems with the railways. A normal battery, with a lifetime of one or two years, is not efficient for the job.

"Once the lifetime depletes, then you have to hunt down that specific bearing, that specific train, and remove the battery," Tarawneh said.



Instead of using a regular battery the mechanical engineering team will use the Terfenol-D material, which will create power with the help of the train vibrations.

“So in reality you have your sensors, and as long as your train is moving, which is what we care about: monitoring the vibration and the temperature,” the mechanical engineering professor said. “Then you get power.”

THE BEARINGS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE OVERALL EFFICIENCY OF THE RAILWAYS.

Concerned with the functionality of the concept, the team put the theory into practice. Graduate research assistant Ryan Lechtenberg created a fixture and generated an electromagnetic field, or a magnet created by using an electric current. Using magnets and an inductance coil they were able to convert it into an electric field and get power.

Working closely with mechanical engineering undergraduate Jacob Bensen, Lechtenberg had to find a way to put the Terfenol-D in key locations. They had to be careful so that the magnets would not be disrupted by the train’s vibrations. Principal investigator, Heinrich Foltz, feels that the bearings play a crucial role in the overall efficiency of the railways.

“Failures in bearings can cause stoppages and other hazards,” Foltz said. “Even when there is no loss of life or property there are high costs in operating time and replacement of damaged parts.”

The UTCRS research team will be able to sense damage done to the bearing before it becomes dangerous, that way when there is some damage, it can be fixed during routine maintenance. Sensors are always needed to monitor the condition of the bearings. Foltz would like to modify the system to make it easier for the sensors to power themselves.

“Ideally, they should work without wires,” Foltz said. “We are looking at using magnetostrictive materials.”

It would also be a hassle to have personnel going to every wheel to change the batteries. So, the plan is to have a sensor that can power itself through harvesting energy. Heat flow or vibration are different ways to harvest energy.

Magnetostrictive materials are made from rare earth metals and change their shape under the influence of an external magnetic field; they can be a bit costly, so making sure the materials are taken care of from any damages or deformations is essential. When a force is applied, magnetostrictive materials can change their magnetic properties, and that change will be used to extract electrical energy.

“Some other energy harvesting technology ends up getting used to power sensors,” the electrical engineering professor said. “There is no doubt that wireless sensors are going to be critical for improving transportation safety.”

Transportation safety evidently affects everyone, and this team hopes to make a difference.

“On a local basis, the team of student researchers working on this project are learning about magnetic materials, precision fabrication, experimental techniques and other research methods,” Foltz said. “It’s excellent training for either industry or graduate school.”

“In other words, the motion of the railcar will cause deformation on a metal, and this metal will produce power,” Ley said. “The metal will be used as a power source to monitor thermal, vibrational and loading effects on suspension components. The capacity for continuous monitoring in railcars will in turn provide a safer passage for railcars that utilize this system.”

The culmination of the ambitious two-year project is a prototype railcar component that harvests energy. The project will help the community by not only making railcar maintenance easier to schedule, but also safer and less expensive.

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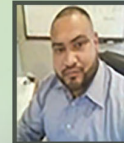
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DOCTORS IN THE MACHINE

The new School of Medicine

By Kaila Contreras • Photos: Arael Meza

Inside the UTRGV School of Medicine, they have their own student store to buy books and other supplies, a bistro, library, admissions and registration office, finance and administration office along with classrooms and laboratories specifically equipped with medical supplies for students to do their assignments. They even have their own Student Government Association.

Composed of 55 students, the UTRGV School of Medicine is home to many RGV natives as well as Texas and out-of-state residents all wanting to make their career goal a reality.

Originally from Brownsville, Jared Eaves graduated from UT Austin in spring 2016 with a bachelor's in marketing and a minor in biology. Before being accepted into the School of Medicine, Eaves considered obtaining a master's at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth. He made this decision because he wasn't accepted to any medical school in Texas.

"I was actually driving in the car with a friend and the phone rang. I usually don't answer calls that I don't

know," Eaves said. "I saw the 956 [area code] and I was just like 'It's probably just like some random person calling.' I had my friend [with me] and asked 'hey can you look up this number on Google?' That's usually what I do and it said UTRGV School of Medicine. I was like 'oh crap!' and I called back right away and [Betty Monfort] answered. She was like 'do you still want to be a doctor?' and I was like 'of course! I worked really hard for this.'"

Eaves explained the difference between the master's program at UNT and the medical program here at UTRGV.

"The [UNT] program is considered to be one to better prepare you for medical, dental, and PA [Physician Assistant] school. When you complete the program, you receive your master's degree in Medical Sciences. Here at UTRGV, we have the full-fledged medical degree program," Eaves said. "After four years, all of us in the [UTRGV] first class will be an M.D. and we will go through a residency program in our medical field of choice."

On July 23, the UTRGV School of Medicine held its first White Coat Ceremony at the medical school where students were presented with their white coats and took the Hippocratic Oath, which stated the

obligations and proper conduct of doctors.

Students who are interested in applying to any medical school in Texas, must complete an application to the Texas Medical & Dental Schools Application Service. Once students have uploaded the required documentation to the application service, it will then send the information to every medical or dental school the student is matched with. Students wait to see what school the application service matches them with. Since the application service matches the student with the school, the student has no say where they want to apply to.

The UTRGV School of Medicine does not require a minimum GPA or Medical College Admission Test score. A minimum grade of a C is required in English, Biological Sciences, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Physics and Statistics to be considered for admission. The student must also have completed 90 credit hours, completed a second application and complete all aspects of the Essential Abilities and Technical Standards. This is to ensure all medical students complete the curriculum and develop personal attributes required by faculty.

While getting the medical school to its final stages,

a total of 2,784 applications have been submitted to hopefully be part of the medical school's inaugural Class of 2020. From those applications, only 226 students were called to be interviewed. Out of 55 students who were accepted, 24 percent graduated from either UT Brownsville, UT Pan American or UT Rio Grande Valley.

Eaves was inspired to pursue a career in medicine because of his mother and grandmother both fell ill.

"When I was in high school, my grandma was diagnosed with [colon] cancer and I would go with her to her appointments in Harlingen quite a bit," Eaves said. "Also, my mom has Rheumatoid Arthritis and I would always go with her to her appointments in Houston. I don't want to say I've always been around it, but I definitely had my times where I've been in contact with medicine and it's always something I've really liked."

UT Brownsville alumnus Ramiro Tovar was part of the "Legacy Commencement" also known as UTB's last graduating class of spring 2015 with a bachelor's in biomedical science. Originally from Brownsville, Tovar's inspiration to pursue a medical career occurred when he was 8 years old when one of his



aunts had a near death experience. With no money to pay for surgery, a doctor from Monterrey offered to do the surgery for free.

“That was one of the motivating factors,” Tovar said. “You see that as a kid, this random guy walks in and says ‘Hey, I’m going to save a life’ and bam he did it and I said ‘Hey, I kind of want to be like that guy.’”

Although most of these inaugural students are Texas natives, there are some out-of-state students who were just as eager to enroll in the UTRGV School of Medicine. Courtney Remington from Charlottesville, Va. graduated from James Madison University in 2007 with a bachelor’s in health sciences. In 2013, Remington decided to move to the music capital of the world aka Austin, Texas to work for the city as an emergency medical technician.

“It was fun to push myself to get out of my comfort zone,” the Virginia native said.

When she moved to Austin, she decided to take EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] courses to help her better prepare for the Medical College Admission Test. This is a multiple choice exam for medical school admission offices to decide which students to accept based on problem solving, critical thinking and knowledge of natural, behavioral and social sciences.

“A lot of what [EMT’s] do isn’t what you think of [like on TV],” Remington said. “A lot of it is community health work, ... they call for a stubbed toe or ‘My throat hurts,’ something along those lines where you would see a primary care physician for.”

Remington tried to steer clear of that path but finally decided to pursue it after college.

“I think I rebelled against doing it for a while because my dad is a dentist and I didn’t really want to follow in his footsteps,” the former EMT said. “But then doing some shadowing and the EMT work, I realized that was really suited for me and what I saw myself doing.”





She chose to start her medical career off as an EMT to get some hands on experience.

"I knew I wanted to be involved in health care and had been considering medical school," Remington said. "Because medical school is such a commitment, I wanted to get some hands on experience to ensure I knew at least in some way what I was getting myself into."

"THIS NEW UNIVERSITY AND MEDICAL SCHOOL WILL FOREVER TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN."

Many who choose a career in medicine have accepted the fact that they will be working in a stressful environment trying to save as many lives as they can. Eaves said he and the rest of the medical students are taught to have positive impacts on their patients.

Being a medical professional, one has to understand that sometimes not everyone can be saved.

"Physician-assisted suicide is a topic of major debate in the field of medicine - specifically at this moment in time," Eaves said. "There are only a few states in our country that have adopted legal physician-assisted suicide, and there are pros and cons to the idea. One pro includes the idea that patients and their families can reduce the amount of physical, emotional, and financial stress."

Not to be confused with euthanasia, pulling the plug on a life support patient who is comatose or in a vegetative state, physician-assisted suicide is defined as a doctor providing their patient with the information or means to voluntarily end their own life - usually with an injection of lethal drugs.

"Many also believe that physician-assisted suicide is a way for patients to pass with dignity," Eaves said. "[Others say] that it is against the tenets of

the Hippocratic Oath and some even believe that it decreases the value of human life. As student doctors, we are often primed to believe that the only way we'll be successful in our careers is if we cure disease. In reality, not every patient can be cured of a disease or saved from a medical tragedy."

While some doctors do work in stressful environments such as the ER, there are some medical professionals who work outside the hospital setting and work a different amount of hours.

"Some specialties are not in the hospital and generally work 'normal' hours, whereas others work on shifts like emergency medicine," Remington said.

Bringing the UTRGV School of Medicine was not only an effort from the Rio Grande Valley but from the University of Texas System as well. Weslaco native and former UT System Board of Regents Vice Chairman Gene Powell has pushed for both the creation of UTRGV and the School of Medicine.

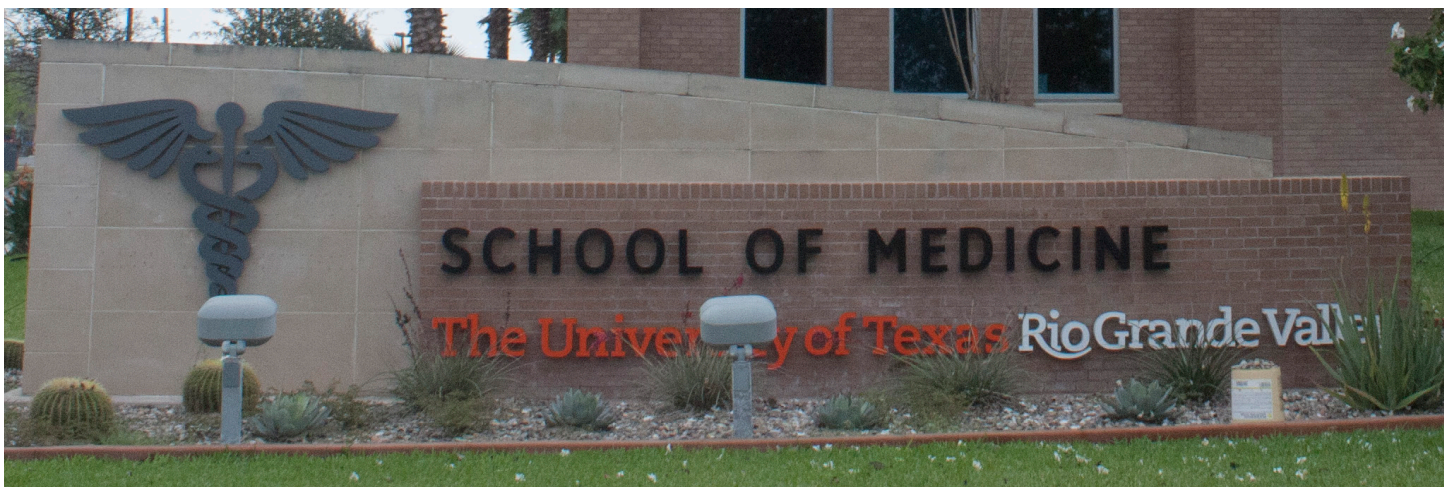
According to a UT System press release, on Aug. 26, 2014, the University of Texas System along with other South Texas officials celebrated the opening of the medical school. The cities of Edinburg, McAllen, Mission and Pharr signed an agreement to provide

\$50 million for the next 10 years for medical training operations.

"This new university and medical school will forever transform the lives of our children and grandchildren," Powell said in the ceremony. "Those who have come before us and wanted the best for this magnificent part of Texas."

As the Rio Grande Valley continues to grow, there can be an endless amount of possibilities of what may come next. Even though the valley is still holding on to its strong Mexican-American roots, it's slowly adapting to new opportunities for future generations.

"UTRGV [School of Medicine] is a new school, it's close to home for me which is really important," Eaves said. "My family is really important to me. Not only that, the community here means more [to me] than any community I know of in the United States. ... I really wanted to be part of something that started for the betterment of other people; especially those people here [in the Rio Grande Valley]."





AGAINST -THE-HERD

Encouraging the pursuit of STEM degrees

By Jacob Salinas • Photos: Arael Meza

The eldest daughter of a seamstress and deliveryman, Karen Lozano came from humble beginnings in Monterrey, Mexico. Despite that, she was always guaranteed an education.

“Education was very important to my parents,” Lozano said. “They had me in private schools all the time and sometimes a large percentage of our income was going into our education. My parents would have sacrificed anything to go to school.”

When the time came for her to go to college her family worried about what she was going to study. While she had the aptitude to study mechanical engineering, she was generally discouraged from doing so simply because successful women in the field are rare. However, it was the words of her mother that helped push her in the right direction.

“‘Is it written somewhere that mechanical engineering isn’t for girls,’ my mother said. ‘If we’re going to support you during college, don’t follow the herd,’” Lozano said.

She took that advice to heart. When graduating from Universidad de Monterrey in 1993 she was the only woman in her field and the fifth woman from her university to graduate with a degree in mechanical engineering in 25 years. Seven years later upon receiving her PhD from Rice University, she was the first Mexican woman in 87 years to graduate with that degree. She was also the fifth woman to graduate from the department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science at Rice.

In 2000, she was the first woman hired in the engineering department at the former University of Texas Pan American. She is the founder and director of UTRGV’s Nanotechnology Center of Excellence.

And the accolades don’t stop there. She was received the University of Texas Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award in 2013. Two years later, in 2015, Great Minds in STEM named her Engineer of the Year. Still, Lozano’s primary focus is to help her students.

“Being at a university doesn’t mean you have to focus

on only your students,” Lozano said. “But you can have an impact on many other students.”

The director of P-156 Outreach, Barbara Garza, felt that working with Lozano was an honor and a privilege. Garza worked with Lozano for over two

education of the community, which explains why she does a lot of community workshops for kids,” Rodriguez said. “She has always encouraged us to share the knowledge that we have gained.” Lozano believes she has a responsibility give her students more than lecture. She strives to also

“SHE IS A ROLE MODEL. SHE CARES A LOT ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF THE COMMUNITY.”

years in STEM-based summer camps for youth.

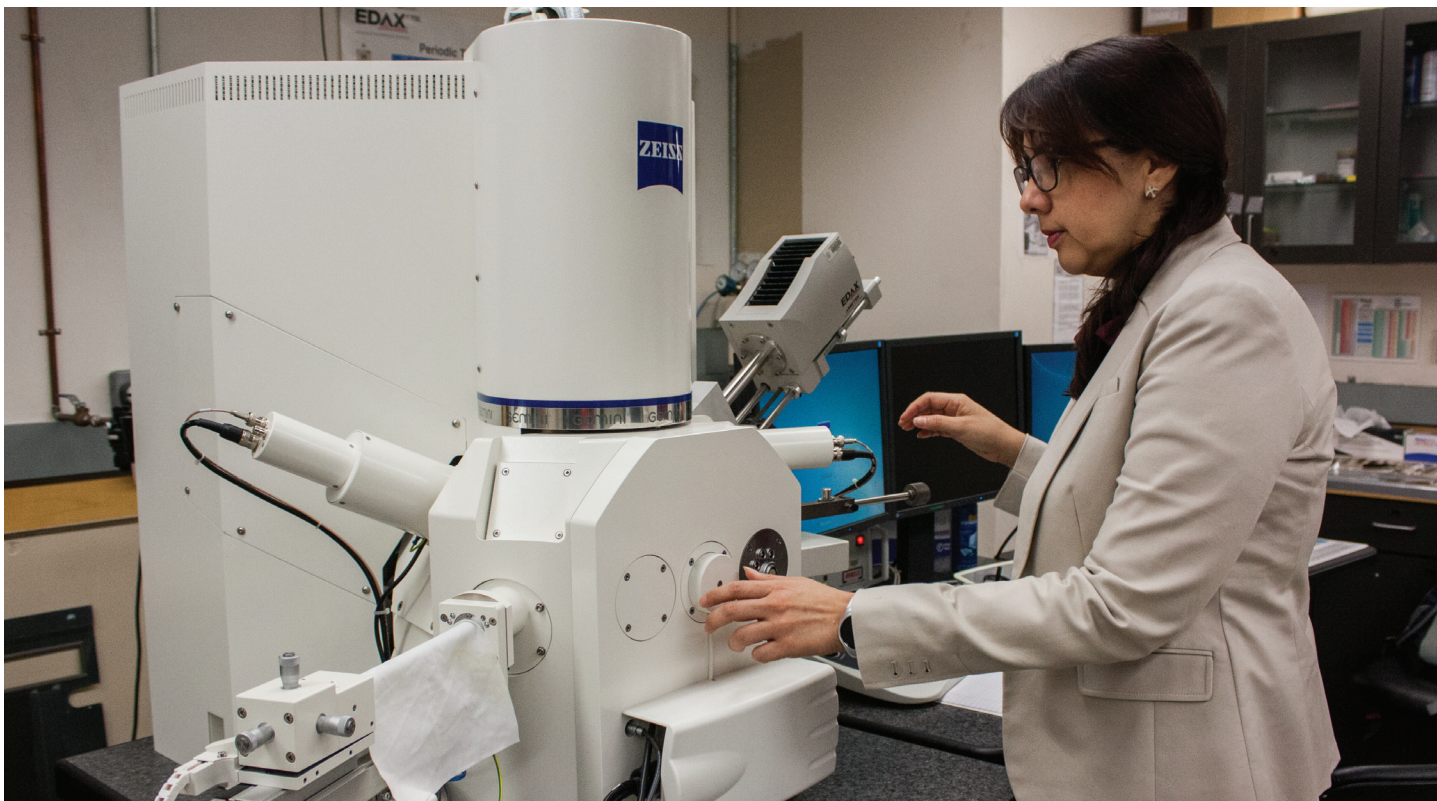
“She is just so empowering,” Garza said. “Her own passions for her study and research can make you sit and listen to her all day; she shares the importance of why people should pursue a degree in STEM.”

It’s this type of passion that has enamored Lozano’s students to look up to her and to spread the knowledge that they have learned. According to Astrid Rodriguez, a graduate student at UTRGV, the only word to describe her is exceptional.

“She is a role model. She cares a lot about the

create a positive environment for them to learn in as they move forward toward the path of innovation. Lozano even went as far as creating her own YouTube channel to help inspire the wider public about the sciences.

“I looked at YouTube and they showed the experiments, but they didn’t explain the science behind what just happened. So, the idea behind ‘Karen’s Lab’ is to give the students scientific knowledge behind simple science principles,” Lozano said. “Because knowledge is power and if you don’t have knowledge, the solution to the problem might pass by and you won’t know that it did.”



Lozano loading nanofiber samples in the Field emission scanning electron microscope.



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UTRGV's Rocket Launchers club
By Mark Moreno • Photos: Mark Moreno

Ever since she was a little girl, Alexandra Alaniz was intrigued by outer space. In 2015 she met Ricardo Ramirez, an advisor for the Office of UTRGV Career Center, who encouraged her to start a rocket club on the Edinburg campus.

"I did mention to her that there was going to be a new company moving down to the Valley, which was SpaceX," Ramirez said. "It would be a good tie-in, if the company comes to recruit here, for them to have that kind of background."

Alaniz loved the idea. She and Justin Osorio, the soon to be vice-president of the club, made sure to attend a SpaceX information session. The SpaceX representatives gave advice and information about the project coming to the Rio Grande Valley. With this information in hand Alaniz began the Rocket Launchers club.

Since it was a new organization Ramirez walked Alaniz through the founding process. He made sure she had all the paperwork, the by-laws and an account.

In the fall of 2015, while Alaniz was doing an internship out of state, Osorio took control of the club.

"Our first semester, we didn't do anything rocket related; all we did was recruit and research," Osorio said. "By the time Alex came back 10 students joined. It went from one to 10 in the semester she was gone."

Alaniz returned in December of 2015. The members of Rocket Launchers met at the McAllen Public Library around three times a week during the winter break to brainstorm for the club.

When the spring semester began, Osorio and Alaniz used their own money to begin purchasing items a little at a time. The club members began building the rocket after studying other professional rockets online, watching how-to YouTube videos and seeing what would best fit their potential rocket.

"Pretty much, we didn't know what we were doing. It was like monkey see, monkey do," the vice president said. "We were researching to see how the other colleges made their rockets and we see this rocket did this and did this well or did this bad."

As the founding president of Rocket Launchers, Alaniz works directly with university faculty. Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Choutapalli,



helps the club on the technical aspects of the club. Ramirez, meanwhile, continues to assist with the management and business side. Alaniz overlooks all aspects of the club as well as the building process for the rocket.

"I make sure that things run smoothly, that we're on track, that nobody gets harmed," the Mission native said. "You know how the members are split into a specific part of the rocket, well I overlook all the areas."

Osorio is in charge of logistics and making sure that the club is following the conduct of the university. He'll also obtain permission to use facilities, labs, and any needed materials. He wants to make sure the club is being built for longevity and can stay within the school for future generations.

"I want to create that here, that was the whole goal to create aerospace engineering experience," the engineering senior said. "To provide experience for many years and throw my own money and keeping doing it again for future people."

Osorio has always been good at math and physics. At first, he wanted to build immovable objects like

bridges, but he is now enthusiastic about rocketry. He's become intimately familiar with the process for building motors.

"Putting weight on the top, you need to balance it out and if I don't propose how to balance it out; it's not going to work," Osorio said. "I'm in charge of the manufacturing, the assembly – the overall design."

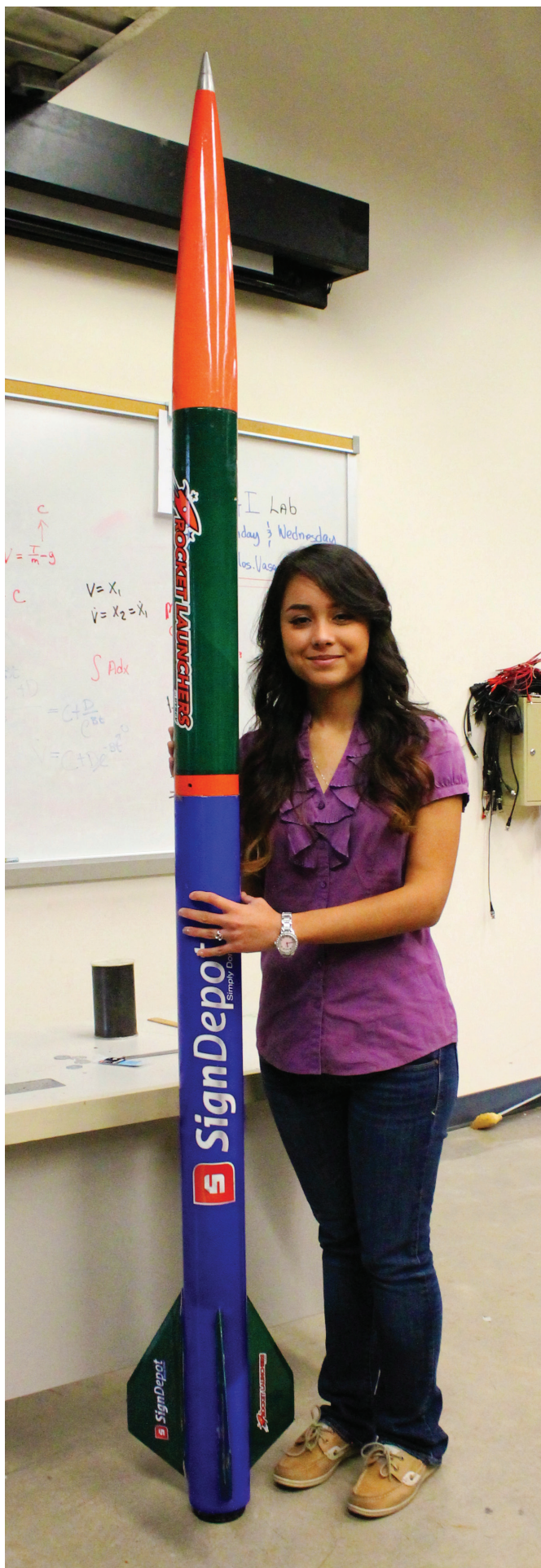
Enrique Molina, a mechanical engineer, joined the Rocket Launchers club in October 2015. He was outside of the engineering building sitting on a bench at the Edinburg Campus when he first saw the club launching a small rocket.

"I heard a noise and saw a group standing around a tree," Molina said. "They had launched a rocket that got stuck in a tree."

Molina is in charge of rocket simulations, the equations used in the programs and the calculations projecting how far a rocket will fly.

"I would model the rocket in this program that we had," the Hidalgo native said. "[It would] sort of tell us what altitude we reached and lift off from target."





This past year, the UTRGV junior also took on the role of propulsion lead, a person who collects the materials needed for the manufacturing process. Molina used both these duties to build a solid rocket.

Cooper Thompson joined the Rocket Launchers in August 2016. A friend told him that the Rocket Launchers were looking for someone who knew electronics.

“To work with different engineering disciplines,” the computer engineer said “[It’s] the important part of student organizations.”

When Thompson began, he was a club member who only gave opinions and ideas, but as the semester continued he got more involved by sharing his skill set. By the end of the fall 2016 semester, he became an officer of Rocket Launchers as an electronics lead.

“I am the lead and sole electronics engineer,” Thompson said. “So I’m designing all the electronic systems and computer systems that manage the payload as well as the monitoring the rocket.”

Sponsored by a non-profit organization called Experimental Sounding Rocket Association, the annual Intercollegiate Rocket Engineering Competition encourages college students to work in rocketry- the branch of science focused on rockets and rocket propulsion. The competition hosts various rockets and all chemical propulsion types of solid, liquid, and hybrid. The annual competition basis it’s rockets on two classifications of altitudes: basic 10,000 feet and advanced 30,000 feet.

The majority of the rockets contain four main components: an airframe, propulsion motor, recovery system and a payload. These components are what make the rockets launch and land.

“Compare the rocket to a car,” Osorio said. “The airframe is like the frame of a car, the propulsion motor is the engine, the recovery system is the brakes, which has the parachutes and electronics and the payload is the people.”

The Rocket Launchers prepared their own rocket for the competition. At 7 feet tall, they have high hopes for it. They’ve called their rocket ‘Spacebound.’ The club

entered it into last year's competition as a basic. Because it was the Rocket Launchers' first year, they decided to restrain themselves to only the basic altitude competition.

Rocket Launchers worked on 'Spacebound' throughout the spring 2016 semester and wrapped up towards the end of May. The competition was held summer 2016 in Utah.

The Rocket Launchers placed 7th internationally. Now, entering their second year, the team feels more confident about the competition. This time they plan on competing in both categories: basic and advanced with two rockets.

"We have the basics down and now we're going to start getting creative and building off the basics," the Houston native said. "This year, we're going to be able to assemble them without wondering if we did it right."

This year the competition will be held in New Mexico. It has merged with another international rocket competition, which will now be called 'Spaceport

America Cup.'

The Rocket Launchers hope to expand their organization and see growth for years come and want the members to get as much as hands-on experience as they can.

"The goal is for other engineering students to get experience with the Rocket Launchers," Ramirez said. "The seniors are making sure the sophomores, juniors and freshman understand the process and protocol and making sure that the club continues after seniors graduate."

The career advisor is glad that he encouraged Alaniz to start the club and hopes other engineering students, especially the girls in the program, will follow her lead.

"She's breaking ground for other female engineers and is one of the few females that is really passionate about her goal to be involved in aerospace," Ramirez said. "She's breaking ground here at the university."





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