

DATELINE: *Volume 57 / Issue 2*
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DOWNTOWN



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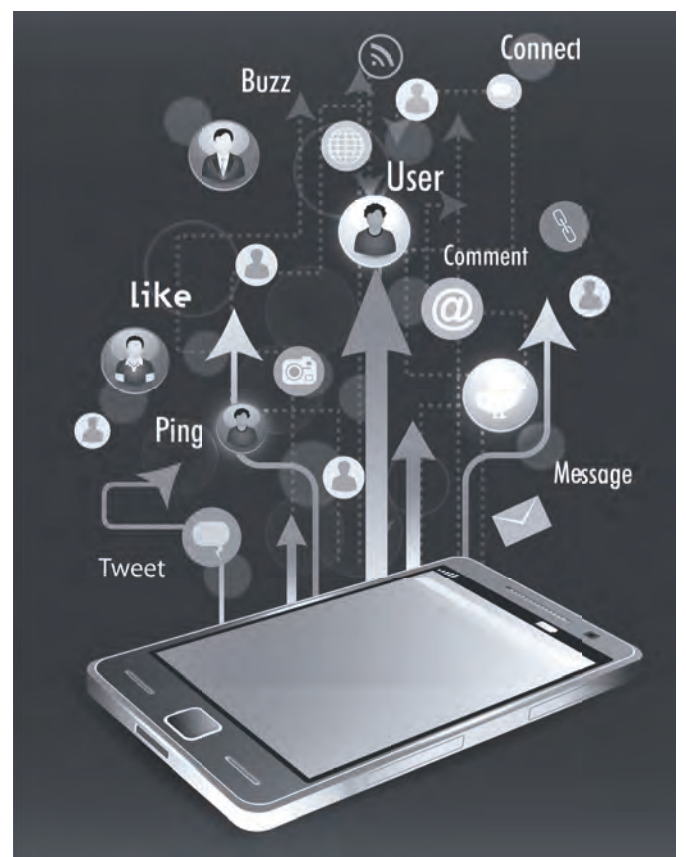
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The Shadow of Doubt by Darci McFerran

Please let it be over," she whispered, her words barely breaking the silence
Still hours before the bruises could appear from his violence.

As the sun broke through the blanket of night,
its blinding rays would signal the end of another fight.

Flinching at the brightness with eyes red and swollen from the tears,
tears that flowed through the night, that flowed through the years.

Finally sleeping, he lay sloppily across their bed,
A loud growling snore the only sign he isn't dead.

The terror from last night has seemingly faded with the dawn,
But her mind loops the replay and she knows, too well, that the horror isn't gone.

Her heart beats wildly, screaming for her to run,
But her fear and self-doubt tell her it cant be done.

With mechanical motions she attempts to seem well,
to bury the evidence of her private life in hell.

She refuses to let anyone know how much trouble she's in
And her rehearsed veil of normalcy will disguise his escalating sin.

Accustomed to the weight and burden of her lies
She loads every bag with her pain, while she quietly cries.

They only see her smile, see her shine in the warmth of the sun,
and to many, her life seems like it is just so much fun.

They don't see the darkness lingering along her frayed edges,
Or the second glance her eyes replay when dancing along ledges.

Her shadow is cast in fear and pain, that pours from a glass straight into her bed.
Fueled by the alcohol flowing in his veins, hatred fills the thoughts in his head.

He cant control it, his aggression intensifies as the demons take over
He is no longer the man that once promised to love her.

Powerless and lost she wonders how this happened to
her
Once strong and intelligent, she isnt the girl who
would allowed this to occur.

The remorse seems real from the man she once loved,
But behind his back he has one hand gloved.

His meager affections sustain in her in this madness,
She forces a vacant smile but it wont drive away the
sadness.

Fear traps her behind the door of her home,
His cruelty effective at breaking her will to roam.

Once spirited and free, she is now held captive in
her head
Where daily she prays that she, or he, will soon be
dead.

Hopelessness dominates her thoughts of escape,
No hero swoops in wearing a brightly colored cape.

Until slowly she can feel the fire burning deep with-
in,
with such beautiful intensity that the fear can no
longer get in

Now is the moment, she seizes the escape
Finding for once, she can wear her own cape.



The Sexual Assault Case That Rocked the Nation

By Kara Moore

The Brock Turner case, where a Stanford University student was convicted of sexual assault, has become synonymous with our country's growing issues with rape culture. Why? Because despite being found guilty of rape and the prosecution recommending six years in prison, he was sentenced to six months by a sympathetic judge. He actually spent three of those months in prison before being released on good behavior. His dad described Turner's act of forced sexual penetration as "20 minutes of action" and the defense blamed his actions on "party and drinking culture at universities" instead of on rape culture. All of this culminated in the realization of many Americans that rape culture might not be just feminist ranting; it could be real. It affects real people. It makes it so that 97% of rapists see no punishment, according to a RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest International Network) study on Justice Department data.

This case was a message sent to victims of sexual assault: their rapists may be convicted, but they won't actually be punished. Many people lashed out on social media. Some women lashed out with art; one Ithaca student specifically created a photo series showcasing staged assaults captured in time. Laws were even changed as a result. California Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 2888, which, according to the Washington Post, would make it so "courts would not be allowed to grant probation to people convicted in a rape or sexual assault involving a victim who was unconscious – or was too intoxicated to give his or her consent."

All of this, though, doesn't change the fact that millions of women and men are victims of sexual violence every year. What can help change this? Volunteering with these victims and helping them to overcome the violence they've faced. I sat down with Aly Jacobs, Manager of Counseling and Advocacy at the Houston Area Women's Center, to discuss what they do, why it's important, and what you can do to help.

Kara: Can you describe the Houston Area Women's Center to me?

Aly: Sure! The Houston Area Women's Center provides services to individuals whose lives have been affected by domestic and sexual violence. What's great is that we are the largest organization in the Houston area. We have shelter available 24 hours a day. It's a safe place for individuals who are fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault; it provides them with a secure physical location - because it's hard to heal emotionally if you don't have physical safety established. We have a hotline available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and that is the gateway, kind of, into the agency. That's how we first get people in through the doors, how we get people in the shelter, set up appointments. [The Hotline] is a great place for resources, for individuals in crisis in the middle of the night. There's always someone there, and it sends a message to survivors that they are not alone.

We have a housing program for those getting out of our shelter or leaving a relationship, to help them get back on their feet. We have children's court services which provide accompaniment for children going through the legal process, helping to prep them for court and be an advocate, a familiar face. It's an excellent service for kids who can be overwhelmed by the court. We offer counseling services so clients can receive support services to talk through their trauma and trauma reactions. Our final department is community education and prevention. To end domestic and sexual violence, we need prevention. Prevention really starts with teaching young children what respect and rape culture is, and that they don't have to adhere to those things.

K: How many women a year do you work with?

A: I can only really speak to our counseling department; we service roughly 7500 adult clients and then about 2300 child clients in our counseling department. Our shelter has 120 beds. Our hotline takes

about 50,000 calls a year as well. We service a large population.

K: Is there an application process to get into housing?

A: There is a screening process, and there are grant requirements that determine whether an individual falls into our transitional housing. As far as the shelter, that's broken into two separate things. There is not an application to get into it; it's available to everyone as long as there is space and you need to leave a dangerous situation.

K: So you only provide legal counseling for children?

A: Yes, but we work closely with numerous legal services to help fit all the needs of our clients. But we do have any lawyers or legal services here. We just help get them connected.

K: Is counseling by appointment only?

A: Yes, well, the first step is usually calling the hotline to share their story and determine what their needs are, to determine whether or not they are in need of counseling and really want counseling. Counsel comes after safety is established. If counseling at the time is right, the hotline can set up appointments to get the individual in. It's about a one-hour session roughly to register for services, fill out the paperwork, and learn about the services available. Our primary service is through group because there isn't a waitlist. We do have individual counseling, usually 8-10 sessions, but there is a waitlist.

K: Do you need health insurance to access these services?

A: All of our services here are free of charge and 100% confidential. No one will know you're a client here without the permission of the person.

K: Are the hotlines all volunteer based?

A: Our hotlines are volunteer and staff based. We have two hotlines: domestic violence, and sexual assault. There is staff that provides some service, and volunteers as well.

K: Are there any other ways to volunteer outside of the hotline?

A: Absolutely, we have volunteers that help with childcare. A huge obstacle to a group is some survivors need someone to watch their children while attending; we eliminate that barrier by providing childcare here at the agency. We have some great events throughout the year that our volunteers play a crucial role in also. The Race Against Violence, Back to School events, and a Holiday Express Gift event which our volunteers are important to. We need our volunteers to service that many people in such a short amount of time. We always need help with paperwork and data entry as well.

K: How do you guys talk to victims when they first come to you?

A: Our belief here is that the survivor disclosed any type of assault, we believe them. I want to think one of the first things they hear when they come through the agency is that we believe the survivor. Statements like "What were you wearing, what were you doing, why did you do that" - all that places responsibility and fault on the survivor and here we know that it was the perpetrator's choice to assault or rape somebody. We put that blame on the right person, not our survivors. Our stance here is very much "We believe you and what can we do to help you." We seek to validate and normalize their trauma reactions.



K: In the Brock Turner case, it was about campus sexual assault. Do you see common scenarios like this concerning sexual assault?

A: I think it varies. One thing to remember is that sexual assault happening on campus is no different than it happening anywhere else. I believe there is a network of support for sexual assault when it's on campus because the victims have the counseling and Title IX coordinator and it's a sub-culture where that support can be there for the survivor. I think you see lots of things in common with campus sexual assault; they usually involve drinking. We have worked a lot with Rice and UH to help provide additional support to give survivors an outlet.

K: How do you talk about consent?

A: I would illustrate it with the "Consent is like a cup of tea" video. It's a simple explanation for various situations by phrasing consent like making a cup of tea. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei-5JGiT8>

K: Do you have any advice for Dateline readers?

A: Any survivors, you are not alone, and there are resources available. As readers know that change can happen; you have a voice. You can get together and work to end violence against everybody. You guys can get involved in creating that change, talking to younger kids and being that group of people to say "this isn't okay." Work against the bystander effect. Work together to create change.

To get involved with HAWC, feel free to go to www.hawc.org. If you are a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence, contact the HAWC at one of their crisis hotlines.

***Domestic Violence: 713-528-2121
Rape or Sexual Assault: 713-528-7273***

Bro's We Can Do Better

Jason J. Rivas

Recently, I visited a prominent and affluent apartment complex – unnoticeably secluded, well-kept, and located in pristine Midtown, with the Houston skyline cascading as its' "backyard." I arrived at my friend's apartment and became witness to a relationship now lost in a holocaust of destruction. Furnishings, personal effects, memories all sprawled out in ruins, the end-result of alcohol-infused anger, sorrow, and denial. A woman stood amidst the broken life she once shared with a love now lost, living out his nightmare in his own squalor. It is a theme found in many a broken relationship: A woman tired and ready to break the chains of an unbearable weight, in denial and full of rage, lashing out against her with no remorse... Bros, we can do better.

I write this not to implicate every man as guilty of this but we are guilty of unknowingly contributing to it. As bros, we naturally have a tendency to feel dominant and in control. It has been conditioned into our psyche since birth: the first-born son is the ideal choice for many families, the understood head of household, and the "pants" in any relationship. We're bros who sometimes partake in "locker room talk" (oh yes, it does exist), promote the Bro Code, and are obedient servants to our own machismo. So when a man earns the admiration of a woman, he has a choice to make: either be true to the laws of nature and treat her as an equal, or blindly follow the broken laws of man which lessen her undeniable worth. And many a man choose the latter... Bros, we can do better.

Once again, I write this not as an implication that all men are guilty of this, but rather, as a reminder that we let it fester. We all know that guy. That one bro who actively and consciously disrespects his equal, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally. That one dude who demands and expects obedience and some form of servitude from their identical. That one bro who cannot accept the notion of an equal making the choice of being without him, without him. And what are the end results of a lifetime of conditioning that we make the rules and choices while our X-chromosome contemporaries follow suit? Oftentimes, we light a fire and burn our equivalents in a sea of chaos and confusion... Bros, we can do better. I call on you, male reader, to stand before yourself, on trial. You are the judge, jury, and executioner. Truthfully ask yourself: "Have I contributed to misogyny?" Unfortunately, I know I have and many of y'all probably have too... Bros, we can do better.

Bros, we need to change the conversation. We must respect the laws of nature that state we are all equal, and that one meager/paltry chromosome does not make someone inferior. A woman has every right to be in control of her choices just as you are, dude. Wake up, and welcome to the 21st Century, a place where political incorrectness is acceptable when appropriate; a time when all see each other for who they are as a person; a place where the systematic walls of misogyny are challenged by societal progress. An environment that acknowledges woman's right to her own freedom, for it is the only logical choice we should consistently respect.

A woman should not live in fear of man's potentially nefarious conduct. A woman mustn't worry of the repercussions of a scorned man. A woman has every right to spread her wings and fly as a man does. It is not a notion that we should tolerate, bros, but a fact of life we all consciously respect and adhere to. There is no excuse for a man to enter his former lover's home and disrespect her rejection through violence. There are no winners in this scenario, only failures. Bros, we can do better... and now is the time.



Trafficking

Kierra Green

“When I grow up I want to represent politics because I believe they have control over how much good happens.” At the time I didn’t understand political figures never meant what they said.

Although I was not allowed to bring my journal with me, I can recall the words I wrote when I was just beginning how to add and subtract.

I saw my bright future in reachable distance before it was taken from me

I was a child who saw sad things but had a happy heart; now I am an undeveloped individual who tends to speak as life has already ended.

I never thought I could be bought – and when I was, I didn’t know I was worth so little. It’s dark where I am, but I call it home because THEY told me I would never see the outside of these four walls, but I continue to repeat to myself that grass is green.

I struggle to remember fresh air, for manipulation now has control over my senses; my eyes have become sensitive to light because I have become accustomed to the darkness. My hands are fragile to touch because they’re treated roughly daily.

THEY dictate my life because they feel they can.

“Take it or die.” these words unnoticeably have become my motto.

I’m numb to the pain because he said it’ll be like this from now on.

My eyes have run dry because there’s no use in crying.

I wasn’t taught the language, so when he screams at me I just sit quietly hoping he won’t strike this time.

I can’t remember the last time I smiled, but I grin when I can see the sun reflect on his face. I imagine that one day it could beam on me again.

Throughout the first months of my stay, I quickly realized the only unusual sound was silence.

I am visited at a minimum of six times a day, from what I can hear; that’s less than the others – maybe my petite-ness isn’t up to standard.

I rarely see my “neighbors.” Occasionally I hear cries of agony, and that’s when he gives them the “happy pill.” I’ve only had to take it once so I must be doing something right.

When I felt the small heartbeat in my tummy I felt joy, but in an instant fear took over.

I never saw the face of that little heartbeat but I hoped it was better off.

I used to get the days mixed up; now I can’t remember the years.

I can only tell my time is passing by the transparency of my veins and the calendar he gave us as a present. It was then that I realized six years of my life was spent in a place that was similar to the degree of hell.

Over the years I was awarded privileges.

When I wasn’t in the company of a customer, I was allowed to look out of the window.

One day I heard a small boy. I could tell he was a child because of his voice, deep with a recurring screech; when he walked through the door, my assumption was confirmed.

It was strange to hear a boy; I thought maybe he was here because they needed his fresh hands. It wasn’t until I heard the same whimper I made when I first got here that I knew the reason he was here was the same as mine.

One, two, ten: the number of times I’ve watched the calendar change.

By this time I am useful for more than one thing, you know, often helping around the building.

There was a moment that confirmed my fate as a human being.

The moment I knew I still had a beating heart.

It was the moment I was in the same room with that little heartbeat I felt years ago in my young stomach.

Will anyone get us out of here? Can a law save us? It was that moment I knew the answer to both questions were not going to be answered anytime soon.

“ I’m not for sale ”



Towards an Understanding of Sexual Assault

By Terrance Turner



On Oct. 7th, leaked audio from a decade-old conversation exposed the GOP presidential nominee as a sexual predator.

While on a bus headed to the set of the soap opera *Days of Our Lives* in 2005, Donald Trump regaled then-Access Hollywood host Billy Bush of his sexual exploits, admitting to pursuing an unidentified (but married) woman – and to kissing women without consent. “I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet,” he said. “I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the p---y. You can do anything.”

Two days later, at the second of three presidential debates, CNN anchor and debate moderator Anderson Cooper confronted Trump: “You described kissing women without their consent, grabbing their genitals. That is sexual assault.” The Justice Department agrees. Its website says, “Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities [such] as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape.” Rape is a form of sexual assault that often defines sexual penetration without consent. (For the record, the definition under Texas law is fundamentally similar. Section 22 of the Texas Penal Code excludes fondling but is otherwise loyal to the federal concept. It states that someone has committed an offense if there is contact or penetration of another person orally, anally, or with a “sexual organ.”)

Perhaps sensing guilt, Trump immediately deflected to his opponent’s husband. “If you look at Bill Clinton, far worse,” Trump said at the debate. “Mine are words, and his was action.” He went even further: “There’s never been anybody in the history of politics in this nation that’s been so abusive to women,” Trump claimed. To bolster that argument, he’d held a press conference before the debate with three women who’ve accused Clinton of sexual misconduct. Those three (Paula Jones, Kathleen Willey, and Juanita Broaddrick) were joined by Kathy Shelton, who had been raped at 12 but whose attacker had been defended by Hillary Clinton in court while Mrs. Clinton was still practicing law. As Vox pointed out, “Shelton’s accusations amount to blaming Clinton for representing her client adequately in court.”

Paula Jones, who sued then-President Clinton for sexual harassment in 1994, claimed that he had exposed himself to her and propositioned her; Clinton’s perjury in the deposition led to the infamous impeachment trial led by then-prosecutor Kenneth Starr. The lawsuit dragged on until 1998, when U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright ruled in Clinton’s favor. His behavior, Wright found, “does not constitute sexual assault.” (Jones had weakened her own case by providing a description of Clinton’s genitals that was disputed by several doctors). Kathleen Willey’s 1997 claim of fondling and unwanted sexual advances was clouded by six people who said that she was “thrilled” with the encounter. “Starr’s key witness Linda Tripp – who became friends with Willey when they both worked at the White House – told Starr’s grand jury that Willey plotted for months about how to start an affair with Clinton,” weekly political magazine *The Nation* wrote in 1999.

Broaddrick’s case was the most damning: an accusation of outright rape. But she signed an affidavit during the Jones case – “there were unfounded rumors and stories circulated that President Clinton had made unwelcome sexual advances towards

me in the late seventies [...] These allegations are untrue” – that contradicts her story. She claimed ignorance of Trump’s accusers in an interview with Jake Tapper that aired Oct. 17th. “I’ve not read about these women,” she said.

Broaddrick must not be reading any news. The number of women accusing Mr. Trump of unwanted advances had reached ten by that point, according to an Oct. 15th report by NBC News. Former Apprentice contestant Summer Zervos accused him of unwanted kissing and groping, with a witness to back her up. An anonymous “Jane Doe” filed a federal lawsuit against him claiming that he raped her when in 1994 when she was 13 years old. Former *People* magazine writer Natasha Stoyneff wrote a first-person account in the publication detailing an attack in 2005.

Stoyneff was writing a feature on Trump’s one-year anniversary with his wife, Melania. He wanted to show Stoyneff around their mansion. She remembered: “We walked into that room alone, and Trump shut the door behind us. I turned around, and within seconds he was pushing me against the wall and forcing his tongue down my throat,” she wrote. Trump denies the story, but *People* has run a follow-up, citing six individuals who corroborate the account. Her former journalism professor tweeted on Oct. 13th, “In 2005, Natasha Stoyneff phoned me, distraught, crying. Said Trump assaulted her. She is telling truth.”

All of the stories detailed above, if true, would qualify as sexual assaults. But many people seem not to know that. Professor Sarah Edwards, of the University of North Dakota, had a 2014 report published in the research journal *Violence and Gender*. In the report, titled “Denying Rape but Endorsing Forceful Intercourse,” she surveyed 86 college-age males, all straight. 31.7% said they would force a woman to do something sexual against her will if there were no consequences and nobody found out, but only 13.6% stated that they would “rape a woman” in those circumstances. Writing for the UK newspaper *The Telegraph* in 2015, Olivia Goldhill said: “The findings suggest that those men making up the 18.1 percent difference don’t fully understand that sex without consent always constitutes rape.”

Edwards found that misconceptions about rape abound: “For example, commentators have suggested that rape only occurs if a woman labels it as such, while experiencing an unwanted sexual experience under the influence does not constitute rape. This perspective demonstrates stereotypical assumptions many people still hold about rape, considering it to be an act of extreme violence perpetrated by an unknown assailant upon an unsuspecting woman who is willing to defend her sexual purity with her life.” But the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), the largest anti-sexual violence organization in America, says 75% of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows – and that 1 in 10 men will be a victim of rape.

In her report, Edwards opens with a similar sentiment about sexual assault: “Federal data estimate that about one in five women becomes the victim of sexual assault while in college, most of which is committed by assailants known to the victim (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2012).” Males aged 18-24 who are in college are about five times as likely to experience rape or sexual assault as non-students, RAINN says. According to the organization, about 2 out of 3 assaults go unreported.

If there was ever a time or place to speak up, it is now.

Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) at Casa Ramirez Folkart Gallery

By Patricia C. Sepulveda

Every year in Houston, Casa Ramirez Folkart Gallery owners Macario Ramirez (originally from San Antonio) along with his wife Chrissie Dickerson Ramirez, (originally from Dallas) celebrate Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead). Casa Ramirez is involved in not only folk art but in a plethora of good causes. They have 8 to 10 exhibits each year on culture and traditions not only to Latinos but other members of the community. "We are becoming too Americanized, and that can make you lose your identity, where you come from. The parents are so busy working that they don't have time to pass it on," said Mr. Ramirez.

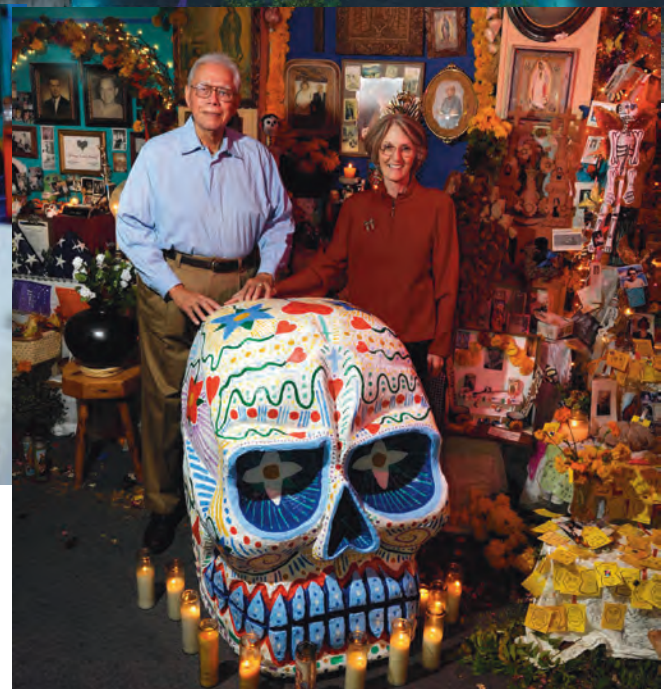
Macario Ramirez has been recognized and considered an expert at Mexican culture by the Mexican Consular, Houston Chronicle, Univision, MECA, Rice University, University of Houston Main Campus and many more. "I am an expert, and I say that humbly," Mr. Ramirez said. When I asked Mr. Ramirez how long he had been doing altars, he said, "I have been doing ofrendas (offerings) since I was a teenager, my father would take me to Saltillo, Mexico where my grandmother had an altar." Mr. Ramirez has spent more than 40 years celebrating and honoring "Day of the Dead."

Dia de los Muertos is a Mexican holiday; however, the roots of Dia de los Muertos lie in the pre-Columbian indigenous tradition of honoring the dead. Religious or not, it can be celebrated. "Day of the Dead" is celebrated around harvest time on Nov 1st for the angelitos (children) and Nov 2nd for the adults. It is on these days that deceased family members and other loved ones are honored "Day of the Dead is a celebration of life; it can be sad, but it is also joyful. There can be dancing, food and music involved," Ramirez said.

It is believed that the heavens open on those days and the spirits of our ancestors are allowed to return to earth to enjoy the festivities that are prepared for them. Spirits go first to the cemetery, then home. The altar offering is a centerpiece of the Dia de los Muertos celebration and is usually placed in a special place at home, public space or even over gravesites. "I have gone to cemeteries in Mexico with a full mariachi group and serenaded those people who are buried in that cemetery," said Ramirez.

A table or shelves are often used to construct an altar. The idea is to beckon the spirits of the dead back from beyond the grave. Altar offerings must include the elements of Earth, wind, water and fire. Fruits are frequently used in the symbolism of earth representing the time of harvest. Papel picado (designed cut paper) represents the spirits fluttering in the wind back to their homes. Water is placed on the altars for the spirits to quench their thirst from their long journey. The smoke from the lit candles and burning copal placed on the altar represent prayers to the heavens to protect the spirits. Altars may also include an arch over the altar to represent someone of importance like your parents or very close family members.

Pan de muerto ("Day of the Dead" bread) is used often, usually shaped in a circle representing the circle of life. Marigolds are placed around the altar because they are very aromatic and help lead the spirits back home. Flower petals are placed along the pathway to guide the spirits from the door to the altar. A cup of salt is placed on altars to take away evil spirits. Altars also include favorite drinks, food, pictures and items of the dearly departed. Day of the Dead is a special day dedicated to our loved ones. "Day of the Dead is about remembering, honoring and celebrating our ancestors," said Ramirez.



The Houston Mini-Murals

By Jason Rivas

Recently, the Northside has seen a flourishing array of colors enveloping the neighborhood. A collaboration between several organizations, artists, and the City of Houston is responsible for the eye-catching mini murals.

Avenue CDC, in collaboration with the Greater Northside Management District and District H Council Member Karla Cisneros, commissioned Up Art Studio in the development of "monuments to urban art." The result would be the beautification of the neighborhood, a development of civic pride, and the encouragement of artistic expression (and economic development) of the region. The partnership highlighted the various utility boxes, within the Northside region as an ideal location for the works.

Up Art Studio reached out to their network of talented urban and local artists to develop the project. The virtuoso maestros saw the utility boxes as blank canvasses with which they could fill the local flavor and color of the neighborhood. Anat Ronen, PilotFX, w3r3on3, Alex Arzu, and Jessica Rice, among many others, created truly inspiring works of art and transformed what would typically be seen as mundane public fixtures into reflections of the culture and essence of the Northside community.

The project is not just centered in the Northside but being conducted all around the city of Houston. Cornucopias of neighborhoods in the city have seen their utility boxes transformed into testaments of artistic expression and local color. The overall mission and hope of the endeavor is to have a lasting impact – socially, artistically, and economically – on the various communities it inhabits. For as the Northside, and Houston in general, continue to expand opportunities and interests to various people across the socio-cultural spectrum, it is important to showcase the local color and rich heritage that makes the area its own.

For more information about the project, please visit:

<http://minimurals.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/minimurals/>

<http://www.upartstudio.org/news/mini-murals>

<http://www.nearnorthsidehtx.com/#!public-art-and-murals/wkajy>

O’Kane Gallery features works by Leamon Green

By Philip Feldwisch

Steamroller prints, hand drawings, hand paintings, and rough drafts highlight the Leamon Green exhibition entitled “Look At Them Now.” The exhibit opened September 1 and ran until October 13.

Speaking with Mark Cervenka, I found out a lot about what goes into making a steamroller print. Steamroller prints involve the artist carving the image into a piece of wood, pouring ink into the carving, and then driving over it with a massive roller. The weight of the drum literally lifts the image onto the canvas paper. There were four of these on display: “Weight of the World,” “Scales,” “Recovery,” and “Wandering Eyes” were the highlight of the exhibit. The rest of the exhibit was all hand paintings or drawings. Some of the works were accompanied by rough sketches.

“We wanted to use the four steamroller prints as the centerpiece of the exhibit since they are larger,” Cervenka said in an interview. The entire exhibit is focused around the four steamroller prints. “The areas that are white are where the wood was carved out to make the piece. This gives a unique relationship and reference to the subject,” Cervenka stated. “The idea of this exhibit was to build around the steamroller prints since they have a bold and expressive look to them. It’s a completely different form of artwork.”

Leamon Green is a local artist and the interim chair of the Performing and Visual Arts Department at Texas Southern University. Green is also considered to be one of the best draft artists around. Mark Cervenka and Leamon Green have known each other for a while. Green’s work has also been featured in other shows.

“I have been doing art for as long as I can remember. My parents were very supportive and I decided to major in art during college,” Green said.

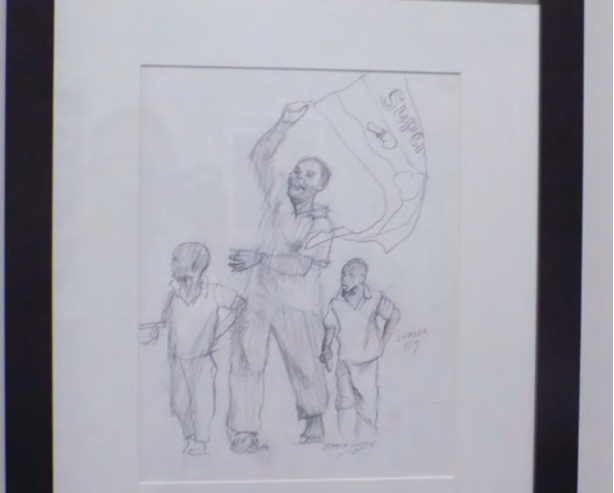
“There was no specific work that we wanted for this exhibit. All we wanted was to build around the steamroller prints,” Cervenka said.

Steamroller printing is known for its relief style; it differs from etching in which a copper plate is carved out, ink applied, and then dipped into an acid bath. The acid eats away at the high areas, leaving the low areas as the artwork. An advantage to steamroller printing is that it allows an artist to print large-scale while keeping the price affordable.

Green has been doing steamroller prints for five years with Houston Print Matters. “I always wanted an exhibit at UH-Downtown. Mark and I went through some ideas together and decided on the pieces that would be put on display,” Green said.

Steamroller prints require a group effort and donated paper. “Most of the time, it takes an entire day to make a few prints. It also requires organization,” Green said in an interview. Since very few places do steamroller prints (they tend to be quite large), it can be hard to find a venue. Luckily, Saint Arnold’s Brewery let Green use their parking lot to create the prints. Green wanted to use the steamroller prints as the centerpiece and build around them. After talking to Cervenka and discussing the pieces to be used, the two of them decided to do just that.

“I wanted to build off the content of the steamroller sketches since they have a bold and expressive look to them,” Green said. “It really is a different animal.”



The O’Kane Gallery is located on the third floor of the Girard Street Building, GSB322.
Hours
Monday-Friday
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday
12:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Phone: (713) 221-8042
e-mail: gallery@uhd.edu

All original Works by Leamon Green, many of which were showcased in the show at O’Kane Gallery.

Stand Up

By Casey Black

In a time where “Black Lives Matter” has become a siren song about injustice in the criminal justice system in hopes that it’ll be sent crashing into the murky depths, it’s ignited a roaring fire that’s burning its way across the country, influencing our media, streets, and politics. In July prominent sports figures took the stage at the 2016 ESPY awards; LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, Carmelo Anthony, and Chris Paul delivered a moving speech describing that they had enough of the systemic racism that’s plaguing the country. They presented in remembrance to boxing legend Muhammad Ali who famously opposed the ‘67 Vietnam War draft, stating: “You’re my opposer when I want justice. You’re my opposer when I want equality. You won’t even stand up for me in America, for my religious beliefs, and you want me to stand up for you and fight when you won’t even stand up for me here at home.”

Soliciting the help of other professional athletes, asking for them to speak up, and use their influence to renounce violence. Answering the call to action shortly afterward was 49ers QB, Colin Kaepernick. In a preseason game against the Green Bay Packers, he took a knee during the national anthem stating that “I’m not standing up to show pride in a flag that oppresses black people and people of color.” A cesspool of controversy flooded media outlets, some demanding that the QB should be fired, while others called him unpatriotic; his silent protest began to take shape. Other players began to sit during the national anthem, joining Kaepernick’s protest – bringing attention to issues at hand in the criminal justice system.

What does it mean to be a patriot other than being named Tom Brady? Are we defined as patriots by standing during the national anthem? How about the measure of someone’s character? Surely that should have an impact. Since we were children, we’re taught that being a patriot requires love, pride, and sacrifice for our country. Standing up, trusting in the country that blessed us with the freedom to make our voices heard, is great! It really is, but only up until the point you’re punished for it.

In the wake of Kaepernick non-violent protest, a wave has washed over the NFL. Players and teams have taken a stand, raising awareness of social injustice. Seattle Seahawks and Kansas City Chiefs locked arms in unity; Marcus Peters raised a fist. Who would’ve imagined that the act of standing or sitting would determine the way we view patriotism? Brandon Marshall has lost endorsements from both CenturyLink and Air Academy Federal Credit Union, according to a September 2015 report by NBC Sports. Despite facing financial repercussion for his stance, he continues to push the envelope with his career on the line – a man who is ready to sacrifice whatever it takes to see a change in a system that he finds corrupt is considered unpatriotic.

Punishing and discrediting people who are actively fighting for our rights, whether they’re a singer, athlete, or regular Joe, isn’t what we’re about. As Americans we shouldn’t be afraid to speak out against bullies, people that wish to see us broke down and stressed out when our liberties are on the line. Democracy is the last best hope for the world. It’s what makes America great.

Dr. Robin Davidson’s Favorite Poem Anthology Soon to be Released!

By Karen Reyes

As many as you might know, the University of Houston-Downtown is honored to have Dr. Robin Davidson, Houston’s Poet Laureate, as a member of our faculty. Many students majoring in English have had the luxury to take one of her many classes. Dr. Davidson is a poet, translator and English Professor. She is the author of two chapbooks (small collections of poetry): *Kneeling in the Dojo and City that Ripens on the Tree of the World*, and of a full collection of poetry, *Luminous Other*. As the Poet Laureate – whose job is to celebrate poetry in schools and other public places – Davidson is currently undertaking a “Favorite Poem Project Anthology” that will give Houstonians a chance to share their best-loved poems for a book in print.

Davidson modeled the project after the former U.S Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky’s national project “America’s Favorite Poems”. In our interview Davidson talked about from where she drew inspiration for the anthology: “One of the reasons I chose this project is that when I was a student in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston, Pinsky was my teacher for a semester and he asked each of us, his students, to craft our own favorite poem anthology. This was long before his terms as U.S Poet Laureate. “I’ve kept my anthology of favorites to this day and for many years now have asked my own students to develop favorite poem anthologies of their own – always with amazing results!”

Surely, many of us have read a particular poem that may strike us deeply, and what a better way to share that special poem than with our city. Davidson has been working on this project since last fall with a team of Houston poets, collecting submissions for the anthology; “We have received up to 400 submissions, and the team is now reviewing submissions. Once we determine those poems we wish to include – approximately 200-250 poems – we will then pursue acquiring permission to the print the selected poem.” But the project does not stop with its release. Dr. Davidson plans “to include a few contemporary performance poems and will provide QR codes for each piece so that the reader can scan the codes and view these particular poems in performance.”

As a professor of English and Creative Writing programs at our university and faculty advisor for the UHD’s literary and visual arts magazine, *The Bayou Review*, she wished for UHD students to be part of the project. Davidson had two important reasons to invite UHD students. One: “Our university is known to be one of the most diverse universities in the nation that reflects the diversity of the City of Houston. Our students, like our city, are from all kinds of racial, ethnic, and cultural background,” Two, “I wanted to acknowledge the generous support of the Department of English at UHD for their contribution to the anthology project,” Davidson stated in the interview.

Davidson welcomes any students that desire to volunteer and support the project by contacting her via e-mail at davidsonr@uhd.edu as she will be needing help once the book is printed. The editorial staff of *The Bayou Review*, which is run by UHD students, will be working closely with Davidson on the completion of the anthology.

The Favorite Poem Anthology will be released in April 2017 just in time for National Poetry Month and in time for U.S poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera’s visit to UHD on April 19, 2017. Upon publication, the anthology will be available to purchase from Calypso Editions, Amazon, the Houston Visitor Center and the Houston Public Library. Till then Davidson is “working closely with Calypso Editions’ graphic designer, Tony Bonds, to craft a beautiful book that the City of Houston can be proud of.”

HPD Violence: The Problem and Solution

By Adam Abuelheiga

11
Campus
&
Local
News

When you hear about police officers, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Do you think of a brave hero who helps maintain the peace and order in society? Or do you perhaps think of a sadist who uses his or her power as an excuse to vent their violent urges? Unfortunately, the misuse of power by certain members of the police force has always been a notorious issue throughout the United States. The idea that someone with a badge would blatantly abuse his authority by attacking or even killing unarmed civilians has sadly become such a common occurrence throughout the country that there have long been jokes about the "racist cop" who uses his position to attack any unarmed minority unfortunate enough to get caught speeding. While this kind of violence has been a frequent occurrence throughout the United States for quite some time, one particular city where this issue has attained some notable prominence is Houston.

When one examines the list of possible reasons as to why many police officers will attack unarmed civilians, there are often different sides of the story being presented. The most commonly assumed reason for why it happens is, of course, the long-standing belief that a large number of the people in the police force are indeed racist sadists who enjoy exercising their power as nothing more than an excuse to attack someone for speeding or doing anything else that might warrant being questioned by a cop. Granted, there are other reasons as to why a cop may feel the need to attack or shoot a seemingly unarmed citizen, but the most common point of concern as to why police brutality happens as often as it does has to do with the idea of the racist cop. That being said, while there is indeed a good deal of racial profiling that occurs among the police, it is safe to assume that most officers who commit these attacks on unsuspecting minorities are not aware that what they are doing is indeed racism. This can be an uncomfortable factor to consider and makes it easier for these cops to justify their actions.

Emily DePrang mentions one notable case of Houston police brutalizing a minority in the Texas Observer. In her article, there is an instance of a black man by the name of Sebastian Prevot being brutally assaulted by three members of the Houston Police Department, despite being unarmed and of no apparent threat. According to the article, Prevot was driving home one day back in 2012, when a police car attempted to pull him over. From the interview with Prevot, the reason he hadn't stopped was that he was afraid that the cops would find a reason to arrest him. He continued driving, "going the speed limit, stopping at every stop sign."

By Prevot's account, he was afraid of facing racial profiling. "I'm from Louisiana, and it was two white boys in the car in a dark area. I wasn't about to stop nowhere close to there," he said. This admittedly wasn't a very good idea on Prevot's part, as trying to get away from the cops would only make any situation worse, though, considering the events that would transpire shortly afterward, his fears might not have been entirely unjustified. Given the events that would take place shortly after he was stopped, it would seem that his fears of getting arrested would perhaps be the least of Prevot's worries.

Prevot's statements listed in the article would go on to mention that the cops immediately began attacking him the moment he pulled over for them in his driveway with his hands already in the air. This beating would end up being so severe that Prevot was left badly bloodied, with half of his left ear dangling near his neck. To make matters worse, his wife would also find herself a victim of the violence by the police shortly afterward, when she recorded what the cops were doing to her husband. According to Prevot, his wife was then attacked: "they twisted her handcuffed and had her phone taken apart, a clear sign that the cops were doing all they could to avoid any evidence that could be used against them."

It has been suggested that the attack mentioned above on Prevot was indeed a racially motivated

incident. As the article testifies, this is an example of the common occurrence of racial profiling. As a testament to the excessiveness of racial profiling, DePrang states that nearly half of the Houston civilians that were arrested during traffic stops in 2012 were African Americans. As one might expect, these stops often lead to consent searches on the drivers, though these searches have happened to black drivers in 2012 about four times as frequently compared to white drivers. This is in spite of the fact that as the article brings up, white drivers are statistically more likely than blacks to be carrying things such as illegal substances (drugs). While there may not be any official statements from the officers themselves as to why they chose to attack and maim an unarmed civilian viciously, the evidence would appear to suggest that this incident was more than likely the result of racial profiling on the part of the cops.

To add to the unfortunate situation that Prevot and his wife had found themselves in, there is also the fact that Houston police officers are rarely punished for their use of violence against unarmed citizens. During an eight-month long investigation, it was shown that over the course of six years, Houston civilians reported officers for the use of violence against citizens a total of 588 times, but that the Internal Affairs had dismissed 584 of those cases. In addition to this, it's even mentioned in the article that the HPD often ignores the claims from their police officers about having witnessed their fellow officers exercising violence against unarmed citizens. In the same period as the previously mentioned reports from civilians, there had been 118 reports from police officers about their fellow officers using excessive force on the civilian population, but Internal Affairs had dismissed 107 of those cases. This of course only serves to increase the chances of "use of force" being utilized by Houston police officers. After all, if an officer has a high chance of being allowed to get away with their actions, what's to discourage them from doing it as many times as they see fit?

Fortunately, in spite of the issues that the city of Houston has to deal with in regards to the way its police force treats its civilians, there have been efforts made to help guarantee a brighter future. As an article by Megan Cole in the Generation Progress mentions, there has been a new policy that was first proposed back in 2013 that would make it mandatory for police officers to wear body cameras. According to Cole, this plan had been approved to expand to around 4,000 Houston police officers back in November of 2015, though it could be until around 2017 before these body cameras are fully deployed throughout the city. This, of course, means that the scale of police brutality in Houston will not fully resolve itself in the next few years, but many human rights and criminal justice activists would likely consider this policy to be a step in the right direction.

The bottom line is that police brutality in Houston remains an issue as of now. There are more and more reports about police shootings, and other police related incidents virtually every day, such as an incident from 2015 where Houston cops were caught having brutally assaulted a teenage African American girl on the side of a road, as reported on websites such as Rolling Out. As one might imagine, this is of course very worrisome for victims of racial profiling in particular. That being said, the implementation of full body cameras on police officers and the recent movements such as "Black Lives Matter" and protests by college students are a clear sign that an effort is being made to stop, or at least lessen this issue, shortly. In the meantime, drivers in Houston should do their best to take extreme caution on the road, so that Houston police officers would have no reason to stop them in the first place, and to avoid running away, as that will only make them more inclined to engage in physical violence.

“Footprints of Immigrant Detention”

By Terrance Turner

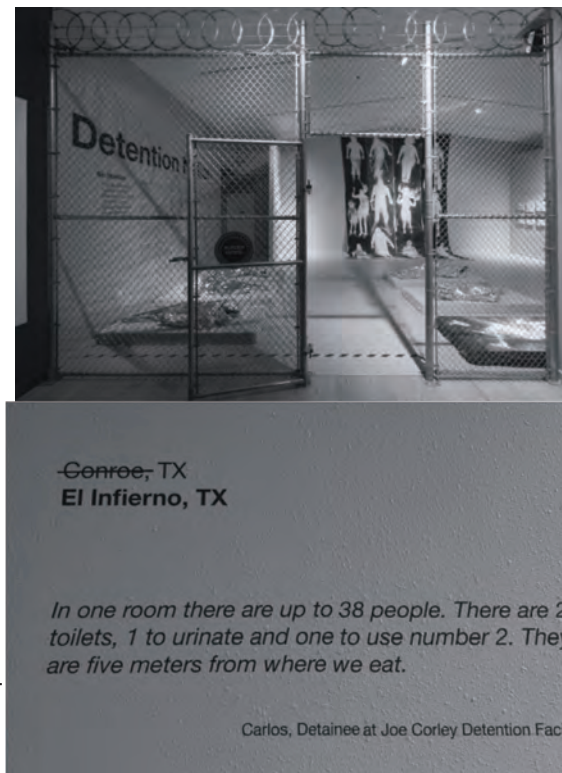
On Oct. 4, 2016, UHD hosted a talk sponsored by the UHD Cultural Enrichment Center and the Department of Arts and Humanities. The theme speaker was Dr. Christina Sisk, an associate professor of the Dept. of Hispanic Studies at the University of Houston. According to her bio on uh.edu, her academic areas of interest include U.S. Latino/a Studies and U.S./Mexico Border Studies. To that end, she spoke about how activism around immigration and artistic representation of immigrant detention have interacted in Houston.

Exhibit A in that discussion was Sin Huellas: Detention Nation, an art installation at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art. The museum, located on 1502 W. Alabama St, is “an exhibition forum for local, national, and international artists” – but also an activist institution that supports artists whether their works are spiritually, socially, or politically minded. “The Station Museum of Contemporary Art organizes exhibits that question our society’s morality and ethics,” the museum website says. Sin Huellas is an art collective whose name translates to “without fingerprints” and is composed of Mexican, Chicano, and American artists. They launched in order to explore issues related to borders, migration, detention, and deportation in Houston. Dr. Sisk says that in the past year, her activist and academic lives have collided, and that intersection is epitomized by the project. “The installation serves as a point of departure for me to discuss how local activism and art (“artivism”) counter national policy and expose abuse against immigrants.”

The exhibit does exactly that. It greets the viewer with a chain-link fence topped by barbed wire coils. Inside, tinfoil figures are placed on white slabs on the floor, serving as representatives of detainees’ makeshift beds. Prison-style bunkbeds flank a metal commode. On the wall is a statement from the collective: “40 miles north in Conroe, Joe Corley Detention Center holds 1,500 immigrant detainees as they wait for court cases in a barricaded facility wrapped in 30-inch rings of barbed wire and a moat,” it says. On the stark white walls are letters from captives. One of them, Carlos, writes about the conditions of the facility: “In one room there up to 38 people. There are two toilets,” he reports. In the line listing the center’s location, The exhibit as it appears at the Station Museum. “If you have ever flown out of the George Bush Intercontinental Airport, you have flown over an immigrant detention center that holds 1,000 men and you have passed through customs where ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] agents routinely single out legal permanent residents for names that sound too familiar,” the statement reads. Dr. Sisk emphasized the triune nature of the fight against deportation and detention centers like Joe Corley’s: ending family detention (holding children in prison-like detention centers along with their immigrant parents), fighting individual deportation, and the resistance of detainees from within.

In March 2014, over 200 men launched a hunger strike at the detention facility, protesting poor conditions and deportations. The result was mass deportations. A year later, in mid-2015, the nonprofit initiative Grassroots Leadership highlighted the case of Douglas Menjivar. He says he was raped in September and October of 2013 while at the center, which is owned by the private prison corporation CEO Group. According to the organization’s website, “Menjivar says he reported the rape to the supervising Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer known only as ‘Mr. Hernandez,’ immediately after it occurred, but was ridiculed and called ‘stupid’ for ‘allowing himself to be raped.’”

The statistics that Dr. Sisk presented on Houston’s immigration scene were nearly as sobering. Quoting data from the Migration Policy Institute, she claimed that Houston immigrants are less likely to be U.S. citizens than the national average (34% vs. 44%). Those from Mexico and Central America are the least likely to be citizens, although they make up 1/3 of all Houston immigrants. The reasons for this are complex but can be summed up by the fact that a “pathway to citizenship” is, for many immigrants, still out of their grasp.



House of Tiny Treasures

By Kelly Cruz

The Professional Society of Criminal Justice Students (PSCJS) was given the honorable opportunity to work with the Urban Educators’ Literacy Society on the House of Tiny Treasures Family Literacy Project on September 29, 2016.

The Interim Dean of the College of Public Service, Dr. Leigh Van Horn, took the time necessary to train members from both organizations a week before the event. At the event, students read a story to the children and their families. They were also provided with goodie bags that contained books they could take home (and prizes). This event gave the students a once in a lifetime experience. PSCJS’ Mariana Grijalva mentioned the reactions of the children: “The kids left so excited with their trains!” The volunteers had a good time while making a change in the lives of the children, their families, and our community. Member Nitzia Reyes stated the pleasure she had volunteering: “Both organizations did a great job working with little kids. It was a pleasure to make a difference in our community.”

It is our goal as PSCJS members to make a difference in our community. We thank Dr. Leigh Van Horn for giving us the opportunity.



Israeli Cultural Event

By Kara Moore

On Thursday, September 15, a new cultural series called the “Around the World Series” began here at UHD. This grant-funded program aims to highlight different cultures from across the globe, increasing cultural awareness for the students and citizens of Houston. It started specifically with Israel, a well-known country – but mostly for its conflict with Palestine. Thanks to the Around the World Series, though, it can now be known as so much more.

The event took place in A300 and featured typical Israeli foods on fine glass plates and expertly decorated tables. A survey and info packet awaited you at your seat, asking questions for before and after the event itself. After some initial clinking of silverware on plates and settling into seats, the event opened with a self-congratulatory set of speakers who discussed the undertaking of the event. Most credits went to Eisha Khan, a student here at UHD, who then also cited the help of several important faculty members such as Dr. Gulati, Dr. Nicholson-Preuss, Ms. Julie Norton, Dr. John Hudson, and Mr. Brandon Kuzmick. She also thanked her friends who helped write the grant making the event possible: Armita Tajadod, Edith Aldaba, Martin Valdez, and Stephaine Ibe.

After the initial introduction of the event coordinators and thanking of contributors, the delegates from the Israel Consulate were each given the opportunity to discuss their home country. They started by asking what we commonly associate with Israel; most people stated religious sites, Palestinian conflict, and prevalent Judaism. The Israel representatives took these responses and attempted to change our perception, discussing how Israel is a leader in technology, falling right behind the US for venture capital funds and leading the world in the number of scientists/technicians in the workforce per capita. They showed clips of a festival hosted every year called Geektime. They also discussed the overwhelming tolerance of Israel, citing its acceptance of same-sex marriage and stating more than once, “We are the only democratic society in the Middle East.” This is not entirely true; Freedom House, an organization which measures democracy worldwide, classifies Israel, Tunisia, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco, and Kuwait as free. Maybe they meant that they are the most democratic without conflict or challenges to that democracy, but considering the ongoing issues with Palestine (that were hardly addressed during the presentation), it doesn’t seem to quite fit as being the only democracy in the Middle East.

At the end of these presentations, an Israeli singer began to sing several songs from the homeland, causing people to get up to dance. At one point, attendees joined hands with a rabbi in attendance and dancing a traditional dance around the room. It was a memorable end to an interesting night. Speaking to several attendees, they were surprised to learn a country they’d thought of as always in conflict and with strict religious values, as technologically advanced and tolerant. The Israeli representatives stated the event went well though it was not what they expected – but nothing ever is.

“Mr. Statement Maker”

By Matthew Simmons

I saw the solo man walk out on a tightrope;
He had mad quotes and verses for light hearts with hope
I saw the solo man’s bucket of tears
His opposition shot hate and spears
But they missed every shot like a one-eyed Elmer Fudd Switching from “wabbits” and ducks to deer.
He bucked bears, tigers, spiders and even writer’s critics
Hit ‘em high, low and split the difference with buyers
and got dope publications
Sweeping nations so thorough that they stayed tuned to
the cleaning on the radio stations
His mission statement was clear as air: he was against
those
Who swear by their ‘gold’ bars of cash-flow, cars, hoes,
and dabbin’
Dag nabbin’ Yosemite, sticking us up for our dignity
They switched the game on him, but he didn’t fall like
Cedric Diggory
He took a mad hand and slapped their goblet
fire till the spell went backward like “boo bobbity bibb-
ity”
And left them sitting there mad, sad, shook, like “Look
what he did to me!”
I saw the solo man and he told me never give up
soul and creativity.
I just want to get on that pedigree.



School's Out, But Starvation Is Not

By Philip Feldwisch

For the majority of us, we never need to worry about having enough to eat. But for many low-income families, food insecurity and starvation are summer problems. With school out, the free and reduced lunch program also ends. This puts many children at risk of malnourishment.

According to a June 2013 CNBC article, summer puts a strain on food pantries and food banks as they struggle to provide meals to families. Kevin Concannon, the undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, told CNBC that summer is the time of year when a child is more likely to go hungry. This is mainly because school is out. Summer is always a strain since more families rely on food assistance during that period than any other time of the year. This means that food banks and food pantries are strained to fill the gap for those who normally rely on other services and federally funded food programs.

According to Feeding America data cited by CNBC, Texas was home to six of the 10 counties in the country with the highest rate of childhood food insecurity in 2011. Almost 2 million children, or 27.6 percent, lived in a food insecure household. The number of counties dropped to three in 2015. But Texas still ranked seventh in the nation among states with high childhood food insecurity rates. Food insecurity means that a household struggles to provide enough food for everyone in the family due to a lack of resources, according to CNBC.

It's not just Texas. The situation is reflected on a national level as well. About 21.4 million children received free or reduced-cost lunches during the 2013 school year, according to the USDA. That number grew to 22 million in 2015. The neediest kids receive breakfast, snacks, dinner, and even backpacks of weekend food through school or after-school programs. But the previous summer, only about 3 million kids were fed through the summer program, which provides meals to kids via school and community programs, Concannon said.

Kids usually have trouble getting to feeding sites when school buses aren't running and parents are not always aware of the programs. When kids don't have regular, nutritious meals, they learn slower and have more behavioral problems. "Food-insecure people are costlier to educate, as well as to care for," said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding America. They also start to develop unhealthy habits, including binge-eating, that can put them at risk for diabetes and obesity. Hungry kids may also resort to desperate measures such as intentionally failing a class so they can go to summer school and be assured of a meal.

According to a June 2015 report by CNN, a record 21.7 million U.S. students get free or low-cost lunches during school. But fewer than 4 million, or just 18%, of those in the student lunch program, are fed through the USDA's summer food program. While it's a record number for the 40-year-old program, many say that the government can do more.

One of the biggest hurdles for summer meals is that it must be served in an approved location and consumed on-site. This is to make sure that the children are the ones receiving the meals. But poverty and violence in an area can deter kids from wanting to go and receive the free meal.

Audrey Rowe, a USDA administrator, said that the department is working with lawmakers to increase flexibility around the summer meals program. It is also trying to expand the number of sites to include health centers and children's hospitals.



New Study Reveals Impact of Hunger on College Campuses

Report Analyzes Broadest Study to Date on Student Food Insecurity

A coalition of campus-based groups will release the results of the nation's broadest study to date on food insecurity on college campuses. In addition to analyzing the prevalence of hunger on campus, the report will document the financial and academic challenges faced by food-insecure students. It will also highlight innovative solutions to campus hunger currently being implemented by colleges across the country.

The report is authored by the College and University Food Bank Alliance, the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, the Student Government Resource Center, and the Student PIRGs (Public Interest Research Groups).

The College and University Food Bank Alliance, co-founded by the Michigan State University Student Food Bank and the Oregon State University Food Pantry, provides support, training, and resources for campus food banks and pantries that primarily serve students. www.cufba.org

The National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness (NSCAHH) organizes college students to end hunger and homelessness. NSCAHH educates, trains, and engages students in using a variety of strategies to address these problems, including direct service, education, and fundraising. www.studentsagainsthunger.org

The Student Government Resource Center works to strengthen student governments into more effective vehicles for student engagement and empowerment. www.studentgovresources.org

The Student Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) are independent statewide student organizations that work on issues including environmental protection, consumer protection, and hunger and homelessness. For more than 40 years, students working with their campus PIRG chapters have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world. www.studentpirgs.org

By: Kara Moore

Plant It Forward, a non-profit organization that helps refugee farmers in Houston, recently created a new initiative by utilizing farm stands to create a “front door” at their various urban farms. This initiative is what caught my attention, as a farm stand suddenly appeared along at the farm at Fondren and Willowbend by my apartment. It allowed me to meet with the farmers and a representative from Plant It Forward who were standing by, waiting to sell quality produce. The sweet potatoes were as big as my head, the spinach lasted much longer in my fridge than the stuff I got at the store, and the mint was fresh and potent. It got me wondering about how the organization got started and so I spoke with Daniella Lewis, the farm-stand manager with Plant It Forward.

Daniella’s primary job as the farm stand manager is to handle the grant that is given to Plant It Forward for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which establishes farm stands so farmers can sell more directly to the public. Currently, Plant It Forward has four farms: the one previously mentioned, one off of Bellaire Boulevard, one by University of St. Thomas and one off of Dunlap in the Westbury Community Garden. The primary purpose of this non-profit is rather simple: provide land, tools, and the skills necessary to begin an urban farm at no cost to the farmer. They take none of the profit from the farmers during this process. It’s an operation based entirely on donations and grant/government programs, with any money from the actual selling of the produce going into the pocket of these refugees.

To get the land, they partner with institutions who have the land but aren’t doing anything with it. Like the one on Fondren by my apartment: the land was zoned ultimately so it could only either be a plot of land, parking lot, or a farm. And Plant It Forward worked with the organization who owned it to make it a farm. In that same way, they’ve worked with UH organizations to get business training for their farmers: currently nine farmers in total, all from the Congo.

Theresa O’Donnell, president and founder of Plant It Forward, had one goal: a farm in every neighborhood. Daniella described it as “we want urban farms to be as common and part of everyday life as nail salons...every person knows they can go somewhere close-by to buy organically grown and freshly harvested produce; to increase the options to access healthy food.”

More than that, though, they are utilizing an untapped resource. Refugees come into Houston in large amounts with valuable skills, especially farming, but often lack the resources to buy huge plots of land to create a farm like they would have had back in their countries of origin, especially considering Houston doesn’t really have huge plots of farmland just lying around. By giving them the resources and the training for business and responsible growing habits, they enable these workers to become ingrained members of our American society, and provide for their families in the process.

The best way to support Plant It Forward? Take part in their Farm Share program. This program is their main source of income for the farmers, allowing people to pay in advance for a basket of fresh food every week for a whole growing season; alternatively, you can buy as you need from one their farm stand locations. As a non-profit, Plant It Forward also has plenty of volunteer opportunities in the form of helping with events or going to help these refugees harvest their produce.

To get involved and learn more about Plant It Forward, go to plant-it-forward.org.



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