

CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

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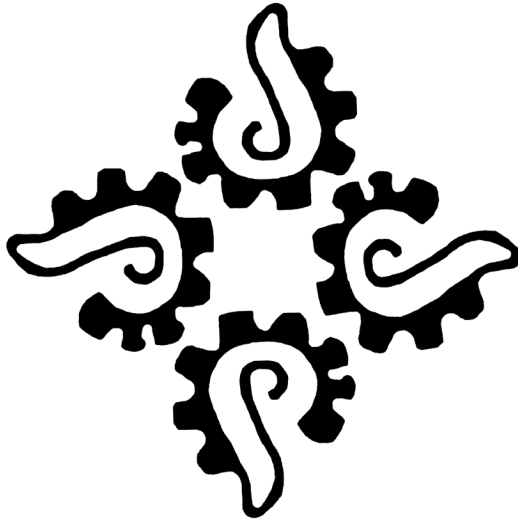
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CouRaGeouS Cuentos

A Journal of Counternarratives



A Journal of the Department of Critical
Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies

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About This Journal

CouRaGeouS Cuentos is a journal publication by the Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies (CRGS) at Humboldt State University. The journal is available both in digital commons at: digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos/ and as a printed, bound copy available through Amazon.com.

The works published in this journal are by students who took the course *Ethnic Studies 107: Chican@/Latinx Lives*. This year, students from Fortuna High School who worked with the Promotorx Transformative Educators Program also submitted their writing. Together, students want to make their stories, their counternarratives, available to their families, their communities, and any other students who could relate to their experiences.

The journal is published annually by students in the spring and fall semesters of each calendar year. The editing of the works is a collective effort by students in the class, students in *Ethnic Studies 280: Courageous Cuentos Production*, and the instructor of *Ethnic Studies 107: Chican@/Latinx Lives*. Every student in the class has the opportunity to publish their work and do so on a voluntary basis. Some students submit more than one entry, in addition to visual art that reflects central themes in each year's submissions.

Land Acknowledgement

As a student journal at HSU, we would like to acknowledge that HSU sits on the land of the Wiyot peoples which includes the Wiyot Tribe, Bear River Rancheria, and Blue Lake Rancheria. Arcata is known as Goudi'ni meaning "over in the woods" or "among the redwoods." Wiyot peoples continue to remain in relationship to these lands through ceremony, culture, and stewardship. They are important parts of not only the history of this area but also in continuing knowledges of this place.

We encourage those in Wiyot territory to make a contribution to the Honor Tax (<http://honortax.org/>), a system set up by local non-native people as one way to recognize and respect the sovereignty of the Wiyot people. Though there is no similar system for other Tribes in the region, we encourage direct giving to Tribes and Native-led efforts.

You can support such efforts on our campus by supporting the Native American Studies Department and the NAS Food Sovereignty Lab (nasp.humboldt.edu/fsl). Take their courses, attend their programming, and support their community projects and events.

Reconocimiento de Tierras

Nos gustaría reconocer que la Universidad Estatal de Humboldt se encuentra en la tierra de los pueblos Wiyot que incluye la Tribu Wiyot, Bear River Rancheria y Blue Lake Rancheria. Arcata se conoce como Goudí'ni, que significa "en el bosque" o "entre las secuoyas". Los pueblos Wiyot continúan manteniendo una relación con estas tierras a través de la ceremonia, la cultura y la administración. Son partes importantes no solo de la historia de esta área, sino también de los conocimientos continuos de este lugar.

Alentamos a quienes se encuentran en el territorio de Wiyot a hacer una contribución al impuesto al honor (<http://honortax.org/>), un sistema establecido por personas no nativas locales como una forma de reconocer y respetar la soberanía del pueblo de Wiyot. Aunque no existe un sistema similar para otras tribus en la región, alentamos las donaciones directas a las tribus y los esfuerzos dirigidos por los nativos.

Puede apoyar tales esfuerzos en nuestro campus apoyando al Departamento de Estudios Nativos Americanos y al Laboratorio de Soberanía Alimentaria de NAS (nasp.humboldt.edu/fsl). Realice sus cursos, asista a su programación y apoye sus proyectos y eventos comunitarios.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all the writers who submitted their stories—from students taking *Chican@/Latinx Lives* taught by Dr. Nancy Perez in CRGS, to Fortuna High School students taking Ms. Angela Alvarado's *Spanish for Native Speakers* class, and Jennifer Femenella, who participated in workshops led by The Promotrx Transformative Educators program led by Dr. Marisol Ruiz. Thank you for your generosity and courage, and for sharing your stories that will inspire new generations of students to come.

Many thanks to the students in the *CouRaGeouS Cuentos Production* class of 2021 for continuing the vision of the journal of publishing students' counternarratives. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, you showed up virtually every week and shared your visions together, so that students' stories continue to be honored and validated. I would also like to acknowledge and give gratitude to the *CouRaGeouS Cuentos Production* class of Spring 2020 for the work they put into the first iteration of this volume. Special thanks to Keryn Lopez, who volunteered his time outside his classes to edit submissions and extend his support.

We would also like to recognize Skylar Silva for designing our Volume 4 poster titled "Multiface." Thank you for the time and care you put into creating this beautiful poster that students can take home with them, a validation of their accomplishments and a reminder of community that was created through their collective, shared stories.

Special thanks to Digital Scholarship Librarian Kyle Morgan, Dean of Library Cyril Oberlander, and Victoria Bruner for the assistance with promoting our journal, inviting us to connect with the larger published writers' community on campus, and for tech assistance in preparation for our celebration event. Kyle Morgan, thank you for always checking in on us, and of course for putting in the last final details to our journal before it goes to printing. We appreciate you so much! This journal would not be possible without you.

To the staff and faculty of the Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies for your relentless support and encouragement. Thank you Professor Kim Berry, Christina Accomando, Ramona Bell, Maral Attallah, Janet Winston, Rain Marshall, Ana Bernal, Corrina Wells, Melitta Jackson, and Kenna Kay Hyatt—your commitment

and belief in the journal as it continues to evolve is immeasurable and everlasting.

To the DHHS Grant from the School of Education for co-sponsoring the CouRaGeouS Cuentos Release Event and the printing of the journals for students. Thank you to the Creando Raíces team for your continued support of the journal and its vision.

Huge gratitude to Professor Agustín Amaro and students taking his Translation and Interpretation Spanish course for volunteering their time to offer simultaneous English to Spanish interpretation at our celebration event. Thank you for making our event more inclusive for our students and their families.

Lastly, thank you to Rosamel Benavides-Garb, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences for his sustained support of this journal. We appreciate you so much for believing in the power of our stories, and for supporting our classes and their potential to transform our university.

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CouRaGeouS Cuentos Production Spring 2021

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Introduction

By Nancy Pérez and Marisol Ruiz

It takes courage for any of us to begin to write our stories. These are the stories of bravery from students across multiple spaces and virtual realms.

One of these spaces was Professor Nancy Perez's Ethnic Studies 107: Chican@/Latinx Lives course taught at HSU, where students learned about the long history of Chican@/Latinx struggle and mobilization in the fight for rights, empowerment, and liberation both in the classroom and in their communities. Students reflected on these histories and their own connection to them, a first-time experience for many of them who shared it was the first time they have taken a class where they got to center their own lived experience, identities, language, family histories, communities, and worldviews.

Another one of these spaces was in Fortuna High School in Humboldt County. The Promotrx Transformative Educators program led by Professor Marisol Ruiz began the journey in Ms. Angela Alvarado's Spanish for Native Speakers classroom, where they conducted a 2-week bilingual translanguaging writer's workshop inspired by the words of Gloria Anzaldua who reminded us not to be afraid to write our truths with our "wild tongues." Gloria Anzaldua also reminded us that if we are not the ones writing our stories, our struggles, and histories, then others would write them for us distorting who we truly are and erasing our existence, assimilating us into rigid identity categories and one way of being.

Before writing any of their stories, students were reminded that writing is a spiritual process where it is not only about writing our stories but about embarking on an inner journey, of reminding ourselves "Si tu puedes, tu eres una escritor(a), Yes tu historia me importa, Si your words matter because they explain your existence." We had to remember and believe that we had a voice and right to tell and write our stories without having to translate or explain them.

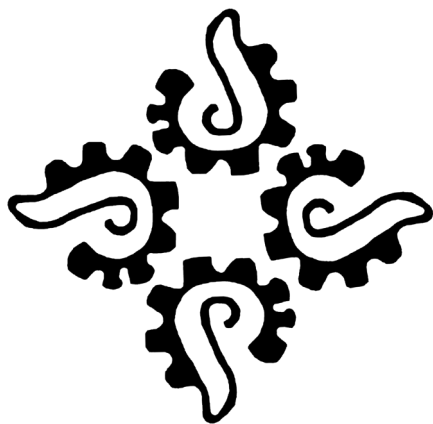
Despite the disproportionate challenges, systemic violence, immense loss, and restrictions that came with COVID-19 and movements for racial justice this past year, students still showed up to class and for

each other. They wrote and listened to each other's stories, processing the times and building a sense of community online with generosity always in mind. We hope that you celebrate the CouRaGeouS Cuentos in this volume with us, and that it inspires you to write your own story too. CouRaGeouS Cuentos is a step towards the pluriverse we are creating together with the voices of youth at the forefront.

To the writers
we love you
we are community and
we are fuerza!
may this complicate
your views of
who we are
may this let you see
you are not alone
but part of a community who
loves and
cherishes your existence
your words
your beauty
y sigue adelante
unapologetically
let your words flow with the wind

Que tus palabras vuelen con el viento
hacia tu familia
tu comunidad
tu mundo y
mi mundo
nuestro mundo
Nuestro mundo
Se complica, si
pero se ve
mas claro
que el ancho mar
que las olas lleven
tus palabras
mis palabras
nuestras palabras
a los sitios más lejanos
para que sigas existiendo

para que sigamos existiendo
Solos, juntos, unidos
y en todas partes
quiero alzar la voz y decir
Tu existes
no en la imaginación
sino aquí
ahora
en este instante
leamos
disfrutemos de
nuestros
Courageous Cuentos





A Letter for Atlanta

By Armando Pena

This letter is to send my love and condolences to the families impacted by this unnecessary evil. I hope for real justice for the Asian communities in Atlanta and across the United States. The moment of solidarity is long overdue. I stand with you in solidarity against the White Supremacy that breeds this hate and misogyny. Our communities can come together to create a more respectful life for our people. We must first begin with the cold hard fact that in this country, we are not created equal. Women of color have been demonized and dehumanized for far too long. We must be honest with ourselves. Our children are watching and they understand injustice and inequality. Now is the time to move together as communities of color who have suffered countless tragedies at the hands of colonial domination. Our histories are shared, our paths converged on the way to liberation. We have a collective responsibility to stand together to correct these atrocities against our people, all of our people. I have hope that we can heal our communities and I will do everything in my power to stand in solidarity with you. Let's honor our ancestors by remaining true to our people's visions. The vision of being the continuation of a rich legacy of truth, love, and dignity.

Dark Targets

By Kacie "Kase" Figueroa

We've had a target on our backs since the day we started to breathe,
A target that is never going to go away,
That target is a parasite and we are the host.

Day and night it's always hunting season for us,
Being hunted down like wild animals that "need to be tamed,"
And put within cages.

We are not wild animals.
We don't want to be put in cages or "be tamed."
I don't want my people, OUR people going through any of this any-
more.

Why does society have to fuck us over and over again?
What did WE do in order to put this
Big DARK target on my back, on OUR BACKS?

I have a question
When does my family, my friends, my people, our people, and my-
self
get the target off our backs ?

Oh right, I know
ONCE WE ARE ALL DEAD.

Cerote

By Klara Hernandez

I think my Central American voice has been silenced for long enough. You all know I am Salvi. You all have seen my “El Salvador” flag lanyard hanging from my backpack. My “Salvadoreña” and pupusas y platanos stickers on my water bottle. Tattoo on my arm. Heck maybe I’ll slap on a bumper sticker. Yes, I can feel the eyes rolling behind me thinking, “we get it you’re Salvi.” But nah, I have to do this every day until I die. Because it makes me sick to my stomach when people assume I’m Mexican. There was a good chunk of my life when I loved that because it was easier. Growing up I was branded “cerote” every single time I told a Mexican that I am Salvadorian (I intentionally spell it “I-A-N” by the way). I am reclaiming “cerote,” that word is mine now. It’s like our “n” word, and assuming I am Mexican is like saying all Asians are the same, it’s racist. My dad is in El Salvador right now, he left last night. For ten years he has been fighting for his green card back. Finally, the whole family shows up to court because during Trump’s time we thought this was it. The judge said because all his kids showed up, he gave him his green card back, and it felt like a miracle. That was the second time I’ve seen my dad cry. So he is there now scoping out all the safe areas waiting for me to meet up with him in a couple weeks. I am going to meet my grandpa and I am going to know my roots. It was hard to bring it out of him but my dad’s childhood consisted of dead bodies everywhere. Gunshots and bombs going off randomly. He escaped at eleven, the year before he would have been recruited into the civil war. He got here above a train. Daringly, I asked my grandma if she took a train. She snapped back, “I walked!” with such a faraway look I asked no further. Honestly, I hate speaking Spanish, don’t get me wrong I love my culture and I want to speak my native tongue, but it was literally cut out of their mouths. I get angry when I think about how Spanish was raped into my people. It makes me want to decolonize every aspect of my life. I want to run back to my roots but there is nowhere, nothing to run back to. So desperately I want to reconnect but it’s extinct.

I Want to be

By Eibar Romero

The thought of being home was probably the scariest for me because home to me meant many different things. Home to me meant that I wasn't working. Home to me meant that there would be violence. Home to me meant that there would be alcohol and drug abuse. Home to me meant that there'd be no peace. Quarantine meant that I'd have to be with my family, that I'd have to experience what I'd already gone through. It meant that I'd have to sit at the dinner table with them but, it also meant that I'd have to sit with my emotions. It was hard, and for the first time in a long time I had to be home on the weekends, I had to hear the yelling, the music, the people, can after can opening. It was hard. So, I escaped. I went somewhere where I felt that I was wanted, where I got attention, where there were times I was the only one that mattered to them, where I became an object rather than a person. But, where I got so attached I didn't want to let go. I cried. I didn't understand. I stayed because at least I didn't have to experience my childhood trauma all over again. I stayed because I was promised something in return, just like mi pa would promise mi ma. He left me. I was sad. I cried day and night because I didn't know who I was, what I wanted to be and where I wanted to be. So I moved out into the cutest apartment where my life has changed so much in so many great ways. I am independent. It wasn't easy. But I am at peace. I am healing. I am wanted by my plants that surround my windows. I am called by my sink to do my dishes and I sit on my mustard colored couch to watch the sunrise and the sunset. This is my new home, this is where I've been wanting to be and this is where I want to be.

Quarantine Thoughts

By Kate Ramirez

How could you separate our hearts
That took us tries and time
To heal and thrive, that now departs
Should I have seen a sign?

Here I am left wondering, why?
Who leaves their child behind?
Going insane with all your lies
Give me some peace of mind

Ignorar da Fuerzas

By Abigail Herrera Cabrera

Mi nombre es Abigail Herrera Cabrera y tengo catorce años. Tengo raíces muy fuertes aquí en Fortuna, CA. Aquí es donde se conocieron mis padres en el trabajo. Nací en el condado de Bakersfield, CA. Porque mi mamá quería estar cerca de mi papá que vivía ahí con su familia. La familia de mi mamá estaba en Fortuna, CA. Pero después de un tiempo, a mi mamá no le gusto vivir en el condado de Bakersfield porque no había suficiente trabajo para ella. Cuando tenía unos dos años, mis padres decidieron separarse el uno del otro porque su relación no funcionaba.

Mis abuelos de parte de mi mamá se mudaron al condado de Humboldt cuando mi mamá tenía 15. Ella también se graduó de Fortuna High School. Ya han pasado diecisiete años desde que mi familia se mudo a Fortuna para un mejor futuro y para que la familia tenga oportunidades que antes no tenían en otros lugares. Antes de la pandemia que está pasando, mi familia siempre tenía parrilladas y siempre celebramos los días festivos juntos.

Vivir en el condado de Humboldt es divertido y tiene paisajes muy lindos. Empezar la escuela fue muy importante para mí. Amaba ir a la escuela porque pude hacer nuevos amigos, conocer nueva gente, y hacer cosas nuevas. Pero un día empecé a odiar la escuela. Después de unos meses de ir a la escuela, otros niños me hacían burla. Esos mismos niños me estaban insultando con nombres y me iba a la casa llorando. Los niños Americanos me decían “Why are you here if you are brown. Brown people do not need to be in school.” Me fui a la casa llorando y me encerré en un cuarto donde había pintura blanca, esa que se usa para pintar las paredes y me la eché encima. Cuando me vio mi mamá me dijo, “Hija qué estás haciendo,” y yo le conteste, “Es que los niños de la escuela dicen que no necesito estar en la escuela porque soy morena.” Mi mamá me miró fijamente y me dijo con mucho amor y ternura, “El color no es importante, lo importante es tu mente, tu eres bella hermosa tu puedes.” El consejo de mi madre y su ternura me calmaron y me bañe. Pero las cosas que me decían mis compañeros por el color de mi piel y porque usaba lentes me afectaba mucho a pesar que el amor de mi madre me ofrecía consuelo.

Mi mamá empezó a darse cuenta que algo estaba pasando y me mando con el consejero escolar que se llamaba Mr. Castro. Casi todos los días iba para hablar con el consejero escolar y decirle de mi día y como otros se estaban burlando de mi. Esto pasó hasta que yo estaba en el segundo grado. Después del segundo grado, decidí defenderme contra estos otros estudiantes. Mi manera de hacer esto fue de ignorarlos. Empezando con el tercer grado, decidí no escuchar a la gente porque no me importaron sus opiniones. Empecé a hacer nuevos amigos que realmente les importaba y que me tenían respeto.

Finalmente, termine la escuela primaria, y empeze la escuela secundaria. Los cuatro años de escuela secundaria pasaron rápido. En un abrir y cerrar de ojos, ya estaba en el octavo grado y estaba en mi ceremonia de graduación con mi familia. En el medio del octavo grado, recibe notificaciones de que íbamos a empezar la educación a distancia por un rato por la pandemia COVID-19. Me dio tristeza porque estaba entusiasmada por tener una ceremonia normal de graduación. No pudimos hacer cosas como queríamos y no pudimos tener una ceremonia de graduación como planeamos e irnos para nuestro viaje de graduación. No pudimos tener una ceremonia de graduación como planeamos, pero por lo menos teníamos una ceremonia de graduación en la forma de conducir hasta la graduación en un parque. Mis amigos y familia fueron a la graduación y tomaron muchas fotos.

Ahora conociendo que soy un estudiante de primer año en la escuela secundaria es increíble. Cuando era más joven siempre iba a la escuela secundaria de mi tía para pasar tiempo con ella y conocer que es sentir estar en educación de nivel más alto. Mi sueño más grande es graduarme de la escuela secundaria e ir hasta la universidad. Cuando termine la universidad, quiero empezar una carrera como enfermera.

Life

By Ruben M. Robins

Sitting in the grass now
Looking at the clouds wow
Tryna hide all shame out, never done
Losing all my mind how?
This and that why now, never moving on, how I gotta move it on
Ride round town with the green burning slow
Cop stopped, lights off, on the side street
Tryna catch me never phase me nah
You donno me ha thought you had me
Head always spinning out, spinning on the water
I should throw it for some money but it be free
You too, please don't sip now on that Henny
check yourself man
you don't need it to find that happy
Life is in this flow now
I can never go down
Always in the background
Never giving up
I don't even know how
But I never showed how
So close to the edge, but now I'm over there and up
Always on alert, for a life, in the dark, hold on, stay strong, you'll be
okay
I was right there, in your spot, listen up, not your fault, face your
fear, keep it going
Do it for yourself, no one else, head up high, look alive, don't be shy,
only happy
Anyone you know, only know, right with you, by your side, only,
in, their, own, way, too,
Never give it up.

Mi Denuncia

By Jonni Segura

In high school my mental health was extremely poor due to navigating being trans as the only “daughter” of an extremely Mexican religious household. My freshman year I had tried to reach out to my school about getting help but it ended up falling short. Fast forward to junior year, my depression had reached an all-time high and I ended up being admitted into a mental institution for a week. Upon my return to school all the staff was made aware of the fact that I had gone to a mental institution, yet, the school made no effort and showed me no support in any way. I was assigned a therapist by the institution upon my release. The therapist I was assigned would meet me on campus for our weekly sessions. The school would open up the supply closet and that is where me and my therapist would meet every week. It was an extremely crowded room with boxes and shelves filled with random globes and projectors that went all the way up to the ceiling. There just so happened to be a table in there and me and my therapist would look around and try to find two chairs every week to sit on and have our session. Not only did my school not support me before things escalated enough that I had to go to a hospital but, they also continued to not show me any support even after that.

Ethnic Studies in the USA

By Rafael Dominguez

The article “‘If There is no Struggle, There is no Progress’: Transformative Youth Activism and the School of Ethnic studies” by Cabrera, et. al (2013) shows how ethnic studies in the USA continues to be oppressed in school systems. Arizona and Texas are states in which students and teachers organized to put ethnic studies in school curriculums. These organized civil disobedience groups opened a nationwide conversation regarding ethnic studies curriculum in middle schools, high schools, and universities. Arizona and Texas have been states that call ethnic studies courses to be “anti-american” and even “radical.” These states tried pushing legislation that would ban ethnic studies curricula and other states considered doing the same. However, California recently passed legislation that would require an ethnic studies course for a graduate requirement in post-secondary schools. By organizing community members to disobey civically, ethnic studies courses have been gaining more acceptance as part of the effort to transform curriculum in schools.

Grassroots direct action like transformative resistance is considered to be an effective method to promote equity. Transformative resistance occurs when people are motivated by social justice and have a critique of oppression and they change the oppressive system by transforming it into a new system. The opposite of transformative resistance is reactionary resistance in which people react to oppression without regard to social justice. UNIDOS was the organization that fought legislation in Arizona to continue their ethnic studies curriculum in high school. When protests began and teachers and students walked out of class, the media began saying students were simply walking out to ditch school. However instead of going to school, students and teachers instead attended the ethnic studies school that they organized together. Students and professors from around Arizona came together to learn about ethnic studies and they also discussed why they were protesting for ethnic studies curriculum. The forming of the school of ethnic studies showed how the students and teachers wanted real change in their curriculum, they showed that they could create a whole new system that would allow them to learn the curriculum. The students did not just create a new environment in which they could learn in, they also demanded that their voices be heard by tying themselves to school board members’ chairs before they met to discuss the legislation that would end ethnic studies curriculum. They resisted civically in this manner and

they created a new system to learn in which together are effective forms of taking action.

Now more than ever we need transformative resistance across every state. This year we have seen many protests because of police brutality and alike we have seen narratives where organizations like BLM are said to be radical and anti-American. By encouraging the acceptance of ethnic studies classes in classrooms all over the nation we can stop division in the USA. Ethnic studies details the histories of minority groups that have been oppressed in the USA and if others could learn about the systemic oppression that colonial knowledge continues to implement, we would be able to change the systems that continue to oppress minority groups.

Work Cited:

Cabrera, Nolan L, Meza, Elisa L, Romero, Andrea J, & Cintli Rodríguez, Roberto. (2013). "If There is No Struggle, There is No Progress": Transformative Youth Activism and the School of Ethnic Studies. *The Urban Review*, 45(1), 7-22.

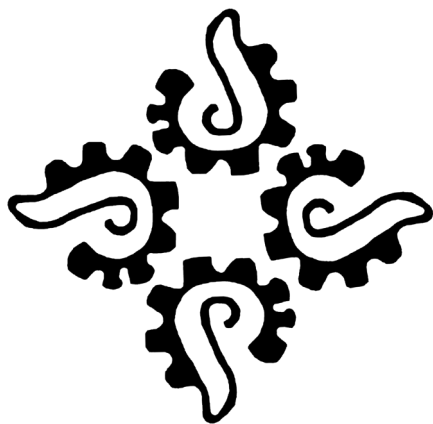
Living Sin Estatus Legal

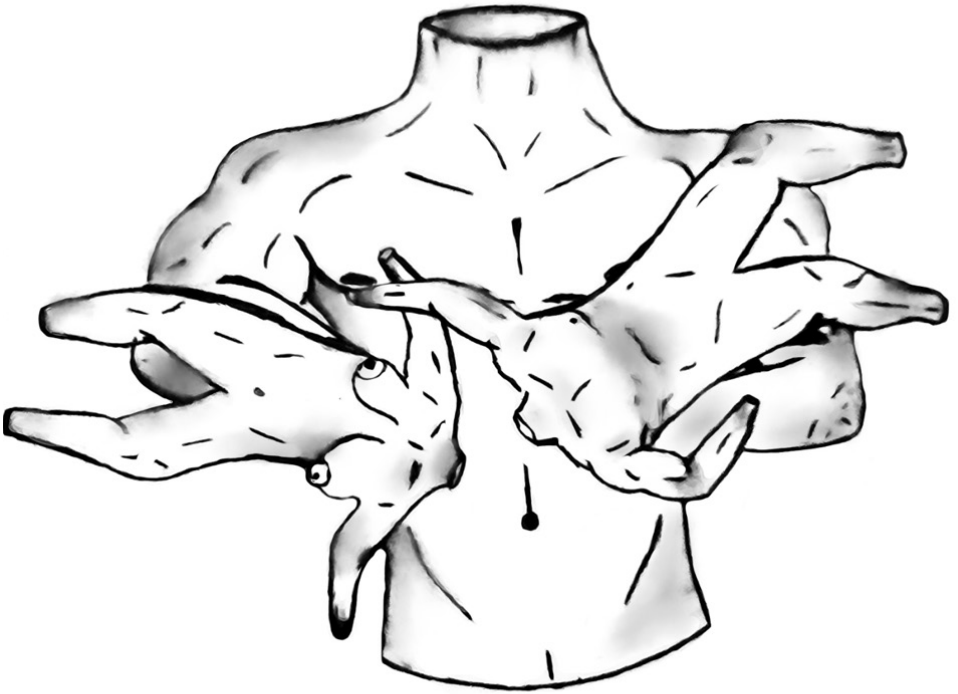
By Anayeli Auza

Growing up I never knew what living *sin papeles* truly meant. All I knew and all my parents ever told me was that I had to work harder because *no tenia papeles*. In 2012 when I was 15 years old Obama passed DACA, short for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Now, many people don't know this but Obama didn't use his executive power to implement DACA because in his heart he wanted to help undocumented youth. Let's not forget he deported roughly 2.5 million people without counting those that "self-deported." Obama used his executive power to implement DACA because of the pressure he was receiving from protest organized by undocumented youth. Prior to being a DACA recipient, the idea of pursuing higher education was not certain. I knew that as an undocumented person I would have difficulty finding a job that was willing to pay me "under the table." After being granted DACA, and obtaining a social security, I was more confident in searching for a job to pay for my school materials and tuition since undocumented students get the left-over financial aid money. Being a DACA recipient and being protected from deportation has allowed me to feel a sense of security in my day-to-day life. For instance, I was able to apply for a CA driver's license which has allowed me to board airplanes, enjoy a drink with friends and family without feeling targeted for showing a foreign ID, and own a car to drive myself to and from work without feeling like an encounter with law enforcement could lead to a possible deportation.

Trump's presidency really impacted my life because for the 4 years he was in office I didn't know if I was going to be able to keep my work permit. This meant I had to consider dropping out of college and moving back in with my family. Studying abroad was also something that I could no longer consider. On top of that, fearing that my family could get deported at any moment crossed my mind at least twice a day. DACA being cancelled also prevented many youth from obtaining this protection from deportation and 2-year work permit. The change in presidency has brought a lot of hope to the DACA-recipient community. However, even if there was an immigration reform, like Biden promised, it still wouldn't be inclusive of the entire undocumented community. So I always ask myself, "if an immigration reform was to pass but it didn't include people like my parents or my friend that made a dumb choice when they were 17, would I want to benefit from this reform?" As a DACA recipient

I am constantly fighting the good vs bad immigrant narrative. My parents aren't bad for wanting a better future for me and my brother. My parents aren't bad people for crossing the border without documentation. My parents just like many undocumented parents deserve to be included in any immigration reform because they have demonstrated how courageous and resilient they are.





Being Mixed

By Maya J. Brightman

Did you ever think you'd fall in love on vacation? Well, that's what happened with my mom and dad. My mom is Colombian and my dad is from the U.S. They met while he was on vacation. He didn't plan it, he just decided to go to Colombia one day. Once in Colombia he explored lots of places like the Iglesia Ermita, and the Zoológico en el Baile de Cali. A few weeks go by and he goes to a club, the same club my mom used to go to. They started talking and they liked each other so they started to date. They then quickly fell in love. That's when my mom decided she wanted to move to the U.S. to live together. My older sister also came to The United States, she was around 5 at the time.

My parents got married 2 months after my mom came to the U.S. (because of the K-1 visa). When my sister was 9 my mom was pregnant with my brother and I. People said my mom had the biggest belly they've ever seen. When we were born my brother came out first. Yes, we are twins! I had a little difficulty. My umbilical cord was wrapped around my neck and I almost died. But to this day I'm still alive!

Nowadays when people look at me they automatically think I am white. Yes, it does bother me, because I am mixed. My mom is black and my dad is white. For me I only look like my twin brother Matthew because he is mixed too. But not so much my sister because she is full Colombian. I think it is rude when people stare, although I do like the attention, but sometimes it can be annoying. In Colombia my mom always tells my brother and I to be super safe in Colombia because it's easy to get robbed or kidnaped, especially if I am very light skinned. This always scared me when I was younger. But other than that matter Colombia is really cool.

Growing up was really fun. Even though my first language was English my mom taught my brother and I to speak Spanish. She would always make my brother and I speak and read Spanish to her. At the time I hated it and I would cry but I'm glad she did because now I can communicate with my family.

Every year for about a month I go to Colombia and we rent a finca with a piscina. My cousins and I are in the pool almost every day. They always make fun of me because I always get the worst sun-

burn even after being outside for only 30 minutes. They don't even call me by my name they just call me a tomato! I don't like that but at least I always win in Marco Polo so we're even. After the pool we walk to la tienda at the corner and eat paletas de hielo. I love the chocolate kind, it's my favorite.

Even though my Spanish isn't great, we still make our way around it. I have 5 aunts and 2 uncles- my family loves to rumbear they can party until the sun goes up. It's always fun because my cousins and my brother and I always play tag or hide and seek when they are partying. it never gets old. When I'm there at times I feel out of place, because I'm white and my Spanish isn't great. It's hard sometimes, but other times I feel really good because they're family and family loves you no matter what.

Born in Oregon and Grown in Guanajuato: Traveling is a Way of Life

By Diego Santos

I am Diego Santos, and I'm 17 years old. I was born in Oregon, but when I was one year old we moved back to Mexico because my father had to resolve some issues with my grandfather, who lived in Guanajuato, Mexico.

I grew up in Guanajuato, Mexico until I was 15 years old alongside my older brother, Daniel, my sister, Angeles and my younger brother, Alexis. Living through hard and happy experiences made us unite as a family. In Guanajuato, Mexico we had 16 acres of land where my father planted corn, wheat, oats, alfalfa, and barley and I helped him take care of the plants by watering, and weeding them, I had to water them at 2:30 pm, each irrigation took 6-7 hours to be able to move on to the next irrigation and this was assisting him continuously every day for 5-6 months until we harvested and went to the next planting. I also helped harvest corn, wheat, oats, alfalfa, and barley.

My older brother, Daniel who at the time was 18 decided to come to the United States to earn more money for his family, because he already had a wife and a son. After seven years, Daniel decided to help us move to the United States so that we could have more opportunities, learn English and have a better education. As the years went by I began to look at life and people from a different perspective. As human beings we begin to think about our purpose in life. Friendships also undergo changes. Before I used to look at my brother as a person whom I admired. I wanted to learn everything from him. But once I got here I got to see another side of him. I know that he is the same person but like other people he wants to remain the same and is resistant to new ideas or perspectives. He can criticize other people but no one can criticize him. I think we all need to change. We should all be open to change. I am super open to change and new ideas. I still love him because he is my brother.

My brother missed us a lot and wanted to see us even though he would come to see us every two years for a month. But this was not enough time to spend together. I was happy to move to the United States with my mother, sister, and brother. I also loved to see my brother and his family. We talked about our lives when he was not with us, what our life was like in Mexico and the well-being of my

grandparents. But I was also sad because my father was not able to come with us, he stayed in Mexico to take care of the crops that help to sustain our family.

I have been here in the United States for three years. When I arrived for the first time I met a person who over time became my friend, we talked about the things we had to face when coming to the United States, we had fun in and out of school experiencing new and fun things that would make us become best friends and we spent good times together. I like the United States a lot and I want to live here but I also want to travel the world and discover new places, I want to visit Japan and eat the delicious ramen they make and go to anime and video game conventions made by Japanese.

Although I am having fun living here I still have a responsibility to go back to Mexico to visit my father. Being away from my father makes it difficult, so traveling back and forth will be a way of life for me.

A Reflection of Myself

By Lauren Gresser

Immediately when I am told to think of someone I love that has imposed some valuable wisdom on me, I think of my Grandma. She has always been a strong figure in my life and continues to play a large role in giving me guidance and shaping who I am. She is one of the few relatives I have that lives in California and has always lived no more than a 10-minute drive from me, so I have many childhood memories spending time at her apartment with her and my brother. When I think of her I see an older version of myself; we are both artistic, fashionable, talkative, spiritual, independent, intuitive, and have similar habits(both good and bad).

The majority of my memories I have with her consists of me sitting at her kitchen table where she would tell me her life stories and pass onto me what she has learned throughout her life. As I grew up she talked less to me like I was her granddaughter and more like I was a friend that she had grown up with, which is exactly how I feel when I am around her. She would tell me family drama that even my mom and aunts and uncles didn't know. I learned a lot from those stories she would tell me but the one thing I was able to take from all of those stories was that she had a great life simply because she didn't care what other people thought of her. Obviously, she had her ups and downs throughout her life and there were some things she wasn't able to do in her lifetime being a 1950s housewife that grew up in the projects of Brooklyn, but whatever opportunity she was given and able to take, you best believe she took it. To briefly summarize, the wisdom I have imparted from her was that no matter what path in life you choose, you will always find contentedness from it as long as it is the path that you have chosen for yourself and that no matter what, you should never make life decisions because it is what you are told to do or what is expected of you. She is one of the wisest people I have ever known and I am glad I continue to have her as a figure to look up to and I am grateful to be one of the many other lives that she has touched.

Incarnate

Inspired by the poem "I Am What I Am" by Rosario Morales

By Holly Rae

I am what I am,
I am plow pulling
Woman.
Woman, pulling
the patriarchal plow from
my heritage.

I am furrow,
deep in the disappointed brow
of ancestors.
I am excommunicated
progeny.

I am someone's
daughter.
Lost child,
who lost that someone.
Still I grow.
I am what I am.

I am fist to chest,
ontogeny
seeking new treks,
beneath feet
that follow faith found
in every trauma. Healed footsteps,
I create.

I am Mother.
I give birth to days. Free from abuse.
Mother of new cycles. My children's
inheritance.
I am what I am.
Woman, with a new compass.
Rebuilt with a
true north to heart, mending.

I am
Questions. Eager
to dig out roots
that connect to my why.
I am silenced passion.
I am facade
allowed. Quietly
queer. Loudly
cornered.
I am yet unbroken.

Unbroken woman
who tore her own path
to save herself.
Makes way for children
to understand, hard
questions must always be asked
to break chains,
face fears,
find strength in soil tilled
for growth.

I am perpetual
unraveling
of tired narratives.
I am permission.
I am disquiet embodied.
I am rectification breathing.
I am what I am.
My evolution will wait for no one.

That Crazy Chick With The Black Hair

By Anonymous

When she walks in the room you can feel the taste in the air start to adjust. Sometimes people look at her and see her face of disgust, and feel as though either they or she are unwelcomed in this space. But, the second we make eye contact I always see a smile. A smile that is bright and warm and full of the world's worst comments you could ever hear. When she sits next to you, you can feel her presence. She makes herself known and holds herself high above the rest of the room. If you're smooth enough to make her laugh it will echo down the halls of your mind and fill your own heart with laughter, leaving you both in a trance of giggles. This is rare to see from her if you don't spare the time. Most people might look at her and see someone intimidating. The art on her skin is some kind of resistance or a sign of someone not willing to talk, rather than simply thinking those tattoos are badass and a sign of someone who wants to be 'tatted as hell.' They might see her face filled with displeasure and discomfort as she looks at the people in her vicinity. But really, that's just her face. Sometimes she changes and becomes loud and obnoxious. It is one of the best things about her. Behind what looks and acts like a crazy loud bitch with black hair is the most beautiful spirit you will ever see. The light of her soul, that she is blind to herself at times, will fill whatever void you have of your own. The way she carries herself even at her lowest will show you that anything is possible. No matter what, you deserve love and care for yourself. I remember my days before I met Anya, I was a shell of the person I am today and riddled with insecurities and fear of anyone possibly getting a glimpse on what was actually going on in my mind. From the first day we talked it was like she ignited the light that I had inside me. One I couldn't see, and she didn't even know to try and help, but still ended up being that source of energy. I transformed into someone new, similar to her in the best ways. I could walk wherever I choose without the fear of someone noticing me and making an opinion of how I might be as a person. I know who I am. I know what I've done, and what I stand for. I will continue to fight for my life. I am the only opinion that truly matters when it comes to myself. That chick in the corner looking angry and unapproachable is the one thing in my life that has made it survivable.

Home In One House

By Theresa Lopez

If I could squish home into one house, I'd choose Nana's.

The first living room would have walls with pictures of family we didn't get to know

We'd have a wall for Nana's side, and one for Tata's

And then the third wall would be for Nana and Tata

On the shelves made of wood planks and bricks, we'd keep a box of notes from them

Like Tata's handwritten grocery lists, and Nana's cursive on the back of receipts

I hope the rest of us live long, and fourth wall can stay empty

The kitchen would still have that old linoleum tile, with light pink stripes and little blue flowers

Enough space for us all to listen to and retell our family ghost stories while taste testing sopa

We'll keep the comal on the back right burner, where it will always sit

We'd never lose track of the pots we need, and still have mix match tupperware

There would be a new dishwasher, and Brother will still wash the dishes by hand

I hope we can all eat together, happily at a table with enough chairs

The living room would have pictures of everyone who's still around

A whole wall of just us kids, and a row for our caps and gowns

Our couch will wrap along all the walls, and we'll still make our movie night bed on the floor

Use some of the blankets Nana made, and save the rest for when we need a little extra warmth

Snacks can go on TV trays that still have rings from Tata's daily cups of black cinnamon coffee

I hope mom still scares us when we fall asleep on Celebrity Ghost Stories or a scary movie

In the back patio we'll put a swinging bench and wind chimes

It'll always be big enough for everyone's parties

Just the right size for the drunken, sincere heart to hearts that happen past midnight

The lemon and orange trees would hang heavy with fruit we'd pick and eat

Make sure to weed the yard, and keep the rose bushes trimmed like Nana did

There's still gonna be bees sometimes, and mosquitos at night

Mostly, I hope we still remind each other to put mud on our bug bites.

Home

By Aaron Spiller

Home is in the East Bay hills. Dark green spots of coast live oak dot the rolling hills made golden by the heat of summer. The raucous calls of scrub jays and acorn woodpeckers are as ubiquitous as the smell of fresh dirt. The sky is a blend of pink and orange and the moon has risen from the hillside. The green and red of traffic lights make visible the town nestled in the valley below. The town is small. The community of people that live there is close-knit and friendly. Parks and community centers litter the town and are filled with barbecues and birdwatchers.

On the outskirts of the town, a long driveway lined with buckeye trees leads to a single-story house painted brown with green trim. Native shrubs are scattered chaotically throughout the yard, between them are patches of bunchgrass. A large oak shades much of the house during the heat of the day and a garden provides much of the produce that is found inside the house.

The interior walls of the house are painted with memories. Framed pictures—depicting family, friends, places explored, and sights seen—exude nostalgia. Visible between the frames is the forest green paint that spans the house. The living room features a long couch, suitable for the large family that inhabits the space. A bookshelf holds decades worth of accumulated stories, histories, and lessons. The smell of coffee leads guests from the living room into the kitchen.

The scene in the kitchen is a blend of old and new. Here, coffee, home-grown foods, and locally-bought produce dominate the cabinets. Kitchen decor items are old and represent years of tradition. This dichotomy encompasses what I consider my home.

Soy de la Tierra del Sol, I long for my Oaxaca

By Yaritza Gonzalez-Ramirez

I am from Rancho Alfaro which is a small town in Oaxaca, Mexico. Rancho Alfaro is part of the Mixteca region in Oaxaca. I am Mixteca, but I don't speak Mixteco, because it disappeared in my town. I know some words in Mixteco like: tí kuii (agua,water), shato (una tortilla de maíz grande en forma de triángulo). On special occasions we eat "Shato" because it takes a long time to make and you can eat this with honey or by itself. I want to learn Mixteco because I feel that it is part of me. I want to carry my language deeply within my soul.

Before I left my town to the United States I was learning a little Mixteco at school. When I was 15 years old, I left my town to live in Silacayoapam which is 30 minutes away from Rancho Alfaro. I moved there because the schools in my town Rancho Alfaro only went up to 8th grade. I know if you read this you might ask yourself "why" if it is only 30 minutes away but the cost of transportation would be too high for my family to afford so it was better to move to Silacayoapam and to live with my parent's friend because they would not charge rent. This is very common in Silacayoapam because people move to be able to attend school. The students in COBAO plantel 10 taught Mixteco and there I was able to learn a few words. I learned how to greet people in Mixteco, how to say hi and bye. I was in that school for one year. They began to teach Mixteco in March or April when they realized that many of us no longer spoke our language, Mixteco. I didn't learn a lot because they began teaching Mixteco towards the end of the year and because I was going to move to the United States. To learn Mixteco is one of my life goals.

Living in Oaxaca for 16 years of my life I had moments of sadness, stress, but also happy moments full of laughter. I had beautiful and wonderful moments in my little town, Rancho Alfaro. I have saved all those beautiful memories in my soul and I carry them with me. But all of this changed when my parents said we were going to travel to the United States. This changed my life, the news was not good for me, they were horrible news because I had my whole life in Mexico. I had friends, family, basically a very happy life. Now, I would have to say goodbye to that life. Maybe my life in Mexico was not a comfortable one nor was it full of luxuries but it was a very happy life.

One day my family planned a trip to a ravine, we had a good time. We left from the ravine in the afternoon, and when we got to Silacayoapam, my dad received a message that said, "El 18 de Mayo tienen su cita en el consulado" (May 18th you have an appointment at the consulate). I saw my father's face and he had an expression of surprise, he got into the car and he said, "Israel me envió un mensaje diciendo que el 18 de mayo tenemos la cita" (Israel sent me a message saying may 18th you have an appointment at the consulate). He sounded surprised and a little worried.

As soon as my dad gave us the news I felt so many emotions and maybe my family felt the same. I felt sad, worried, confused, etc. The farewell was tough, it wasn't easy, saying goodbye it hurt so much. I remember the last day at my school, I could not stop crying. It is not easy leaving when your friends tell you not to go. When I was in the car, I read a letter from my best friend. She wished me luck. Every word in that letter made me cry. On May 10th as we left Rancho Alfaro I could not stop crying. On May 11th we arrived at Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. We had to arrive days before the appointment because we had to go through several steps before the appointment such as the glaucoma exam, vaccinations, etc. The truth is that the days I spent in Juarez were fun and beautiful, we met wonderful people and we as a family had a good time. The day of the appointment arrived and at the consulate we had to wait some time before they would tell us if we were approved or not, then after answering some questions and showing a few papers that were needed they approved our residency to be in the United States. They told us that we had to wait three to seven business days before they gave us a six-month visa and that we would also have to go to El Paso, TX to sign papers. After three business days they spoke to us telling us to go to El Paso, TX to have our visa signed and that same day we entered the United States.

Once we got to the United States, we went to San Diego to see my father's brother, uncle Jose Luis, who we had not seen for over 20 years. I did not know him nor his family. We were there for a few days and then we went to see another uncle who lives in Bakersfield and we spent a few days there until we finally got to Fortuna. When we got to Fortuna the first thing I noticed was the change of weather. Oaxaca, San Diego, Bakersfield all have warm weather and Fortuna is cold. I was freezing. I had never felt so cold despite it being summer. But Humboldt is very beautiful. I love this place, walking

amongst the pines is very relaxing, the rivers look very clear and clear and above all meeting my family was very important to me. All of my mother's brothers are here and two of my dad's brothers are here. I met my uncles and cousins for the first time, seeing the emotions on their faces to see my mother after more than 18-24 years without seeing each other was something very moving. Moving to the United States was painful but also joyful because I got to meet my family again after so many years.

In August of that year I began school at Fortuna High School. Going to a school without knowing any English was not easy. Being spoken to in a language you do not know nor understand does not feel good. When I entered some of the classrooms the teacher would ask students, "Who speaks Spanish?" because the aide for Spanish speakers was not hired yet so the teacher had to rely on students to interpret for us. When she would ask if anyone spoke Spanish everyone in the classroom was silent, no one answered. Believe me, I have never felt so powerless. I wanted to run away and start crying, I felt many negative emotions. I just repeated in my mind: "relax, relax," but I felt that it did not work. I had never hated school as much as at that time. Students would then tell each other "Jose don't you speak Spanish" and then they would say "No, Teresa knows Spanish" or "Pedro stop lying, you speak Spanish." I remember that one of the girls once said "I only know how to say, 'Hola Como estas?'" Some of the students looked like they knew Spanish but maybe because they did not want to be associated with me; no one was willing to help me. I know that some of them spoke Spanish but I thought they were ashamed to be Mexican and speak Spanish and this is why they did not want to help me. Or maybe they thought that this was not their responsibility and they were not responsible for that burden to translate for someone. This happened in all of my classes and it felt horrible. I do not give that feeling to no one. Months later at different Latino parties like Quinceñeras I would meet some of the students' parents and see those students who did not want to help me. I would tell myself "Wow, no que no hablaban Español!... Wow that was messed up!" But at the same time, I am not sure why they decided not to help me. Maybe they had a good reason to not help me. I have never confronted them. However, there was always at least one student per classroom who did help me during that class period. After the period was over they would go on with their life, their help did not extend to showing me the U.S. social life or introducing me to friends or helping me navigate school.

After a week of this type of emotional torture they finally hired an interpreter that helped us a lot. Thanks to the interpreter we could understand, do things better and everything improved.

But not knowing English hurt me. I still have not mastered English, however, I recognize that it is my fault because I have not put the time and dedication to learning the language. I do not have a lot of friends in the United States because everyone here is not very social. I have cousins that grew up in Fortuna but I feel like they are different. I do not feel close to them, they are not very warm. If we were in Oaxaca and I just got to a new school, my classmates would say "Yaritza, come sit with me," "Yaritza hang out," and "Yaritza, later we will go out, come with us." Inviting a person who just came to a new school or place is important to making someone feel welcomed. My cousins go out with their friends and they have never invited me to go with them. Being here I feel trapped physically, mentally and emotionally, I feel that little by little I am ceasing to be me, but nevertheless I feel that it is part of my life now and I also belong here. I feel that coming here has taught me to value many things that I had and things that I did not have and now have. In Mexico I had friends and I felt welcomed and that I belonged there, here in the United States I have economic wellbeing and I have family who I love. During these years I have learned a lot, this change made me, it taught me courage. I realize that life changes when we least expect it. I know that many of us come here to improve ourselves and get ahead, to be better financially, I appreciate the opportunity and I feel lucky. I know that there are sacrifices in everything one does and I am willing to make those sacrifices. I know that on many occasions I have undervalued my life and I no longer want to do it, sometimes we are happy and we do not even realize it. I know that being here has also given me wonderful moments next to my family and friends, and new people that I have met, this is all thanks to the fact that I have come here. I have been able to meet people and I feel grateful and I should not be depressed.

Changes are not easy but this change has given me a beautiful lesson in life that changing a country, language, culture, people, and many other things are not always easy nor are they good or bad but one will learn something from this experience. As changes enter one's lives we must remember that many times things are not what they seem. Sometimes they paint a very wonderful picture of American life and it is not like this. Of course, there are good things, and vice versa, Mexican life is not all bad nor is everything wonderful. I

always learn something in different ways and I know that it is part of life. I want to continue learning and enjoying this life here in the United States, with the illusion of always visiting “Mi lindo Oaxaca” (My beautiful Oaxaca)- the title of a beautiful song, land where “Dios nunca muere” (God never dies) a second song, and where I listen to “Cancion Mixteca,” a third song which makes my skin get goosebumps when I think of it because I am Mixtec. I love the following line that last song which says “... oh, tierra del sol!, suspiro por verte ...” (Oh, land of the sun!, I long to see you.)

Citations of my three favorite songs that remind me of Oaxaca:

Lindo Oaxaca: <https://youtu.be/jkcOVPJlye4>

Dios Nunca Muere: https://youtu.be/WOAWSLv_08w

Cancion Mixteca: https://youtu.be/EG9jXZEI_Yk

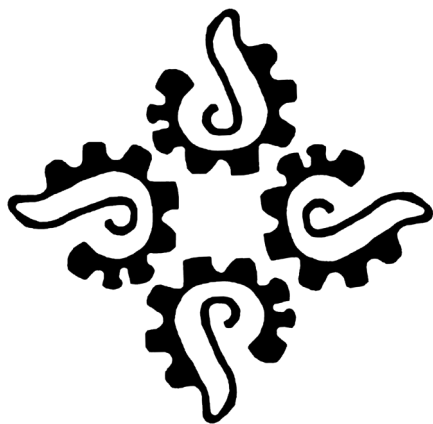
Ser Bilingüe es el Future

By Anthony Bravo Garcia

Nací en la ciudad de Fortuna, en el condado de Humboldt. Yo he vivido aquí toda mi vida. Mis padres emigraron a los Estados Unidos desde Oaxaca, México para un mejor futuro y para que sus hijos obtuvieran más oportunidades especialmente la oportunidad de estudiar. Me identifico como Latinx porque nació en los Estados Unidos. Creciendo con la identidad Latinx en el condado de Humboldt es divertido porque hay una comunidad grande de Latinos en esta área.

Aunque nació en los Estados Unidos mi primer idioma fue el español porque crecí hablando español en casa con mis padres. Una vez en el jardín infantil se me hizo difícil comprender el aspecto de la lectura y escritura, lo que me llevó a ir a una clase especial donde aprendí a leer y escribir incorporando el dibujo. Yo soy muy bueno para dibujar y eso fue lo que desarrolle antes de poder escribir y leer. Todavía me acuerdo que el primero libro que leí fue el de "Rana y Sapo" (Frog and Toad). Después de leer el libro tenía que escribir lo que sucedió y dibujar. El dibujo fue cuando ya no se me hizo difícil leer y escribir en inglés y en español. Usé lo que aprendí en esa clase para convertirme en un hablante bilingüe. Convertirse en un hablante bilingüe abrirá muchas puertas en el futuro.

En el futuro espero estudiar arquitectura en la universidad. Mi pasión nació cuando mi tío Gerardo me llevó a su trabajo en Honeydew que queda a 12 millas de Scotia, es también parte de Humboldt County. En Honeydew pude ver como mi tío diseñaba jardines en diferentes casas. Honeydew es un pueblo chico, no viven muchas personas ahí y hace mucho calor. Mi tío diseño un jardín para que las plantas no se acaloraran, ósea donde las plantas pudieran crecer y dar frutos sin acalorarse y marchitarse. Mi tío es hermano de mi mama, el es muy divertido siempre está diciendo bromas. Siempre la paso muy bien con el. Me gustaría estudiar arquitectura en la misma universidad que fue mi tío, Chico State University. En el futuro también quiero diseñar casas y jardines en el condado de Humboldt





Tribute to Fifteen

By Steffi Puerto

I'd like to think of fifteen as a golden year of growing up, yet being fifteen and Chicana holds a whole different meaning. At the age of fifteen, the world seems unstoppable, similar to a novela. Life is moving at a drastic pace and with any possible outcome emotions and friendships begin to flourish, taking a significant role in adolescence. Altogether this creates spaces where memories not only become defined, but also a piece of you. Aurora Guerrero the director of the film *Mosquita Y Mari* (2012) is able to capture these feelings, and give a sense to what it feels like to be at the age of discovery and friendship. The movie resonated a lot with me as I found myself being able to connect the main characters, in a time when I was discovering myself. The age of fifteen is also the age of defiance in a young Chicana's life, connecting to my idea of fifteen as the age of women-hood, and self-discovery. At the end of the day, fifteen is a tricky year because you are phased with personal conflict and growth, yet it shapes you into the person you identify with today.

The best memories are formed with unexpected plans and unforgettable friendships that create a moment that could possibly never be replaced. The giant hill on 82nd holds many memories of adolescence and reckless behavior. This hill sits perfectly tall and majestic, with a narrow road that leads to an amazing view of East Oakland. You can see it all from this hill, from the Castlemont football players putting in that work, to people heading home after a long day of work. Beyond the coliseum you can see the start of the suburbs that turn into the rough "ghetto" city I called home, to the gentrification that had eaten part of the beauty of the "ghetto" and transformed into a billionaire hotspot. That transformation has succeeded in turning the beautiful town that I know into something I no longer recognize. The memory of the 82nd hill has not only been able to capture the beauty I see within my community but also the amazing conversations I have shared with my best friend Sabrina, as we discovered the lonely hill during the summer of being fifteen. Fifteen with the first taste to freedom, skipping out on cross country practice to climb up this hill and talk about the boys who hurt us, and the things we never told anyone. I still keep in my heart the secrets that have been buried within time on that hill. Through watching the film *Mosquita Y Mari* I found myself going through a deep set of memories. Mosquita and Maris' dynamic was unbreakable and so raw to an age where it feels like you are the only fighter in a battle of

emotions, and uncertain twists and turns. Like Mosquita, I was very shy and timid at the age of fifteen, and like Mari, Sabrina was hurt by the world we found ourselves in. Our friendship dynamic was strengthened through conversation, many inside jokes, and a lot of food tasting and making. Fifteen was shared not only on top of an amazing hill, but it was shared with my best friend Sabrina. Although now older, we still share the same dynamic we built together at the age of fifteen.

Now the age of sixteen became a whole different story to be frankly honest. Fifteen was sweet but living in a low-income community makes you realize a lot of things. For instance, you can no longer depend on your parents for money, they work hard enough. Second, you get this urge to want to grow up so fast that you look for a job, and soon start slaving away for corporate America. Only to realize that although you know you have a good significant amount of money it is useless because you do not really have anyone to spend it with. I unfortunately fell into this trap like many of my friends. I remember hanging out with Sabrina and talking about how cool it was going to be that we're both going to have our own jobs and would not have to worry about how much we spent, or not having enough money to hang out. That dream was a fat lie, the transformation took its form in the days, weeks, and even months till I saw her, and our time that was spent on that hill became a distant memory. We created time during the summer to go visit the hill that stayed perfectly still on 82nd, but to our surprise found high school couples making out, and even a blue kiddie pool laying by the narrow road where kids now come and slide from the top of the hill during the summer. We found it pleasant that others found the place like us and created their own memories.

Yet at the peak of it all my senior year arose and I began to ponder a lot about the person I was at fifteen. The person I am now and the person I wanted to become. As cheesy as this sounds I sought my best friend as a form of resistance to revisit the memories that shaped us. Reaching out was easy, we made time for each other and revisited the hill that rightfully belonged to us. I recall laying outside her car as we sparked a joint and began reminiscing about the age of fifteen. The age of innocence and where we were now. For me smoking that joint on top of the hill was not only a form of resistance to reliving a memory I once knew, but it was also about closing a chapter and securing my adolescence at that very moment. We were no longer fifteen, we were eighteen and although sixteen

was not perfect it has created a ripple effect to the lives we live now. At fifteen life is sweet, because the world is your oyster of discovery yet when sixteen comes around you soon realize you have to grow up and being reckless is no longer an option. Then at the tip of it all you turn eighteen and you are considered an adult and have transcended based on these memories and life lessons to the person you are today. I can understand that same feeling of being a kid and identifying with an image and then turning fifteen and feeling like you can finally represent yourself and identify the way you really feel. Presenting yourself like the person you are beyond age.

At the end of the day, memory, transformation, and resistance are a big part of what it means to grow up. We can hold onto the memories we have created. We can cherish and love them yet with time transformation takes its course and shakes up your reality, it's the most important part of growing up. In the end, we create resistance in order to feel in control of what we used to know and feel. That leads you to understand and grow even more and appreciate not only what you had at fifteen, but work to enjoy what is left to come and continue the cycle in new spaces, building new friendships and together creating unforgettable moments.

Tradition

By Pricilla Ceja

I live in a small town in the Central Valley. Being from a small town meant there is not much to do, except once a year for about a week when the Spring Fair would come around. Every year my friends and I would always get excited about it wondering what rides would be there, if there were any new ones, what kind of fair food we would eat, and what kind of act was going to be the main event. The first year I moved there was the year I was introduced to the fair and thankfully it happened during a first-grade field trip so I didn't have to spend it alone, lost and confused. I remember the only ride we were able to get on was the Ferris wheel. Our chaperon bought our group of six tickets enough to go on a ride of our choice but we all had to agree on it (and reach the height limit). Being on top of what seemed like the world was so strange, I don't want to say it was life changing, but in a way, it was.

The next year was a little different. I was still the new kid and had not formed any real "out of school" friendships and so I went to the fair alone, with my mother. I remember going through all the little kid rides by myself and having no issues with them, but then I decided to be brave and stand in one of the big kid lines. I remember my world felt a little blurry waiting in line. I remember my hands got sweaty and I felt the people in line being too close to me. I remember looking for my mom, trying to find her sitting at the bench waiting for me but I couldn't see her. And then I got to the front of the line and I had a decision to make, do I walk straight and leave through the exit or do I turn right and enter the ride. I looked up at the uninterested ticket collector, shakenly showed him my free rides bracelet and walked onto the Gravitron. Leaving the ride a bit bolder, I led my mom right back to the kiddie rides until it was time to leave, not before I rode the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that year. A tradition I was able to keep even through the next two years when I had to go with my sisters and all it took were a few tears and pleading.

Fifth grade was the first year I was able to go with friends. I remember sitting in class during silent read when my best friend at the time passed me a note asking if I wanted to go to the fair with her and her brothers. I also remember getting a stern look from the teacher because I gasped in excitement. The next three years my friend and I went together, once more with her brothers, once just me and her,

and one final time with our little group from junior high. At the top of the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that year, my best friend of four years told me she was moving away. The excitement of being at the top of the world and being able to see across the field and see the whole fair went away. The lights went blurry as I started to cry and the sounds of the radios playing from the other rides went away. All I could hear was my friend telling me she would still be in touch. The fair ended, school ended, and my friend never talked to me again.

Freshman year, I went with a boy. My parents thought I went with a group of friends again, which I did but we all split off with our respective partners as soon as we got to the middle of the fair. I remember every chance he got he would put his arm around me and I would mentally scream and physically distance myself. It's not that I didn't want to be with him, but what if someone saw? On top of the world, we had our first kiss on our first and last ride on the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that night before going home. We broke up a week later before he moved away.

Sophomore year, I went with a girl. Again, my parents thought I went with friends and I did except she didn't want to be with them so we split off alone. It felt familiar and yet different with her. I remember she would get closer and I would get nervous, mentally scream and try to move away, we weren't doing anything bad but what if someone saw? Is this how Mosquita y Mari felt when they were laying on the couch together? They weren't doing anything bad, but what if someone saw? What would they think of them? I remember her grabbing my hand tight when we went upside down or spun really fast on every scary ride. When we got on the Ferris wheel for the first and last time, she told me she liked me and we made out until we lost our breath. She switched schools the following week.

The next two years I spent the fair with my friends (and brother). But something was different. There were too many people. Instead of short lines with a waiting time of 10 minutes, we would have to stand waiting 30 minutes if we were lucky and no groups jumped the line. Instead the lanes between the rides and games were filled with people. My little town was growing. Big named companies never lasted long because no one trusted anything other than the local restaurants or stores, but times were changing. Open fields that were reserved for farming are being bought for houses, with

the local news articles talking about how “Shopping is conveniently located just around the corner” inviting people to shop at these big name companies. These were the only years I wasn’t able to get on the Ferris wheel because of the long lines. None of my friends wanted to wait to get on and my brother wanted to go home, we were all tired and hungry. More people meant higher food prices, something we didn’t expect the first year and figured it was cheaper to eat after during the second year.

The next year my friends and I spent the money for the free rides bracelet for our siblings and bought tickets for ourselves. We decided it wasn’t worth wasting the money on the bracelets on ourselves if we were only going to be able to ride 5 rides, since we would be leaving early to eat. It was nice getting to hang out with my friends under the shady benches and people watch. We were able to try out the fair games, something we didn’t do because they wouldn’t allow the prizes on the rides and leaving them out was the fastest way to get them stolen. Leaving the fair to go eat, we figured out that with everyone at the fair meant downtown was free. We were able to walk into restaurants that would usually require a reservation and be as loud as we wanted, within reason of course. After, we ended up going to the movies and had the whole theater room to ourselves. Laughing out loud and making fun of the people on the screen I think we all collectively agreed we were having more fun there than we’ve been having at the fair the last three years. The fair had a lot of firsts for me, and I saw it as a tradition to finish it off with the Ferris wheel ride, but after spending that night hanging out with my friends I realized some traditions were meant to be broken because they sometimes created better ones.

A Quilt of Memories

By Abbyleeny Gonzalez Ramirez

My first day in high school, it was something that left a mark on me because I came from a different school, country, culture, and language — everything was different.

My name is Abbyleeny Gonzalez Ramirez but I like to be called Abby. I live with my parents, Jose Antonio and Maria, my brother Jesus and my sister, Yaritza. We are from Oaxaca, Mexico. Oaxacan culture is beautiful because they wear their huipiles with extravagant colors. Their cuisine is nationally recognized, its climate is really beautiful and there is so much to say about its beaches. A very special tradition is the Guelaguetza, a folk-dance festival, where we represent our traditional dances from the different regions in Oaxaca.

I was born in a small town in Oaxaca. When I was 5 years old, I lost my grandfather from my father's side, to this day it still hurts me, losing him was a lot for me. Another death that affected me was my grandmother's aunt sister, who was another grandmother to me. She died two days before my birthday. It was something very emotional because everyone in my family knew the moment of her death would come, except me, and they were right because she had cancer, which I didn't know, and seeing her die was something that I still cannot overcome.

When I was little I really liked school, I went to one of the most outstanding schools in the area. I competed with several schools, where we would have competitions to see who was smarter in several subjects. It was not only one subject but all of them, which were: mathematics, Spanish, science, history, government, and ethical training. I placed in the top 3 of all of the students. At the end of the school year they gave us the diplomas with the place that we had won, and they gave us an award from the community. Once I won 200 pesos and all of us who won one of the first places got to go eat at a place where you could also play soccer, volleyball and other games. There was also a small lake where you could feed the fish and ducks. It was a very happy moment for me because I felt a sense of accomplishment for the first time in my life.

Even though I was in 9th grade when we moved from Mexico, I had to start over when we arrived in Fortuna because I lost most of the

school year due to the move. I have many memories of the year that I was in high school, but a funny memory that I have was 3 days before the Day of the Dead. My class wanted to make an offering in the room and the teacher agreed since there was a lot of space in the room. The next day we began to put offerings on the ofrenda, and the teacher brought a portrait to make it look more beautiful. However, students from another room saw the offering and began to steal the fruits and sweets. They did it when the teacher was not there, so one of my classmates stood at the door so no one could enter, and I don't know how it happened, but the door came off the hinges and landed on a classmate. The students and I helped her out from underneath it, at which point we realized that she had a huge bump on her forehead. Nothing ever happened with that because the teachers never knew, but it's still funny to me.

Once I reached 9th grade, laziness began to set in and my grades began to drop. At first I liked going, but I saw a lack of respect there, not even for the teachers, much less among us students. The principal who was also a teacher bullied the students that he felt were either weak, mentally challenged, out of shape, or not the same religion as him. He would specifically bully students that he knew did not have a father to defend them, maybe because the dad either passed away or left the home, and the moms were too afraid to do anything about it. I was lucky because I had a dad, but I would always help my friend who did not. He always had a favorite student and discriminated against the others, so I didn't like being in that school. It was like being in a hell that I wanted to end and leave, but I never thought of going to another state, much less leaving the country. The day they told me that I was going to come to the United States, I was shocked, but at the same time I was happy because I was going to meet my mother's side of the family and I would be able to leave that school.

The process to come to the US was long; we spent about half a month in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. A lady who was hired to help us with everything was very kind to us. I remember very little about that place, but the lady showed us several tourist places. One place that she took us was the house of Juan Gabriel, a famous singer and composer. We could not enter but from the outside the garden looked very beautiful, with a large green lawn with trees, and flowers and songs were heard in the background. Something that I do remember perfectly is that the lady who helped us with the process to go to the United States, had us plant a rose bush or a tree in the

park that she would take care of as a symbol of our new residency in the United States.

When we arrived, my father wanted to go see his brother who lives in San Diego, so we went to San Diego when we entered California. We stayed for almost a week, I liked its climate, but I especially liked meeting my uncle and his family. One day my uncle took us to a park near his house, while my brother played soccer with my cousin. I would lie down on the green grass watching the sky and the air would feel fresh on my face. Then we went to Bakersfield. Another uncle lives there. He is my father's brother and there was a lot of family that we visited, so we stayed for more than a week. One memory I have is that they invited us to watch a soccer game. It was very hot, but the good thing was that they put up tarps and it was shady. When it was over they invited us to eat, and then they started singing. The atmosphere was fantastic, and it continued until around 11 at night. Lastly, we came to Fortuna.

The truth is, I didn't want to come to the United States, but I wanted to meet my mother's family and another uncle on my father's side. That same night we arrived at my aunt's house, my uncle Lalo also arrived. I did not know what he was like but when my very religious Catholic uncle Israel brought us dinner and began to pray, we all noticed Uncle Lalo's food was already gone, and I remember everyone laughing. What I really liked was seeing the trees and the tranquility and I felt that I was in my town. What I liked the least was the climate, I was used to the heat and it was very cold in Fortuna. It was fun though, I thought I was going to miss my town in Mexico, but it wasn't like that, at least, not at first.

The first day I went to my new high school in Fortuna, my way of thinking changed, mainly the first days. I didn't have an interpreter, and my only company was my sister but we had different classes. I saw how Latinos, mainly Mexicans, made fun of me for not speaking or understanding English. Since then I promised myself not to do the same, the day a Latino arrived and did not know English I would help him. Then I met Diego, Daniel and so on and I made sure to help them navigate the school. I like being in high school despite everything. I feel very happy now I have friends, favorite teachers like the Fem and Holmes. I have many memories and that makes me very happy.

Dels

By Ricardo Torres

Two, zero, one, five the year we met that one night.
Tall, curly hair, with beautiful eyes something that I could get used
to for the rest of my life.

Sneaking out to see each other under the bright moonlight I knew I
found the right one.

Opening the car door for you, always by your side.
Gestures everyone thought they were gone. I brought them back to
life.

Because even when I lost, I was winning having you by my side.
I'd do anything for my love!

But who would have known this was just a life lesson after all?
I realized being at the heights of love it also brought me to my fall.

Unfortunately, you broke me apart.

I inhale the cigarette smoke and I die inside.

I exhale and realize you are my past.

Como me enseñaste que todo sucedió por una razón.

Con este poema me voy...

Loving the Game is Greater than my Breathing!

By Josue Morales

Hello, my name is Josue Morales. I'm from Mexico, Morelia Michoacán. Morelia is the capital of Michoacán, it is the largest place that can be found in all of Michoacán. I lived in Morelia for most of my life.

I am 16 years old and I am a freshman in Fortuna high school. I migrated to the United States when I was 13 with my family – my older brother, my two sisters, and both of my parents. I didn't have a family in the United States so it was a bit difficult to adapt to living in the United States, but when I entered the soccer team it was easier to adapt because I made many friends. When I came to the United States, I came to Humboldt County because there my father had a friend who gave us a house to live in.

I have loved soccer since I was 6 years old. I started to like soccer because my mother played soccer when I was 7 years old for a team in Morelia, Michoacán. I liked going to see her play soccer at all her games and my father accompanied me. I started playing soccer when I was 7 years old in a team in Morelia. In Morelia if you want to be on a soccer team you have to pay because they need to pay for the uniform, travel, and food. My parents gave me the money to pay so I could be part of the team. It was very expensive but my parents made a great effort to pay for this by working longer hours. For one year, I had to stop playing soccer because we didn't have the money to pay for it. The economic situation was very difficult.

My family decided to migrate to the United States to have a better life and so I could attain a better education in the United States. I didn't speak English and in the small county of Humboldt, there weren't many teams when I arrived. I didn't play soccer for another year, sometimes I thought that I would never play soccer again because it was difficult to be able to find a team to play with. When I graduated from middle school and entered Fortuna high school, some friends told me that I could join the school's soccer team and so I did.

When I joined the team, my English and confidence improved because my teammates taught me words I did not know and they made me feel welcomed. My soccer teammates and friends have always supported me and helped me improve my English in and off

the field. They were always telling me “No that is not how you say it ; you say it like this... .” Most of my teammates are bilingual and they were born in the United States so they tell me how to say things correctly. I made Mexican friends and also white friends. It was a bit difficult to understand everything the coach was saying because he only spoke English but there were many people who spoke Spanish and they translated some things for me. This made me feel supported and welcomed and that I was part of a soccer family.

In 2021, we played against different soccer teams for five weeks. We stopped playing for 2 weeks because of COVID-19, there were some students in Fortuna High who were infected and it took us 4 weeks to be able to play another soccer match. Only 2 family members were able to come see us play due to COVID-19. We had to wear a mask on and off the field this made it difficult for all of us to play. We have not gotten used to wearing a mask in games because you can't breathe so it is difficult to play. We had to travel to play games but we couldn't take off our masks on those long trips. Breathing was hard, sometimes I felt I needed more oxygen but the love for the game was greater than my breathing.

When COVID -19 ends, I hope everything is better so that we can celebrate our team's wins and be able to play the whole tournament without wearing a mask. I want to be able to be with my friends after games. I also want to spend time with my family and go to the river and shop at the mall, and visit my friends who live in Los Angeles. Finally, I hope that when the COVID-19 ends everything will return to normal.

Soul Sisters

By Julia Top

For every person there is always that one person that is special to you in your life. It can either be a family member, a teacher, or a friend. You can spend countless hours with this person for many years but still not know parts of their life or who they are. As you learn more about them, you start to understand the person more. The person I'm talking about, and who is an important person in my life, is my best friend.

I remember when I was around the age of 9 I had to start over, make new friends, and become a new version of myself because I was attending a new school. The school I attended ran from K-12 and I started during the 5th grade. Even on the first day I could tell everyone in my class knew each other and grew up together. I had a group of friends that I hung out with every day for the past 9 years, these 7 girls were my everything. I remember thinking I would do anything for them and that still stands till this day. We grew up together, but even though we hung out every day and were good friends as a group, we talked to one another individually as well. We all had that one person that we were closer to in our group, but for me that wasn't my best friend. I never thought that after 9 years the person who I would consider my best friend was someone I rarely talked to growing up.

Growing up there were certain events in my life that I never shared with my friends so expressing how I felt was very hard for me, whether it be good or bad moments. I was a very private person who didn't let anyone in, until I went to college. My roommate was part of my friend group back home but we were never close until we found out we were both attending the same university. Growing up we saw each other in different ways than we do now. I remember in high school I was known as a loud and energetic person, while my best friend was known as the class clown who talked to everyone. But after coming to HSU we realized we had our reasons for why we acted that way, and together we became more of the people we wanted to be.

Being far away from home was something new for both of us since we weren't with our families and the people we grew up with had gone our separate ways. We only had each other which was hard considering it took us a while to be able to open up to one another. Opening up was especially hard for me. Living with my best friend

has been a transformation, in a way, for me. Growing up I had always kept to myself and shut people out. I believed that I didn't need people to fall back on when I needed support, because that's not how I grew up. I believed that I had to be independent and had to deal with my problems by ignoring them. But coming here and living with my best friend, I learned how to be more open with how I'm feeling. She now knows about every event throughout my life and how much it affected me, I also know certain events that went on in her life. After learning more about each other we became closer to where I consider her more than my best friend, she's my sister. For me, opening up is still something I'm learning, but it is easier for me now. I know that by coming down to HSU I grew more as a person, but the best experience is growing with my best friend and knowing that she's a person that I will have in my life continuously.

Mi Persona

By Fabi López

Recuerdo todo como la primera vez, como tus ojitos dulces se iluminaban al verme. Tu sonrisa se formaba lentamente cuando me acercaba a ti. Como extraño esos tiempos. Cuando todo era más fácil. Aquel día cuando besaste mi frente inesperadamente me di cuenta que tu eras mi persona. La persona con la que quería compartir cada minuto. Tal vez éramos muy chicos, muy ingenuos. ¿Pero qué esperábamos? Definitivamente lo éramos. La vida te trajo hacia mí para enseñarme grandes lecciones.

Tu me enseñaste a querer, a ser una mejor hija, hermana, y persona. Me ayudaste a comunicarme más con mi familia y tener ese enlace familiar que me hacía falta. Me enseñaste a cuidar de la gente que quiero. En los momentos que necesitaba hablar con alguien siempre estuviste ahí sin pensarlo dos veces. Recuerdo como me decías que no me importara lo que dijeran los demás, que siempre fuera yo misma y que no cambiará mi forma de ser. Me enseñaste a apreciar todo lo que tenía a mi alrededor. Me enseñaste a compartir los bellos momentos con la gente que aprecio. Y a no ser egoísta. Siempre me decías que luchara por mis sueños. Y eso es lo que estoy haciendo.

Pero te lo dije. Éramos muy chicos para saber lo que nos tenía el destino. El largo tiempo que estuvimos juntos me hizo aprender que todo lo bello se termina algún día. Y hasta el día de hoy sigo aprendiendo de ti. El día que diste la vuelta, me seguiste enseñando buenas lecciones. Aprendí a valirme por mi misma. Me di cuenta de lo fuerte que en realidad soy. También aprendí que el tiempo cura todo lo malo. Siempre estaré agradecida por cada minuto de tu tiempo que fue dedicado hacia mí. Por todos los consejos y por el amor que me diste. Te estimo y te deseo lo mejor en la vida. Independientemente de lo que haya sucedido, siempre te apreciare. Gracias por ser mi persona. Siempre lo serás.

I am from both sides of the Border- Humboldt and Michoacán

By Estefani Villalobos Valencia

Hello, my name is Estefani Villalobos Valencia. I am from Humboldt County, California. Yes, believe it or not, I was born here and I lived here the first seven years of my life. I went to South Fortuna Elementary until 2nd grade. Later, my parents had the drastic decision to move to Mexico to Aguililla, a town in Michoacán and I lived there for 10 years. I am going to tell you a little about my history in Mexico and even how it has been to live in the United States. The first question people ask me is if it was better to live in the U.S.A. or Mexico? My answer was that "I felt it was the same," although I admit I always wanted to come to the United States to be with my brother because I did not have a good relationship with my mother.

My mother and I did not get along because she would always compare me to my sister. I believe this was a big mistake on her part. My sister lived far away with an aunt in the United States. My father never compared me with my brothers; we are all different, but because of that, I had a grudge against my sister because according to my mother she was the perfect daughter. I remember thinking to myself, "My mom is wrong about me. She doesn't know me. "

When my sister visited us in Mexico from the U.S., I took the time to talk to her about my mom. After talking with my sister, I realized that she was not having a good time living with our aunt in Fortuna. I must admit I admired her and after talking with her, the resentment I had for all those years towards her withered away, because I realized it was not her fault that my mother was at fault for always comparing us. She asked me to forgive our mother and to give her the benefit of the doubt. She said "Do not pay attention to what our mother said." She also told me she admired me for being rebellious and for not giving up.

During this time, I started to feel bad about myself and at that time I blamed my parents for that, it was thanks to them that I felt bad because I felt like I lacked love. To this day I feel bad, everyone says it is "depression." Maybe it is depression, but I don't want to admit it! But I have deviated a bit from the topic.

I really like the town where I lived in Mexico; I met my grandparents and a lot of family. Primary school was a very beautiful time for me in Michoacán. Thanks to that school I met many people includ-

ing my best friend whose name is Yulissa. Also, another person who played a great role in my childhood was Marisol. All three of us were inseparable; the perfect trio. I would say Yulissa was the intelligent one, and Marisol the rude one, and I the kind one and a little rebellious too. When I entered high school, everything changed. Yulissa did not enter the same high school; she had moved to Lazaro Cardenas, and Marisol no longer continued studying. I have to admit the first weeks were different, but I think the same thing happened for all of us.

There in high school I met many new friends, as time went by they also left school, except for Briceida and Rubi. As the school year ended and we graduated from middle school we were all excited for summer. However, that summer was not what I expected I experienced a bit of everything, bad and good things. My mom opened a restaurant and gave me my first job as a waitress. I worked with her all summer. When it was time to return to school, we entered a new stage since we entered high school. I was only able to enter the high school there if I had dual citizenship, otherwise I would not be able to enter the school system. Even though my parents are Mexican and I am Mexican, the school system in Mexico did not see me as a true Mexican. It made me feel angry so they gave me one semester to get my dual citizenship.

The truth is that I was not doing very well in school. I did not put enough effort into it, I was just going to play. At the time I only had passed 3 subjects, so my decision was to leave school plus they wanted to kick me out because I did not have my Mexican citizenship.

My mom was very upset and of course she didn't feel I appreciated the effort she made to get me into that particular high school and I didn't know how to value it. When I left high school, the punishment for me was to put me back to work. After 7 months, my brother Alberto, with whom I currently live with, asked my mother if she thought he could bring me to the United States. He asked excitedly, "Can Estefani come and live with me in the United States, this way she can keep going to school. I am stable now and I can offer her a safe home here in Fortuna, CA. Will you let her come?" My mom thought it was a good idea but my dad did not think it was a good idea, so I talked to my dad. It took a bit more for my dad to agree because, not to brag, but I was always his darling. He said to me sadly, "I will miss you, but it is for your own good to go to the Unit-

ed States so you can study and find work.” It was a bit drastic since they told me I was leaving three days before I came to the United States, and as my friends said goodbye to me, I cried a little since I knew that everything would change for me.

But “it’s for a better future,” everyone told me enthusiastically. I didn’t remember much about Fortuna, the town that I lived in as a young child, just the last house we lived in. The language was not too much of a problem because whenever my cousins came to visit us in Mexico they spoke English to me, so that I would not forget, and I thank them for that.

My arrival in the United States was very normal. I loved the landscape. I have always liked the redwoods and the climate that is in Humboldt. I miss the heat a bit though.

I live with my brother, Alberto and his girlfriend, Ana. The truth is that they treat me very well, they worry about me and when there is time they take me to see places. I also have family here in Humboldt that I saw again after many years of being apart. My favorite part of Fortuna would be the little forest that is in the park. When you get to a certain point you can see almost all of Fortuna in the late afternoon, and it looks super cool.

I’ve been here in Humboldt for 6 months and it has been going very well for me, I hope it will continue to be like this. At East High, my new school, Noemi helps me a lot to catch up with my subjects. There, I also have met Omar and Ashly, my two good friends. I am also in an ELD (English Language Development) class at Fortuna High School. My teacher helps me a lot with the English course. In the ELD course I met Laura, our bilingual instructional assistant who has helped me a lot with English. I also met my new friends, Selina and Omar, who are also in the class. Everyone who goes to this class has treated me very well, they have never made me feel like I do not belong. In the future I want to continue studying to get a good job and to become independent.

I think it was a very good decision to come to the United States because I started to speak more English and I got to see my cousins again. I also get along better with my brother Alberto now that I got to know him more. I hope to soon go back to Mexico to see my parents. And then I will come back to Fortuna because I am from both sides of the borders. Fortuna and Michoacán are my home.

St. Helena, CA

By Maria Ortega-Partida

In the heart of the famous wine growing region Napa Valley, CA, lies my little home town named St. Helena. This little town is as cute as small towns get. We have a Main Street running through town full of businesses owned by people who have more or less lived in St. Helena forever. Because of the prestigious wines that are cultivated from the most beautiful vineyards, this town is the definition of a millionaire hub of people. Everyone you see in town drives a Mercedes, BMW, Range Rovers, or some other overly glorified European sport car. The houses all over town are picturesque and quite literally grand. I grew up running around various houses with enough space to ride a bicycle in and play tag in with my two siblings. A rich lifestyle describes my childhood. The only difference was that this lifestyle happened to be lived through going to work with my mother where she cleaned houses for rich old people. The lifestyle that I had with my parents growing up was the polar opposite quality of life surrounding me in the town. Because I was surrounded by privilege, I was ashamed to speak of my situation at home being poor and having undocumented parents. I never shared my experiences of being trapped in two different worlds in fear that I would be ridiculed for being different than everyone around me. My parents, who are both immigrants from Mexico, living in low-income housing, and were raising three kids in place surrounded by unobtainable wealth, taught us valuable life skills and wisdom.

The schools that I went to growing up in town were always made up of kids being about 50% White and 50% Hispanic. These schools had state of the art facilities with all resources provided including big expenses such as field trips and guest speakers. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a town that had these facilities and programs because, had it not been for the town's wealth, I would not have been able to experience these things through my parents. I learned to do many forms of art, partake in cooking classes, swimming lessons, and many other privileges that kids like me would not have been able to access otherwise. Like Ana Serrano, a Mexican-American artist who makes little cities and worlds out of cardboard, I became interested in art and pouring my experiences and emotions into the art that I make. From a young age, I incorporated aspects of what it was like growing up less fortunate than others within a very wealthy neighborhood. When my teachers would see my art they would be taken aback by the meaning because they were not experienced in a life of

struggle. Through these art projects, I explored my own identity as a Chicana, which in turn strengthened my bicultural aspect of myself.

These schools and facilities in which programs were held hold a soft spot in my heart and childhood. Experiencing these privileges allowed me to become bicultural, verbally and non-verbally, from a small age. I lived in a very traditionally Mexican household that only spoke Spanish, while going to school speaking only English and getting to experience activities and ideas outside of my parents' experience and knowledge having come from Mexico not long before. The majority of my personality and skills in life come from these schools and facilities and I am eternally grateful for all of them. Through classes and programs in town, I learned how to be mindful of others' situations and experiences through seeing the lack of mindfulness and awareness that the wealthy and privileged kids had while partaking in these programs. The people in school, more than the activities and trips we had, impacted who I am today and how I view the world. I grew up unaware of the division between the wealthy and the poor, but through growing up getting to experience both, I eventually began to critically think about these ideas.

The town and community norms/cultures were and still are financially driven. A positive result of the economic power of the town, schools and programs within schools have been very well funded to provide activities and classes for kids that might otherwise not be able to access them on their own. The schools in town have extremely passionate and well-educated teachers who care fully about each and every student, resulting in a great education through development of knowledge and life experiences. Unlike a lot of parents and community members, teachers at all of the schools always promoted critical thinking and forming one's own opinion on issues and ideas. When I was younger I viewed St. Helena as a small oasis of happiness and peace in a scary and cold world. I always thought that nothing could ever go wrong or be wrong because everyone was kind and because of that, everyone saw everyone else as equals. In junior year of high school, we had a lesson on the Chicano Movement and for the first time, I saw how poorly Mexican people are treated in California throughout history. This lesson in the moment and even now struck a chord in me. I started seeing the power dynamics and class division within the seemingly equal and peaceful area. Looking into my upbringing and childhood, I reflected on the loss of identity that I had as a result of my work outside the home. I started thinking deeply about the loss of culture experienced by

many Mexican kids at a young age in schools. I reflected on my own, as well as my family's, loss of connection to my Mexican culture. This made me think about the lack of knowledge that I have about Chican@/Latinx history regarding California and America; this history was slightly taught at my school, mostly skimmed over and warped. This lack of history and education inspired groups like The Latino Student Union Club at St. Helena High School to form, in search of connecting with others with similar experiences to them in terms of their Chican@/Latinx roots. The club has pushed for more reading of Mexican-American authors, more education of Mexican-American history, and discussions on race dynamics and how they affect us.

The Chican@/Latinx voice in St. Helena is slowly getting louder. Road signs, PSAs, News, and most services in Napa County are translated into Spanish and provided in both languages automatically. Days like Día de los Muertos, Mexican Independence Day, and various other celebrations of the culture are held in public spaces for the entire community all throughout the year. Although there is a long road of conversation and understanding, small changes and celebrations motivate people to make changes. What my family has done to keep our own voice alive has been telling stories to keep people alive and passing down heirlooms as a form of storytelling. Growing up, my deepest connections to my Mexican heritage always came through my art work. My family, specifically my mom, have always told their stories and experiences verbally, but also through painting and drawing. My mom has vocalized her childhood and how that translated into motherhood. Her story is full of aspects of being trapped in an unfamiliar environment, such as St. Helena, and having to persevere through it without fully understanding that environment. Juan Herrera, a poet and writer who discusses Chicano Identity, inspired me to develop this story telling into a work of art with lessons and symbols to pass on. In one of his writings titled "Spatializing Chicano Power: Cartographic Memory and Community Practices of Care," Herrera says, "Social movements mobilize to make changes in actually existing places. To understand the impacts of social movements, we must therefore think about changes in community spaces, and how those impacts continue even after the alleged decline of movement" (p.50). In developing my "cultural story," composed of experiences from my family and my own experiences, I must begin at square one and understand the impacts of movements on my own community. With the protests earlier in 2020, the town of St. Helena began to have a shift in

mindset and began rethinking race and the effects of racial disparity in the community. Through this, more conversations are happening between the white and non-white people of the town so that more of an understanding is had on what people need to be successful.

One day, I hope to see this town speaking more about the differences in experiences of one another in hopes of connecting on a deeper level. Once we begin to see one another on a deeper level, we learn to appreciate all aspects that a person brings to the table. By knocking down the norms of divisiveness and xenophobia in this town, the community can begin to understand and embrace everyone. Through the sharing of stories, celebrating cultural diversity, and talking about systemic issues, I believe that St. Helena can truly become a place of change and progression.

Work Cited:

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My Memory, or Lack Thereof

By Yolanda Cesareo Zacarias

I remember the eight houses I've lived in.

Some more than others,
although I'm not too sure why.

Could it be that they all had
a vibrant garden —
succulents sucking the sun, lilies imitating the clouds
the purple drooping flowers, crying yellow tear-
drops — crafted by my dad's swollen thumbs?

Or could it be that in each house
I have memories of my mother coming home
burrowed underneath her leather work gear
her chaparreras, flopping onto a worn couch,
bathed in dirt, sweat, and the scent of broccoli
as she lifted her tiny feet
so that I could unlace her boots?

Or maybe it's the memory from Apt B,
when Edgar climbed up on the church roof
to grab la pelota
the blue paint on the walls, a sky-blue hue,
the same shade I felt in my stomach
at his funeral a week later.

Or perhaps it's the gunshots and the sirens
all around my East Side?

Or the gray-hooded man — bullets piercing into his chest —
falling to the ground —
outside of the red corner store where I'd buy
mazapan De la Rosa?

Or the pain underneath my face
one thousand needles piercing my skin
as I tripped over the uneven sidewalk?

Or is it that all the moments
sitting around a worn-down dinner table
eating pan dulce —
soft conchas that melted in my mouth,
and coffee thick in the air —
have all blurred together?

Or maybe I—?

Maybe I don't remember the houses
because they were all the same:
two bedrooms for thirteen children and both my parents;
bunk beds and mattresses from garage sales—
two to three bodies squeezing into each.

Maybe I don't remember the houses
because I buried my nose in books,
breathing in the pages
wishing the words would write me away
to a world where I couldn't hear the screaming.

Maybe I don't remember the houses
because I can still hear Joan Sebastian
and Leo Dan
as I pick out the best candy
and light a veladora so she can find me
—an ofrenda for my sister who barely had the chance to
breathe.

There was a small brown coffee table—
wooden, chipped along the edges—
that survived all the moves—
used as a desk
where I taught my little brother to read and write—
two of the most valuable weapons—
because every sibling raised the next
and he was my responsibility at the time—
today, my greatest treasure.

— This was in the mustard yellow house
with the brick red roof on Alma St.
— with the huge backyard filled
with a small pumpkin patch
(could you believe they sprout from yellow-orange flowers?),
and a garden full of tomatoes, carrots, pomegranates, limes,
and various yerbas.

My oldest sister, and second mother, cooked our meals,
with that huge silver pot that never gave up—
no matter how many times the flames flicked it—
caldo de rez, sopa de fideo, tamales, pozole, menudo.

I do remember.

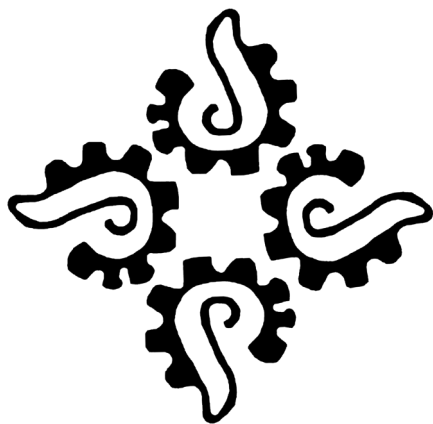
There was a house we painted —
outside a soft pink —
what a rose would be if it wasn't associated with love — i
nside a vanilla cream
and the bathroom a pastel green
I memorized the address to this one.

Then the beige house with two stories.
I prayed this would be the last,
but there were two more to follow that.

By the last sunshine yellow,
the sun had died and the night came to
collect us.

Its bittersweet realizing we're not the same residents
from Apt B, the pink house on 1211 Rider,
not even the ones on Tecopa Way.
hardly any of us speak now, but I know
we all hold pieces to our puzzled memories.

These are my shades of brown.
the deep chocolate mocha, chocolate de abuelita, café negro,
or with a dollop of milk, my golden caramelo, hints of red
and russet, a light cream, stirred with canela and a few
teaspoons of golden-brown sugar.





La Razón De Mi Vida

By Karina Ramos Villalobos

Mi ama.

La razón de mi vida.

Por ti ma, yo soy feliz.

Todo lo que yo hago es por uste.

La razón de mi vida.

Por ti yo estoy luchando para mi futuro.

Por ti yo soy fuerte.

Mi ama.

Usted es la razón por la que me despierto todos los días para luchar por mi fortaleza.

Yo estoy aquí para hacerte feliz.

El esfuerzo que usted hace por mi es mi motivación para nunca parar.

Los días y noches que trabajas yo le pido a Dios que se hagan un alto.

Todo el esfuerzo que yo te he visto hacer por tus hijos yo un día también lo voy lograr.

Como usted dice "como mamá yo siempre voy estar ahí por ti no importa en qué situación estarás yo siempre estaré ahí."

Yo también siempre estaré ahí.

Yo siempre te amare como usted me ama a mi.

Yo siempre te tengo en mi mente.

Yo siempre te tendré en mi corazón.

Por ti ma le doy gracias a Dios.

Gracias por que me dio la mamá más fuerte y hermosa.

Gracias por siempre apoyarme.

Gracias por el amor que me has dado.

Gracias por mi vida.

Mi ama.

Por ti le escribo estas bonitas notas de realidad.

This is Campesino Life

By Chelsea Rios Gomez

My name is Chelsea. I was born and raised in the Central Valley, which is on Yokut land. The Central Valley is California's most productive agricultural region with an estimated value of 17 billion a year. I grew up here surrounded by campesino life. What does "campesino" mean? The literal translation is "peasant" but that word is outdated. Another translation can be "farmer" but that doesn't feel right either. I won't tell you what word in English is a good enough translation to represent the complexity behind the word campesino, because there isn't one. Instead, I will tell you what it means to me.

Both of my parents work in the fields. Once we were at least 11 or 12 years old, my mom would take us to work during school breaks or on weekends. She wanted to show us the true meaning of hard work. She always told me, "Mija, te quiero enseñar que duro es este trabajo para que le echas ganas en la escuela, yo no te quiero mirar aquí conmigo." Which translates to "My daughter, I want to show you what hard work is so you put effort in your schooling. I don't want to see you here with me." And it was, it was very hard work, but my mom never complained, rather she enjoyed her work. But it's hard work for minimal pay. So why did she stay? She found the work rewarding and honorable. I did too. I loved when my mom would pick me up from school in her dirty work clothes. I wanted everyone to see how hard of a worker my mom was.

I learned so much working with my mom. I learned how to grow grape vines and take care of them. I learned how to pack and label. I learned all the chisme or gossip from the people working with my mom like who got pregnant or who's getting a divorce. I learned about their culture, I've met people who were from all over (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua). I learned about the complexity of each one of their lives.

There is beauty behind this type of life. Waking up before the break of dawn and driving for at least 30 minutes to an hour to the job site and meeting the people you'll be working with, sometimes for the first and last time and other times, they become lifelong friends. Another important aspect in campesino life is food distribution. My community is an immigrant community full of Spanish speakers with big hearts and friendly faces. There's this joke among children

of immigrant parents. That our parents only know to show their love by feeding us or more specifically by serving us freshly cut fruit. Therefore, I deemed the giving of fruit an act of endearment. So when my mom's work buddies always stopped by and gave us a bunch of different fresh produce for free. I realized that we are all we have. In the country where we are responsible for feeding millions of people yet get paid little to nothing. We are all we have. This is campesino life. It's more than a job title, it's a way of life. We support one another by providing jobs, feeding each other either fresh produce, meat, homemade cheese or other dairy products. We donate clothes to people who just moved to the United States or we offer discounts at our stores. We educate one another. We direct each other to resources available. We are there for each other when the government isn't doing their job to support our community especially during this pandemic. This is campesino life.

The Life of Jose Perez Ramirez

By Jose Perez Ramirez

My name is Jose Perez Ramirez, I am 16 years old. I was born in Visalia, Southern California. Visalia is very warm. When I was a baby my parents decided to move to Fortuna, in Northern California and I've lived here ever since with my parents and my younger siblings. I have no idea why they decided to move to Fortuna but they did. During my middle school years, I had friends that I saw no difference between us. One day I realized that some of my classmates were outstanding with their accomplishments and I was just an average student with nothing special.

So one day, I decided to study hard and not let my parents down. Being smart and getting recognized gave me some joy in what I was doing. I even started enjoying books after my teacher in my seventh grade year recommended a short and sweet book series called *Island* by Gordon Korman. I couldn't put down, like a reward rather than an assignment, it felt addictive. I usually get this kind of enjoyment from playing Mario with my friends. Usually when I read books I get bored easily and can only read for so much time, but with this one felt completely different. "Wow!" I couldn't believe how much I was actually enjoying reading a book. Even though I was enjoying reading, it felt as if I was still wasting my time on having fun.

I found a new world inside pieces of paper that changed my point of view of what reading was actually like and how reading isn't boring and doesn't have to be done only for class. I started increasing my test scores and my grades little by little. Around the same time when I was in sixth grade, people from Trio, a group that helps students learn about planning for the future, started coming to my school and asking the students what they wanted to be when they grow up. The students and I didn't have an answer.

I brought it up to my parents and my dad explained his feelings with frustration in his voice. "Ay hijo por eso te traigo al trabajo para que veas lo que significa trabajar cuando no tienes educación. Por eso necesitas estudiar." I know he just wants the best for my future and wants me to work hard so I don't end up in that scenario, but those words are stuck in my head till this day. I felt stressed by the pressure that was building on me by my parents. A year later, one of my teachers, with disappointment in his voice, discussed his concerns for the class. Even though we were all close to graduating

on to high school, we all acted as if we were in elementary school. He said if we acted in the world the way we acted now we would become failures. I was shocked with the realization that what he was saying was the truth. "I should think about my future," I thought to myself.

I suddenly realized I should start thinking about what I should do for the future. One day, half way into my high school life, when I was discussing my success in school my parents had a very serious discussion with me. My father tells me "no me siento bien," they told me that they were planning on moving back to México a year after I graduate. Ever since my Grandpa died my dad has been feeling more homesick as the days pass. Me dijo "Quiero despedirme de mi mamá cuando se vaya." They said it in a way that there was an expectation that I have to meet before that time comes. I should have a plan on what I should be. This news was so sudden to me; I don't feel prepared to take care of my siblings all on my own. I fear that I will fail and go nowhere in life.

After that talk I realized that I have a short time limit on deciding a career I should take and stick with. Succeeding in school isn't an option now, it'll determine my future. As of now I'm studying to become an accountant and I'm studying computer science for a backup plan. I chose this path because I'm interested in computer science though I don't know if that'll be my main plan because I am most skilled at mathematics. I chose these paths because they both include math which is my favorite subject and the most fascinating to me. I do still have fun studying since my classmates are competitive and we improve after getting a lower score than one another.

Her Personal Special Touch / El Toque Personal Especial de Ella

By Jasmin Madrigal Carrillo

Todos me decían que lo hiciera. Tenía trece años y estaba en séptimo grado. Me tomó poco tiempo para inscribirme a correr como una candidata y escribir a short but full paragraph on how I'd be the best student body president the school has ever seen. Solo tenía un muchacho corriendo contra mí para la posición.

Mi experiencia con liderazgo es muy alta y avanzada. I also had this untamed determination to have things be and be done de mi manera. Personas confiaban en mi judgement and that I would follow through on my ideas and promises. Y me encuentro siendo una persona muy outgoing so getting people to feel safe and comfortable around me era facil. Tenía varias personas que me conocían, porque no voy a mentir, era un poco popular en middle school.

I like to think of myself as a very imaginative, understanding, and non-judgemental person. Because of my strong beliefs, I made it very clear in my speech that absolutely any person who wanted to share their concerns or ideas about making the school better and making the experience unmatched or with me personally will be discussed and taken into account.

Pasé mucho tiempo siendo tímida cuando era más joven. Sé exactamente que uncomfortable es tener un problema que de verdad te está molestando, pero nomas tener opciones para hacer justicia que involucra tener que hablar con alguien que no confías y casi ni conoces. Situations like that were where I preferred to stay scared and worried about my problem over talking to someone else. Con saber que pueden ser your own peers, hice muy claro que podían hablar conmigo personalmente en el tiempo que sea con confianza porque absolutely no kid my age or younger will ever be harassed, bothered, or bullied under my watch.

Pienso que muchos student bodies fail because they don't give each other the chance to get to know each other as individuals before having to "work" with each other. I personally, with no hesitation, made it clear to everyone that if I were to win the position, regardless of their support I will personally do what I feel needs to be done. Todos en el council agreed to move forward because they understood there would be no possible way to change my mind. They too respected and trusted my instincts.

The heat was rising. Nomás faltaba una semana para que saliera la escuela para las vacaciones. Pensando en la posibilidad de que mi nombre no fuera anunciado through the loudspeaker made my stomach twist. I knew in my heart I could not lose but the intensity was still in the air.

Luego un día al fin del día cuando faltaban 5 minutos para salir, my name was being announced as the new Student Body President of Fortuna Middle school. I was charged up with the feeling of reaching one of my goals. Casi se me salía una lagrima con la felicidad que overpowered me, my actions, and my words. A huge relief. Everyone in my class got up and clapped. I bet you could hear "WOOOOH!" and "OMG DUDE GOOD JOB!" from two classrooms away. Then the dismissal bell rang and everyone sprinted outside. My dearest friends all stared at me with the funniest looks of joy on their faces. Then surely the crowd went wild and swarmed to congratulate and hug me.

Everyone was hyped. My grade especially knew what was about to go down. They know all the connections I have, they know the personal effect I have on people, they know how argumentative I am, they know I am a strong individual, and most importantly they knew I wanted the same things as them, to make our 8th grade year make up for all three of the previous years.

Me calentaba el corazón mirar a los demás feliz y divirtiéndose. Mis amigas y amigos cercanos didn't think too much of it but they knew I took it all muy en serio. Aunque era un trabajo muy en serio, nunca me perdí las cosas que me encantaban y me traían alegría, como estar en el equipo de voleibol y en el cheer squad. Y si a veces se amontonaban las cosas con los deportes, la tarea y el student council.

Las personas alrededor de mi miraban como me estresaba y enojaba. Si me encontraba furiosa cuando alguien se atrevía a decirme que exageraba y que era mal a mi trabajo. Aunque sabía que esas personas hablando mal de mi nomas estaban de mal humor por verme ser tan exitosa y feliz even with all the cosas que voluntariamente I devoted myself to, todavía dejaba que la frustración me llegara personalmente.

Regardless del estrés, ahora veo que de verdad hice todo lo que quería hacer. Todos los eventos escolares o pequeños detalles, yo estaba atrás de ellos. Mi toque personal. Mi imaginación para ser

diferentes cosas que nunca han pasado o hecho y mi determinación por completar las cosas en tiempo ha dejado una marca en la mente de todas que lo presencié. I believe it is more than safe to say, that I once again, fulfilled my promises. Y esto es lo que me hizo sentir el poder de ser una mujer mexicana.

El Centro de California

By Kacie “Kase” Figueroa

Riverbank is located in the Central Valley of California. A location where instead of having palm trees swaying, we have our almond and peach orchards swaying and blowing their pollen up in the air. Instead of having the smell of sea salt in the air, we have the smell of cow manure.

Nevertheless, the smell goes away and all you can feel is the soft Delta breeze that comes down from Stockton. Riverbank is known as “the city of action” but the only action we get are the never-ending trains. Coming back home seeing the house covered in smoke and hearing a smoker’s cough everywhere because of *los chiles cocinando en la estufa*. Waking up early on a Saturday morning only to hear Antonio Solis blasting on the radio and the smell of Fabuloso all over the house.

Hearing the phrase *tienes el nopal en la frente* when I forget a certain word in Spanish. Having conversations with *mis hynas y vatos* in “spanglish” when we forget some words in English or Spanish. *El Valle Central es mi tierra* and I know it will always be there when I need it the most. There’s a piece of the valley within me that will never go away no matter how far I go.

From Porterville to Humboldt

By Lizet Santiago

Hola, me llamo Loren, y nací en Porterville, California. My mom and stepdad are US citizens, they were born in Tulare, Ca. My mom's family origin is Puerto Rico and my stepdad's family origin is Mexico. My dad was born in Guerrero, Mexico and grew up in Acapulco, Mexico until he was 13. When he was 14, he came to the U.S and started a new and better life here.

Porterville was a dry little town. I grew up in a little 3-bedroom house that was falling apart in a neighborhood that felt unsafe, because there was a lot of drug abuse and gang violence. Growing up here, my first language was Spanish but my mom told me "Necesitas empezar aprender inglés." When I was in school I had an accent trying to learn English, just like my dad. While learning English, I slowly started to forget Spanish. I remember entering kindergarten, my dad told my younger sister and I "Si empiezas a hablar Inglés más te agarrare un quad." So with my dad's incentive, going to school and making an effort to learn another language became a lot easier. When I finished first grade, my teacher had a parent conference with my mom. They both agreed that I should do another year of first grade because that would prepare me for second grade.

Other than school growing up was a struggle, we were living paycheck to paycheck. When I was five years old my dad got into legal problems, so he left. He was not always in the picture, my siblings and I would visit him a couple times when we could, sometimes it got to the point where I didn't want to go because I would cry. My uncle did live with us at the time, and he always reminded me about how my dad missed us and said, "Vas a verlo, es tu papa, vas estar bien." I've always been daddy's little girl, so it would hurt me every time I saw him. So every time my uncle came to pick up my sister and I to see my dad, I would hide behind my couch. There is a little space there where they wouldn't find me. I always told my mom I didn't want to see him or that I didn't want to see him for an hour or two. I wanted to be around him all the time and wanted him to come home with me, sometimes it just hurt more to leave more than it did to go with them to visit. We didn't always see my dad but he tried his best to call us and send us things for the holidays. Even then, later when my dad wasn't around it was only my older brother, my younger sister and myself. My mom was going to school and working at a propane facility so she wasn't always around. When

she had work early in the morning she would take us to a babysitter who babysat my sister and I every morning till midday because my mom always worked and studied. On the weekends when my sister and I didn't have school she would take us with her to her work and my mom always told us "vayanse al otro cuarto arriba" so we would go upstairs and play like we were teachers or running around trying to waste time while my mom was in her office working. Not only was my mom overworking herself for us but also studying to be an LVN (Licensed Vocational Nurse). I don't know what it's like to be a single mom but my mom was definitely doing it.

It was always the same every day, but I did have a neighbor. Her name was Anisha and her little sister's name is Damary's. We met because my dad was putting up a fence but the neighbors had to go half with us because it was on their side too. Anisha and I met at a really young age, we didn't go to the same school but we lived next to each other. Her grandma didn't always let her come over and play with my sister and I. In our backyard there was a space where we could get to each other's house because the fence was not far back so, nos apretamos a través de la cerca para ir a la casa de mi vecina y jugar con las muñecas. Siempre encontrábamos una manera de pasar el rato y si no había forma, traíamos sillas y nos sentamos al otro lado de la cerca y platicamos. I always played with the same toys over and over again because I never got new ones, it was rare to get brand new toys so we would go outside and play near the tree or with dirt because that's all my sister and I had. One day Anisha told me "you should come to Santa Fe" and I ended up convincing my mom to transfer us since it was closer from where I lived. My sister and I ended up switching schools, so we didn't need someone to watch us either, we would walk to school and back every day.

Mi mamá conoció a mi padrastro, no vivía con nosotros pero a veces andaba por ahí. When I was in 7th grade, my stepdad talked to my mom about this place named Humboldt. Ninguno de nosotros sabía lo que era Humboldt o dónde era. Todo lo que sabía era que no quería dejar a mi familia y a mis amigas y empezar de nuevo. My stepdad came to Humboldt in September and we came right behind him late December 2017. We had no house when we first came. Everything was in storage and we stayed in a small brown cabin near Scotia in a trailer park for 3 months. At first I did not like it here at all because we weren't living in a house, it was always raining and so cold. I was so used to the weather back home and being in a home, that I told my mom that I hated it and that I wanted to go

back home. My mom always told me “te aguantas hija, no siempre va hacer así.” We ended up not staying there long because we needed a house, we ended up finding an apartment here in Fortuna. I got enrolled into Toddy Thomas Middle School. It was so different, like coming into un mundo diferente. We started in the middle of 7th grade. I did have my sister so I did not enter school by myself because we are in the same grade. It wasn’t too bad but I was always homesick. Even though we would go visit, visiting took a while because it’s so far away. It takes 8-9 hours to get there and visit family and friends. I still just wanted to move back home. I did start to make new friends. Toddy Thomas is a very small school so there weren’t many kids there which was a different environment for me. Everybody knew everybody, it wasn’t very hard making friends. I had a group of friends and it was nice having a friend group like them; I had them all of 8th grade too. Don’t get me wrong, there are quite a few things that I enjoy about living here in Humboldt. I love the beaches and the hiking trails. It’s very different here compared to my hometown in Porterville. I also started to get used to the weather that when I go down south over the summer I hate being in the heat, casi se siente como si me fuera a morir si me quedo en el calor por más tiempo. Now It’s been about 4 years since I’ve been in Humboldt. Todavía hay muchas más cosas que aprender y explorar aquí en este hermoso lugar pequeño.

Mis Raíces

By Kathy Zamora

Soy de Escondido, California. I was born and raised there. Hasta que vine aquí a Arcata, California para mi primer año de colegio. Escondido is a part of San Diego County, I grew up living one hour away from Tijuana y dos horas de Los Ángeles. Mi ma y pa tried their best to make me feel secure my whole life. After the Great Recession, my family and I moved to West 5th Avenue. It wasn't so bad, my Tio Coco lives on that street too. Once I began to get comfortable with our house on 5th Avenue the rent got higher.

We moved to Ash Street. Not so bad again, my Tio Juan is a quick drive away and my Tio Amedeo is a walk away, I had family surrounding me everywhere. Holidays were always crazy with our big family, driving around Escondido on the holidays meant to watch out because cops will place "Check-Points" on our blocks. Don't worry though, la vecina or my Tia will probably warn you.

Although you will get comfortable in Escondido, you will see people you went to elementary school with, you will run into what's her name's mom at the tienda and you'll see homegirl at the kickback. Las fiestas, the get-togethers, y los recalentados create the space I don't take for granted. It's that familiar feeling and space that makes you feel secure. But Escondido will trap you. In Escondido, I am surrounded by my people but my people are fighting and surviving.

My first year in Humboldt was transformative. Because of EOP, I was enrolled in CRGS my first semester. I learned that white patriarchy is real and affecting lives including my own community. With our current president, it was more obvious for me to realize how his rhetoric is racist and xenophobic. I have relatives that voted for Trump, I have brothers that used to say I was "overreacting," that my view of America has changed. We have been living in a White man's world, where people of color, LGBTQ+, anyone that does not fit the part are unwanted. The world we are living in has favorites and brown people are not it. Being educated about America's corruption has made me passionate to expose and resist society's norms. After living in Humboldt for a few months, I returned for the holidays. I went home with a new perspective but Escondido didn't change. I was ready to tell my parents that the system is unjust and we must fight back. Instead, my parents' reaction was "Mija, qué te ha dicho? Este es tu país." I noticed how we, Mexican-Americans,

are forced to conform and believe that one day we will also achieve the American Dream. Similar to Mosquita's parents from the film *Mosquita y Mari* (2012), my parents have pushed me to excel in school. My parents knew that I had the privilege to get a higher education and never work as they have. My parents have been working non-stop since the day they came to the United States. They have been dreaming about the American Dream.

The American Dream is living in the suburbs with your perfect family, a man and his wife, some children, in a beautiful neighborhood. Children's books, the Hollywood industry, and our school system allows institutional and systemic racism to continue to exist in our country. My parents are undocumented. My dad is unable to achieve his dream of owning his own house under his own name. I fear for the day that I see my pa "like an oak tree leaning from its tired years" (Uribe, 2016). It's heartbreaking to watch my pa work every day. I want him to rest and enjoy the life he has. My mom is unable to visit her family in Mexico after 20 years. It is as if they are trapped. Como dice el poema de Carmen, "Vivir aquí es querer estar alla. Estar alla es querer estar aqui" (Christoph, 2014). My parents, along with the other thousands of hardworking families, fear that one day they will be arrested for living on stolen land. However, my parents never let their citizenship status define them. They are proud Mexicanos living in America. My parents are hopeful for their futuro. CRGS has shown me the ugly of America, but I am hopeful. Hopeful for the day my parents become "legal" citizens of the United States. That status will mean everything to them. Even when this country has made my parents feel as if they deserve less, my parents have always provided a space where I feel welcomed and loved. They have always made me feel proud of who I am. Mexicana, Chicana, Latina, yo soy la hija de Revocata y Modesto Zamora.

George Floyd's death is a consequence of the years of institutionalized and systemic racism in our country. Black and brown bodies are at a higher risk of police brutality. When I tried to explain to my parents why people were angry and disappointed, they didn't fully understand. Until I showed them how George Floyd was murdered, my mom cried and thought about the children in our country. Escondido is one of the many cities that suffer from over-surveillance. Escondido is filled with beautiful brown bodies, yet society sees us as criminals. This is why I joined my community when protests were held at City Hall or at the Escondido Police Department. I will not stay silent. I will use my knowledge and my privilege to educate

others about our corrupt and capitalistic society. I went to La Mesa, San Diego's peaceful protest that ended up with cops throwing tear gas right in front of us. There were children and families at that protest. In Escondido, a peaceful protest was organized by a 15-year-old Black student. There were people from my high school, my family members, my community gathered to fight against systemic and institutionalized racism. I joined my community when they held a protest in front of Escondido's Police Department. There was a literal cement barrier between the armed cops and the peaceful protesters. Escondido has given me a perspective and a space where I have found my voice. My voice is for my people, for all people that have been forced to be silenced.

Escondido is my home. It's a space where I feel like I belong. With my Tios and my Tias around, I have my family, my people, and my culture with me. Escondido, mi comunidad, y mi familia son parte de mi, son mis raíces.

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Dreaming of the Future

By Emanuel Velasco

It has been two years since I came to Humboldt. When I got here I noticed everything was very different than being in Mexico. I was impressed with how tall the trees were in Northern California since there were no Redwood trees in Jiquilpan, Jalisco. As my family and I drove from Sacramento to Fortuna I could not stop watching the majestic Redwoods. I remember thinking to myself, "Oh my goodness they are such huge trees!" I was surprised to see so many big trees.

When I got to Humboldt I felt strange because when you come from another country to the US it is not the same as just being in one country; a country you had lived in for years. There are so many things that are different and unfamiliar to what one was used to in Mexico. I felt lost because I didn't know anything about Humboldt, I didn't know anyone except my aunt, and I didn't speak English.

I have learned to appreciate Humboldt for its nature like the forest, the beach, the rivers, as well as the friendships I have made, and of course, "las parrandas." I like to walk in the forest because I enjoy the fresh air and I like to hear the birds. I like the beautiful sunsets at the beach here. I also like the rivers/los rios because they are relaxing.

However, sometimes I miss Jiquilpan. I miss my family and friends but what I miss the most is my horse and my grandparent's (abuelitos) animals. I miss riding my horse every day and riding with my friends. Also, I like horse riding competitions. One time in the competition there were eleven horsemen and me. In that competition, everything was going well, I was reaching my goal to arrive to the finish line. But I fell down on the floor. I knew the belt was tied; I do not know how the belt was loosened. The people who were there to see the race were scared and thought something happened to me, but everything was fine, nothing happened to me. I miss Mexican foods, especially my tita's (grandma's) food like "sopitos and birria." I remember when my tita would say, "véngase a comer, la comida ya está lista." I was always the first one at the table ready to eat her food.

I plan to go study at College of the Redwoods after I graduate high school. I plan to study and become a mechanic because I like cars. Someday I would like to start my own business in Fortuna and move to a new place.

Mi Gran Tata Abuelo

By Johanna Bonilla

My great grandfather, though I haven't met you, I know you're resting peacefully in the clouds. I admire your work ethics, but most of all your humbleness as a musician. When I learned qué fuiste músico I felt proud because someone in our family was able to pursue an artistic career and still work as a laborer. You gave me hope that I, too, can pursue a career I want no matter the circumstances I'm in. I heard stories about you having gigs at cantinas and en el barrio de San Miguel, El Salvador, y cuando no estabas jugando música estabas trabajando o en casa relajando. Even though you didn't earn much from doing gigs you enjoyed performing in front of everyone because money comes by most of the time but moments like those do not. You may not know this but, I'm also following in your footsteps. Evidently, your circumstances and mine are different, yet I still don't lose hope that I will live out those dreams you once wanted for yourself and your family. If I could speak to you I would ask, "Where did the inspiration come from?" and "How did you know this was what you wanted?" Your stories left an impact so powerful that I'm glad that out of the whole family you did something different. You unknowingly created a path for the rest of us to pursue life however we wanted. I'm truly grateful for being the lotus in this family but you won't be the last.

My Mother's Roots are from La Tierra de Huizaches, I Carry her Roots Within Me

By Selina Diaz Sumano

Hi, my name is Selina and I was born in San Rafael, California, but when I was one years old I moved to San Pablo Huixtepec Oaxaca, Mexico because my father did not want us to grow up in the United States. He feared if we grew up here we would never want to visit Mexico.

I could write about everything that happened during those years before I came to live in the United States, but in reality, there is not much to tell. However, my dad came to the United States when I was 5 years old, therefore I was not with him and I did not spend the most important years of my life with him. I remember that on every birthday he would call to congratulate me and always promised me that the following year I could go to the United States to visit him. But it was always an illusion, so I stopped believing that one day it would be fulfilled, until I was 15 years old. When my older brother also came to the United States, his situation was different because he was not born in the United States, so he crossed the border to the United States when he was 18 years old in 2017. 2017 was a very hard year because we were worried about what he was going through, we did not know if he was okay, where he was at, or if he had made it to the United States. It took 2 months to hear from him again when he was reunited with my dad. Once we knew he was okay we could relax.

Two years after my brother left, my dad told me that it was time to come live with him. I felt that it was no longer something I wanted, in fact, I was not even ready to leave my whole life behind and especially to leave my family and friends, but now, it was not an option. From that day something changed within me, I felt that from then on, I would no longer be myself and it was true. I began to think about it so much that sadness began to invade my mind. Most of the time when I spent time with my friends or family, in my mind the only thing that passed by was the fact that I would no longer go to see them for a while or that as time passed they would forget about me. So I didn't enjoy the months completely before I left.

Five months after my 15th birthday, I had the date and absolutely everything ready to go. My travel day would be Monday, July 15, 2019. A week before the farewells began, that was the most difficult of

all because there were tears in all of them that could not easily stop. I specifically remember that everyone told me, “tienes una gran oportunidad, no la dejes ir, estarás mejor ahí.” I believed those words for a moment, but there was something that did not convince me, I always knew something would happen. One night before I left, I remember feeling scared, it was around 10:00 pm, and I had returned from saying goodbye to my grandmother and my little cousins. Obviously, I returned home crying and my mother greeted me at the door to give me a comforting hug. I couldn’t stop myself from hugging her and after a few minutes we went to bed to sleep and rest a bit, since the following day I would make the journey to the U.S. Before sleeping, I sat with her on the edge of the bed and we talked, it was time to say goodbye. I can’t forget every word she said to me, and it broke my heart as she told me: “No te preocupes por mi hija, yo voy a estar bien, cuando tengas oportunidad de venir a verme está bien, trata de llevarte bien con tu papá y no tener problemas, te quiero mucho y cuídate si?” “Si, voy a regresar a verte, cuídate mucho por favor y si necesitas algo, siempre llámame, yo también te quiero mucho no lo olvides.” le dije con ternura al abrazarla.

I promised to return every year to visit her and one day bring her with me. That was the deal she had agreed with my dad. I was sad about leaving my mother even though I grew up with the stereotypes of the movies, and I thought that people here were lucky to come to a country with a good economy. I spent the best years of my life in “San Pablo Huixtepec” better known as *Tierra de Huizaches* because the *Huizaches* grow everywhere and it is almost impossible to get rid of them. *Huizaches* are a type of tree with thorns and they are native to Oaxaca. People use this tree as firewood and to cook because it grows quickly and everywhere. When you cut this tree you are never able to cut its roots and it will grow again, it is a giving tree. *San Pablo Huixtepec* is a town full of culture and traditions, where people are very united and happy. So I was used to living surrounded by happiness, and although there were almost always bad moments for me, they were easy to overcome when my family and my mother were together. She was always there to support me. I had many friends and I went out with them every day. I learned to be educated, to have respect for the elderly, and I learned to have responsibilities. I believe that everything I am now as a person I owe it to the fact that I grew up in Mexico and, of course, to the examples my mom set for me.

The day finally came, and we got up early to go to the airport. I didn’t

know how I felt at that moment, I just wanted to stay and never leave. It was time to board the plane and that was the last time I saw her. I got on the plane with my cousin Omar with a heavy heart. When I finally got to San Francisco, which is where my dad would pick me up, I was a bit confused because I hadn't seen or lived with my dad for 10 years. He was standing there waiting for me with his friend, but I was mad at my dad because he had forced me to come to the United States even though I did not want to. I wanted to stay with my mother, so when Omar and I saw him we just looked at each other and said nothing. I saw he wanted to cry but I just looked at him and I just stayed silent. Omar asked him, "eres mi tio?" and he responded, "yes" and asked us to follow him. We followed him through San Francisco airport to where the car was parked and we began our five-hour journey to Fortuna, California.

When we got to Fortuna, we went to drop up my cousin Omar with his grandparents and then we went to my new home. When I entered, I was greeted by my older brother and he told me: "Que bueno que ya estás aquí, si creciste mucho." I responded, "Pensé que seguía igual... hueles a Estados Unidos," le dije con risa. Then my dad presented me to his new partner Clara and her three children before we said goodbye and went to sleep. When I went to bed I called my mom to let her know that I had a safe trip, but we were both still sad about being separated. The next day I woke up at 8:00am like I was used to, but it seemed that nobody was home because the house was silent and my brother had already left to work. It was a bit weird because when I lived in my pueblo, people were already awake and starting their day by 5:30am. You could hear the birds singing, the roosters, dogs barking, cars selling gas, tortillas, fruits, or others picking up old iron that people had in their houses. It was different here. So I decided to text with my friends and watch a movie to pass the time while I waited for someone to wake up and come to the kitchen. Three hours later my dad came to my room and told me that after breakfast we would be going to the Mall to buy me things that I needed.

During the ride to Eureka Bayshore Mall, I did not talk with anyone, I only observed the giant redwood trees that were on the side of the road. When we got to the Mall my dad began to talk to me about all the stores that there was and how the stores were different. I say this because there is a big difference between how you buy things in Mexico compared to that of the U.S, the tax is not included in the price because in Mexico, when you buy a product the tax is already

included in the price. We went to TjMaxx to look for something that I liked and this is when I began talking with my dad. “¿Cómo estuvo el viaje?, te dió miedo el avión o era normal?” dijo mi papá. I said, “Me dió un poco de miedo cuando ya estaba arriba, pero en el siguiente vuelo ya me quería regresar,” le respondí.

That’s what I call the *la tercera parte de mi vida*, the third part of my life. It was still summer, and that was a time I had grown to know as family time where we would go to the rivers in my *pueblo*. Where we would pass the time at home or on occasions help my grandmother prepare *tejate* to sell. *El Tejate* is a drink made from corn and cacao, it is a very traditional drink in Oaxaca and is heavily consumed by people in the summer, since it is very refreshing. During this time, I waited to go out to places, to eat together, or for my dad, Clara, and my brother to return from work so that we could sit down and watch television together. The reality is that none of that happened. Every day I stayed at home without going out, without seeing new places or meeting new people. I ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner alone at home a lot of the time. I began to feel like I did not belong here even though I talked with my mom and friends every day, I still felt completely alone in this new place.

Finally, the time came to go back to school and I thought that it would be the perfect time to make new friends and become a part of this new place, but it was harder than I thought because I did not speak English so I could not communicate well with everyone. Fortunately, at school they assigned me Laura who explained everything to me about school and joined me in all my classes to translate. In addition to that, I met more people who also did not speak English and we were in ELD together with our teacher Femenella, where I felt more comfortable because I knew that I was not the only one who did not speak the language. I even made friends with everyone in the class. We would talk about things we missed from our home back in Mexico and how it is that we came to be here. I’d finally found joy in making new friends and didn’t feel too different, since we are from different states of Mexico. Everything seemed to be improving, my grades in the schools were excellent compared to my grades in Mexico. The schools in Mexico are one of the biggest challenges you can face. If you are a person who is a little distracted or worrisome like me, it is difficult because since elementary school the tasks turn out to be in greater quantity. For some it is very difficult to have good grades and carry the same learning capabilities as others. Since changing schools,

the U.S. turns out to be very easy and stressful for students. I thought as time went on everything was going to be normal for me, and even though it had only been 5 months, something happened that I wasn't prepared to experience.

It was a day before my birthday, I was alone in my house and I called my mom like every day, but I noticed something different in the way she talks to me. All the talk was normal until we were almost saying goodbye. "Tal vez el Lunes vaya al hospital, porque me he sentido mal últimamente," me dijo mi mamá un poco triste. "¿Qué pasó? ¿Por qué no me habías dicho nada?" le respondí preocupada. "Es que no hay nadie que pueda llevarme en estos días." "Mañana mismo le hablaré a alguien para que te lleve, sabemos que te tienes que atender rápido antes de que empeore," le respondí casi llorando. "No te preocupes, el Lunes sin falta voy, ya mañana hablamos, por favor no le digas a tu papá ni a tu hermano, hasta que ya esté ahí," me dijo mi mamá con una voz quebrada.

After I hung up the phone, I started crying because I had a very bad feeling, I knew something would happen to her. Since then I began to assimilate it. I called my dad and as soon as he found out he called his nephew from Mexico to take my mom to the hospital that same night. It all happened so fast that night, I didn't talk to her until the other day at 6:00 p.m. She called me from the hospital to wish me a Happy Birthday. The call didn't last more than 2 minutes, so I can't remember much about what we talked about. I knew that the next day she would have surgery and that it was a little risky, so I asked everyone to ask God for her. Thank God she came out of the surgery and left her to rest without visitors for a day. When my dad picked me up at school he told me: "Ya hablé con tu abuela, dice que tu mamá ya salió de la cirugía y se ve bien, nada más tendrá que quedarse reposando más días en el hospital."

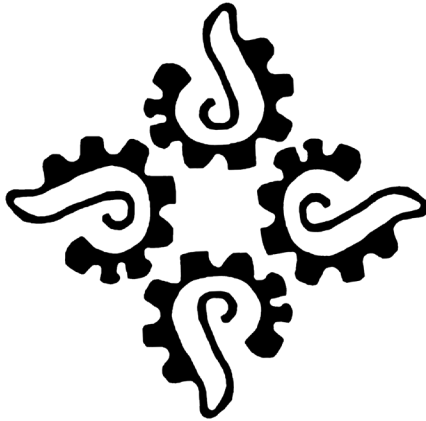
That day was a Tuesday, and my dad was planning to have a special dinner to celebrate my birthday, but before we sat down for dinner, my mom called me to tell me that she was fine and that I shouldn't worry and that I should enjoy my birthday dinner. She actually told me more things, but my mind was so dazed that I couldn't pay attention. The last thing I heard was "no se te olvide que te quiero mucho."

As we ate I couldn't stop thinking about what could have happened because I'd been having nightmares that last three days. That night

we went to sleep like any other day. It was 4:30am on December 11 when out of nowhere I woke up and in front of my bed was my dad and my brother. I knew without them telling me anything that my mother had passed away. Both my dad and brother hugged me but I didn't shed any tears. I felt that during the last few days I had already assumed it and that now I could be even stronger. I checked my phone and had too many calls from my grandmother, cousins, and aunt. I took the time to call them to tell them that I was okay. That day I decided to go to school to distract myself. Apparently, I looked normal and no one noticed, just one person. It didn't take many hours for my friends in Mexico to find out and send me messages of comfort and call me. It was that day when I felt my heart completely destroyed. From that day on, I learned to live with that experience, and although it is not easy or something that one day I can forget I will always take as a lesson. I will continue to hope one day to be with her again. Sometimes she visits me in my dreams and I am glad to see her even for a moment. I miss her every day. When I look in the mirror I can see her, I carry her own features and her name is also *Selina*. It is as if she had reincarnated in me.

In memory of the person who gave me life, who raised me as a mother and father, who gave me the best examples and the best experiences in life.

Artist Statements



The hieroglyph (glyph) artwork was created by Michael Tjoelker, a student at Humboldt State University student in 2016.

The glyph is inspired by Nahuatl hieroglyphs used by the Aztecs in Mesoamerica. The single glyph, *tlatoa*, denotes speech, important speech, speech spoken by individuals who held social, political or religious positions of power and thus justified the writing of their speech.

This Journal reclaims the glyph to foreground the power of speech, the assertion that students already possess important knowledge, and the primacy of telling their *cuentos* – of telling their stories. By orienting four glyphs towards a center we intend it to mean that the CouRaGeous Cuentos in this journal are a form of liberatory dialogue worthy of writing and publishing. Importantly, it is a conversation within community.

The artwork that forms part of the interludes between chapters in this volume was created by Jonathan Pena Centes.

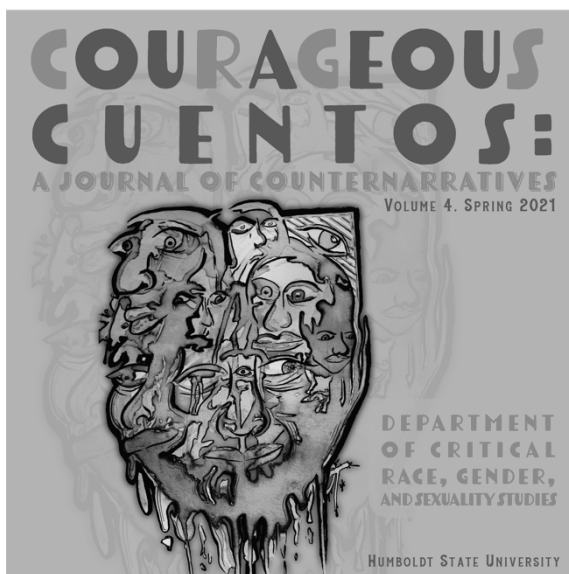
Jonathan Pena Centes



I was given the name Jonathan Pena Centes and was born in South Central, Los Angeles. I am 23 years old. I grew up and spent most of my life there up until I came to Humboldt State at 18 years old as a Class, Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major.

My artwork is reflective of my own struggles regarding decolonial thought. Decolonizing the mind is about separating reality from the narratives forced upon us by colonial systems. My artwork is reflective of this process; however, it is also inspired by the book itself as I often empathized and gained inspiration for the artwork from the submitted writings.

Skylar Silva



My name is Skylar Silva, I make my art under the pseudonym Over There. I am a studio art major with an emphasis in Graphic Design. I have always been interested in art but only started taking it seriously 1 year ago. I am from Grass Valley, CA, and have a deep love and respect for the mountains and mother nature.

This piece was made to represent the fact that we as people have to assume different identities while living our lives in order to fit into the “status quo” of society. It shows the different ranges of emotion that one person can feel on any given day.

Author Bios

RUBEN MEYER ROBINS (he/his/him), author of “Life”, was born and raised in the City of Los Angeles. He is majoring in Child Development and plans on becoming a teacher for children K-6th grade.

PRICILLA C. (she/her/hers), author of “Tradition”, is from a little town in the Central Valley. She is majoring in Zoology but enjoys writing when she has the time. When she’s not writing or studying for genetics, you can find her outside sitting under a shady tree reading.

KATE RAMIREZ (she/her/hers), author of “Quarantine Thoughts”, is from Norwalk, CA. She is majoring in English with an emphasis in Teaching. She enjoys taking walks in the forest and writing poetry.

KLARA HERNANDEZ (she/her), author of “Cerote”, is a 1st generation Salvadorian American majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Native American Studies. She is seeking to grow my grassroots organization: EkoSocial Justice to help the Indigenous peoples of El Salvador and advocate for basic human rights for the country as a whole.

KARINA YAMILETH RAMOS VILLALOBOS (she/her), author of “La Razón De Mi Vida”, is from San Diego County, specifically Escondido. She is a double-major in Journalism and CRGS. She enjoys writing, music, going on adventures and discovering new places around her with the people she loves.

KACIE “KASE” E. FIGUEROA (she/they), author of “Dark Targets” and “El Centro De California”, was born in Oakdale, CA and raised in Riverbank, CA. They are majoring in Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with the pathway of Ethnic Studies and minoring in Spanish. They enjoy spending their time in the redwoods whenever they get the chance.

STEFFI PUERTO (she/her/hers), author of “Tribute to Fifteen”, is from East Oakland. She is double majoring in Journalism (Public Relations) and CRGS (Ethnic Studies) and she loves to make people laugh.

KATHY ZAMORA (she/her/ella), author of “Mis Raíces”, is from Escondido, CA. She is a social work major with a passion for

change. She is hopeful for people to live their lives regardless of their differences. She loves going to Humboldt's beaches but miss swimming in San Diego beaches

LAUREN GRESSER (she/her), author of "A Reflection of Myself", is from Murrieta, California. She is currently a Psychology major and she enjoys making art, experiencing new things and situations, and getting to know all the different kinds of people around her.

FABI LOPEZ (she/her), author of "Mi Persona", is from Lodi, CA. She enjoys being out in nature and being with family.

RICARDO JR. TORRES (he/him), author of "Dels" is from Oxnard, CA. He is majoring in Kinesiology with a minor in Business. He enjoys listening to music and playing sports.

ANONYMOUS (they/them), author of "The Crazy Chick With Black Hair", is a sophomore at HSU majoring in Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality with a focus on Ethnic Studies. They say, "I have grown so much here at HSU, but I wanted to include a part of myself from home, so I wrote about my best friend that I miss so dearly."

HOLLY RAE (she/her), author of "Incarnate", is a queer mother of four majoring in Critical race, gender and sexuality. She has a passion for art, the process of healing and the masterpiece of connection.

AARON SPILLER (he/him/his), author of "Home", is a senior majoring in Wildlife Conservation and Management. He is originally from the East Bay where he spent much of his youth roaming the many trails that carve that region. He enjoys sports, cooking, bird-watching, and spending time outdoors with friends and family.

JOHANNA BONILLA (her/she), author of "Mi Gran Tata Abuelo", prefers the name Vanessa. She is from Downtown L.A. y es Salvadoreña. She enjoys going to the beaches and going to the mountains. She most definitely enjoys cruising, she says, "because there's always a new place to discover and if you get lost, even better."

JULIA TOP (she/her), author of "Soul Sisters," is from Los Angeles. She is a social work major and wants to help children and trauma survivors. She enjoys spending time with my friends and family. She really loves to swim and read as well.

YOLANDA CESAREO ZACARIAS (she/her), author of "My Memory, or Lack Thereof" is from Salinas, CA. She is an English Teaching major with an Ethnic American Literature minor and hopes to be a high school English teacher. She enjoys running, writing, reading, and baking conchitas!

THERESSA LOPEZ (she/they), author of "Home in One House", is from Fresno, CA. She is majoring in English and minoring in Ethnic Studies, and she's about to graduate! She is continually inspired by laughter of her family and the brilliance of her peers. She likes to paint and draw on things. She sleeps a lot, and remembers almost all of her dreams.

MARIA ORTEGA-PARTIDA (she/her/hers), author of "St. Helena, CA", is super excited to share her personal reflections on growing up in St. Helena, CA. This piece was important to her in processing her identity and how her home environment of 18 years shaped her views and life. She is a second year HSU student majoring in Psychology and minoring in Religious Studies. She enjoys ceramics, music, and cooking among many other things.

CHELSEA RIOS GOMEZ (she/her), author of "This is Campesino Life", is from Pixley, CA. She enjoys many things, but mainly loves spending time with her little brother and mom. She says, "We do most things together and without them, I wouldn't be where I am today."

ARMANDO PEÑA (him/his), author of "Letter for Atlanta", is majoring in Ethnic Studies with a minor in Child Development and he is originally from South Central Los Angeles. He enjoys writing and believes it is liberating for us to own our stories and also uplift others in the process. He says, "The stories we tell is the power we share, and we will need all of our collective voices to make effective positive change."

RAFAEL DOMINGUEZ (he/him), author of "Ethnic Studies in the USA", is a first-year student majoring in Psychology. He was born and raised in the Los Angeles area. In his free time, he enjoys being active by going on hikes and riding bikes. He also enjoys listening to music whether it be cumbias, rap, or rock, he's always up to listening to something new.

Why Courageous Cuentos?

"Courageous Cuentos is a safe place to create your own history. It lets you know that your story is important, and meant to be remembered. Here you are accepted, and you get to be a part of the change, be a part of speaking up about what you believe. It is important to me and the school, because it is an eyeopener for many about abundant social issues in our lives. Create the community you want, and it starts here.

-Emely Almader

"Courageous Cuentos is crucial to the legitimacy of our stories. We, as marginalized peoples, seldom get to write our own history. Each story from Courageous Cuentos is a moment of resilience in our collective decolonial histories. Courageous Cuentos gives hope whose stories go untold and voices go unheard. We are in a perpetual struggle of truth and expression, these cuentos are the rich and true stories of our families, of our people. Courageous Cuentos gives power and agency to people who refuse to be left in the margins of history and we pay our respects to these people who lift up the voices of others" .

-Armando Peña

"Courageous Cuentos continues to be an outlet and safe space for our narratives that are underrepresented. It's important to promote our narratives especially in these days when marginalized communities continue being marginalized more than ever. It is important to HSU because it encompasses our values of community and solidarity within our community. "

-Rafael Dominguez

"Courageous Cuentos has become an important space for many voices that are often left out in institutions like Humboldt State University. We now have the honor to also be including other voices from the community that also face challenges of being heard. This has become a part of the HSU community as well as the community around it. "

-Eibar Romero

"Courageous Cuentos is where you can connect and relate to the stories written. It is a space where you can feel connected to someone or something beyond yourself. For me, it reminds me that I am not alone, that we are all here experiencing the same things. More importantly, it is a space where you can share your voice, thoughts, and emotions with no judgment."

-Victoria Ramirez

"Courageous Cuentos provides a space that allows us to embrace what others might want us to hide. Sharing our own experiences through this journal and the surrounding community can be a source of a therapeutic, if not essential, way of expressing ourselves and validating ourselves and others. In a society where self-love and deviating from the dominant norm is frowned upon, celebrating and accepting ourselves and others is a powerful, radical act."

-Ariel Stelljes

"Writing is a way of processing, healing, and teaching. Courageous Cuentos provides a space for students to share our experiences with our communities both at HSU and our homes. It is incredible to see all of the creative pieces that have come out of these classes, and be a part of this volume!"

-Theresa Lopez

"It is essential for a people to record their experiences throughout history in order to develop a collective memory of the past. A community with no memory has no guidance from their ancestors, or an accurate critique of their reality. It is impossible to understand the present without knowledge of what made the present. Courageous Cuentos is a community's self-righteous act of self-perseverance. It is a flex of a people's autonomy to speak their own truth. An act against a white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy that has terrorized the world for generations."

-Jonathan Pena Centes

"Courageous Cuentos is important in creating a space for our marginalized stories to be vocalized – there truly is no other journal like it at HSU. There is so much strength and history inked in between the pages of this journal and so much care in binding it all together. "

-Yolanda Cesareo Zacarias