

# *X P R E S S*

SF STATE UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 2017



**Take the rock.**

# *X P R E S S*

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** *Samuel Favela*

**MANAGING EDITOR** *Lizzie Cotterell*

**PHOTO EDITOR** *Alina Castillo*

**MULTIMEDIA EDITOR** *Darian Costa*

**CONTENT EDITOR** *Heather Rutz-Leighton*

**ONLINE EDITOR** *Anya Livshyts*

**SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR** *Marinelle Cabillo*

**ART DIRECTOR** *Erika Correa*

## **CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

*Destiny Arroyo*

*Kiana Fillius*

*Nicole Green*

*Anya Livshyts*

*Michael Massaro*

*Agnes Mostad*

*Jazmine Sanchez*

*Kaila Taylor*

*Mitchell Walther*

## **CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS**

*Diego Aguilar*

*Alina Castillo*

*Nicole Green*

*Richard Lomibao*

*Mitchell Mylius*

*Ørjan Ryland*

*Travis Wesley*

*Mitchell Walther*

*Aya Yoshida*



## **ON THE COVER:**

*Alcatraz Island makes an appearance  
in the absence of fog during sunset  
in San Francisco on Monday, Oct. 9,  
2017. | Travis Wesley*

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*Special Thanks to Don Menn  
and Beth Renneisen*

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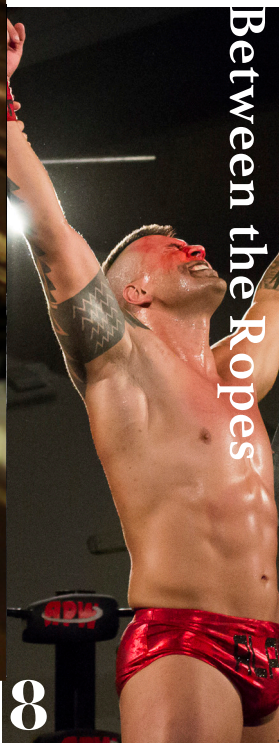
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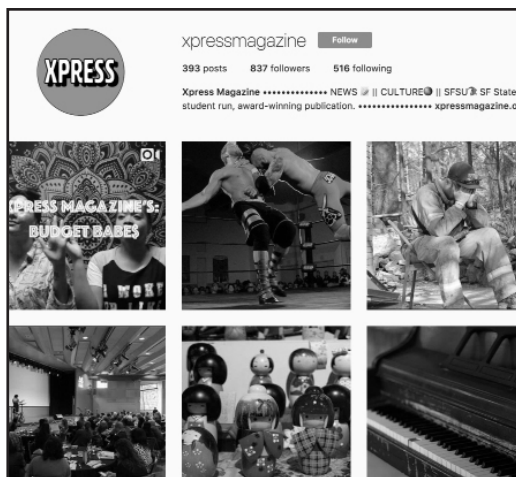


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Editor-in-chief  
Samuel Favela

When I first started my journalism journey back in 2012, many wondered what the hell I was going to be doing with the path I was on.

This field made no money, print was going extinct, and it seemed to be a dying industry.

But then, good ol' Mr. Trump came along.

And now whenever I mention I'm a journalism major, it's followed with a, "Good! We need more people like you, now more than ever."

The thing is though, there's always been people like me. Well reported information has always been there for people to absorb. Unfortunately, it took a rude wake up call for the majority of people to realize how important we are, but hey, we're here, and there's no point of putting the blame on anyone now.

*What matters is where we go from here.*

How we document the truth and how it is delivered is something I've been thinking heavily on since I came into this position. So when I gathered my editorial team, I made sure to make it clear to them: we need a voice that's personable, trustworthy, and relatable.

We're millennials and so are our readers. We poke fun at how hard it is to find affordable housing while having good paying jobs with benefits, and yet, somehow turn up for march after march, fighting to make a change for future generations. We're being accused of killing a different failing industry at least once a week, but making everyday changes within ourselves, hoping to positively influence society.

With this in mind, I wanted this issue to be strictly online.

*I want to test our readers.*

I want to take social media strategies, apply them, and see exactly what we get when our main goal is to not only inform, but to engage with them.

Gathering inspiration from Teen Vogue's Editor in Chief Elaine Welteroth and Digital Director Phillip Picardi, I'm offering our readers more, too. Our students here at San Francisco State are so diverse.

*You deserve more.*

Whether it's reading our article about using the N-word, listening to our End-Of-The-World podcast, or reporting fashion trends on campus, and learning workout routines on Instagram; we want you to know that we're hustling for you, our multifaceted readers.

Enjoy what we have to offer this semester.

SF-fl

# KEYS TO THE DEPOT

by Michael Massaro



The piano located in the Depot at SF State can be played by anyone on campus. Whether you are practicing for a gig or just killing time in between classes, this musical instrument can provide a creative outlet for all . | Alina Castillo

An old Kimball piano is nestled among the tables and chairs in The Depot at San Francisco State University. Surrounded by students who get food from restaurants in the food court, e.g. Farm Fresh Underground, or buy drinks and/or beer at the pub, occasionally one can hear its key being played by a student. The Depot is located in the Lower Conference Level of the Cesar Chavez Building. But why is this piano here? Where did it come from?

The answer is: nobody is really quite sure, but it serves a particular function to the student body.

The wood body of the piano feels like a skateboard that was waterlogged from a trip through the rain; the keys have lost their stunning pearl whiteness and sit unevenly across; the smell of dust and spilled food/drink lightly emanates from the housing and lid. The piano also plays as though its been played one too many times, the keys lag and stick after they react to touch, creating a muddy hand-feel.

The piano looks like something someone would leave on the corner for months without anyone taking it, yet it serves a purpose to the students at SFSU.

Owning a piano is a privilege that not everyone has. Providing a piano that anyone can play, if they build up the courage to fill the Lower Conference Level with the sound of their piano skills, is something that gives all students the opportunity to play and potentially learn piano, something they might not have had the chance to do before. It also gives students the chance to overcome their stage fright by playing in front of, albeit, distracted students. But the bottom line is that this hunk of wood, spring steel and ivory, is a tool that students use to learn, which seems like an obvious positive, especially for a university.

"I'm here for five days of the week," said James Hall, an english major at SFSU.

"I never owned a piano before, but I learned how to play from a class I took last semester."

Hall enjoys playing all genres of music in order to avoid musical weak spots, adjacent to not skipping leg day at the gym. Some of his favorites to play are "Chasing Cars" by Snow Patrol and "Variations Aria" composed by Johann Sebastian Bach. Hall comes from a musical family, which has given him an urge to learn the piano, and is thankful for the old Kimball in The Depot.

Students like Hall are perhaps the most obvious and most important example as to why there should



An empty chair in front of the Kimball is an invitation to play. | Alina Castillo



be learning tools, like musical instruments, made accessible to students on campus. Without the piano in The Depot, it's likely that Hall would never be able to fit piano practice in his daily routine. Skills like learning an instrument, require consistent practice just to maintain a certain level of expertise. Therefore, The Depot, or at least the convenience of placing a dusty piano on campus in general, has kept students' musical ambitions alive.

SFSU is a university that teaches piano classes in their music curriculum, so why's the only piano that students have access to an antique resting in a food court?

It's definitely not the optimal place for a piano. Ramen, pizza, sandwiches, and beer conflict the smell of the room, resulting in a distracting practice place, while dialogue, silverware-clattering, and the beeps of the arcade downstairs suffocate the sound of the piano.

This isn't the only piano on campus, but it's the only one that all students have access to. There are pianos that collect dust until a performance or formal recital, like the seven-foot model C7 Yamaha, a much larger piano, which enjoys a good reputation among musicians, located in Jack Adams room. There are also pianos scattered across the Fine Arts Building, alas they are only for music majors.

While it is a nice addition to The Depot, this concept has more to add than one random, beat-up piano in a food court. This success should result in a spring board that inspires the school to offer more musical educational tools to the whole student body. A school ought to strive to educate students to goals of both quality and quantity of education; providing as many tools as possible is an efficient way to do so.

This is a contested issue because some faculty and students don't see a reason for a renovation. The prior perspective can be summed up with the old saying "give an inch and they'll take a mile," but this perspective can look crude especially when considering educational tools.

While nobody seems to know exactly why that old piano is there, Margie Williams, the SFSU piano technician, has seen this type of piano before - the type of piano that's been abandoned and uncared for. Pianos that tend to have a similar story.

"The problem with pianos in public spaces is that they become orphans because nobody is really there paying attention to them until there's a big problem," Williams said.

"They tend to get abused, in the form of drinks getting spilled inside, wear and tear in outsized proportion to the maintenance budget, etcetera. Technicians are generally reluctant to work on these types of pianos because it's really discouraging. I certainly support the idea of public access to pianos,

but nobody thinks about the maintenance required or tries to monitor what goes on around the piano. Eventually the pianos get so awful that nobody wants to play them."

In all likelihood, the piano was left in The Depot because it would have been thrown out otherwise. It's also likely that this piano will maintain resting in The Depot until it is deemed completely unplayable. This will most likely result in its destruction, but what's unknown is whether or not its death will be accompanied by rebirth - a new, or another old and forgotten, learning tool for the students at SFSU.

Regardless, not all the students who use the piano on campus depend on it to be their one and only learning tool. Tiffany Duong, a student who has been playing piano for sixteen years, and owns a piano at home, plays Disney and musical soundtracks, like *La La Land*, at The Depot about once every two weeks simply for fun.

"It's a little bit old and the keys are small and close, but it's convenient," Duong said.

"The piano I have at home is better a lot nicer, but I just play this one for fun because I commute far."

While seemingly less important than being a tool to learn, having a piano next to a bar is a fun concept for a lot of students. Despite Duong having the option to practice from home on a much nicer piano, she still really enjoys playing the piano in The Depot from time-to-time.

There are even music majors who have access to the exclusive pianos who still choose to play on the piano in The Depot for similar reasons. While it is most-definitely the worst piano on campus, speaking from a technical standpoint, the students that use this piano have found value in it from its unique novelty. Adam Medina is a music major at SFSU who chooses to use the pianos located in the Fine Arts Building - music major use only - and the piano in The Depot.

"I use this piano, lately, every Tuesday and Thursday between classes," says Medina.

"I'd say I mostly practice in the Fine Arts Building, but if I'm grabbing a beer or something, I'll use this one. Nice atmosphere and it's more social; people come to you."

That's not the only reason Medina enjoys using this piano. Despite it being undeniably a worn and overused instrument, there's a certain warmth that doesn't come with a brand new, expensive Yamaha.

"This piano has a honky tonk type of feel. I just feel like older pianos have more character. I mean, it's beat-up and looks like a run-down piano in a saloon, but it sounds good, despite not being maintained." ✕



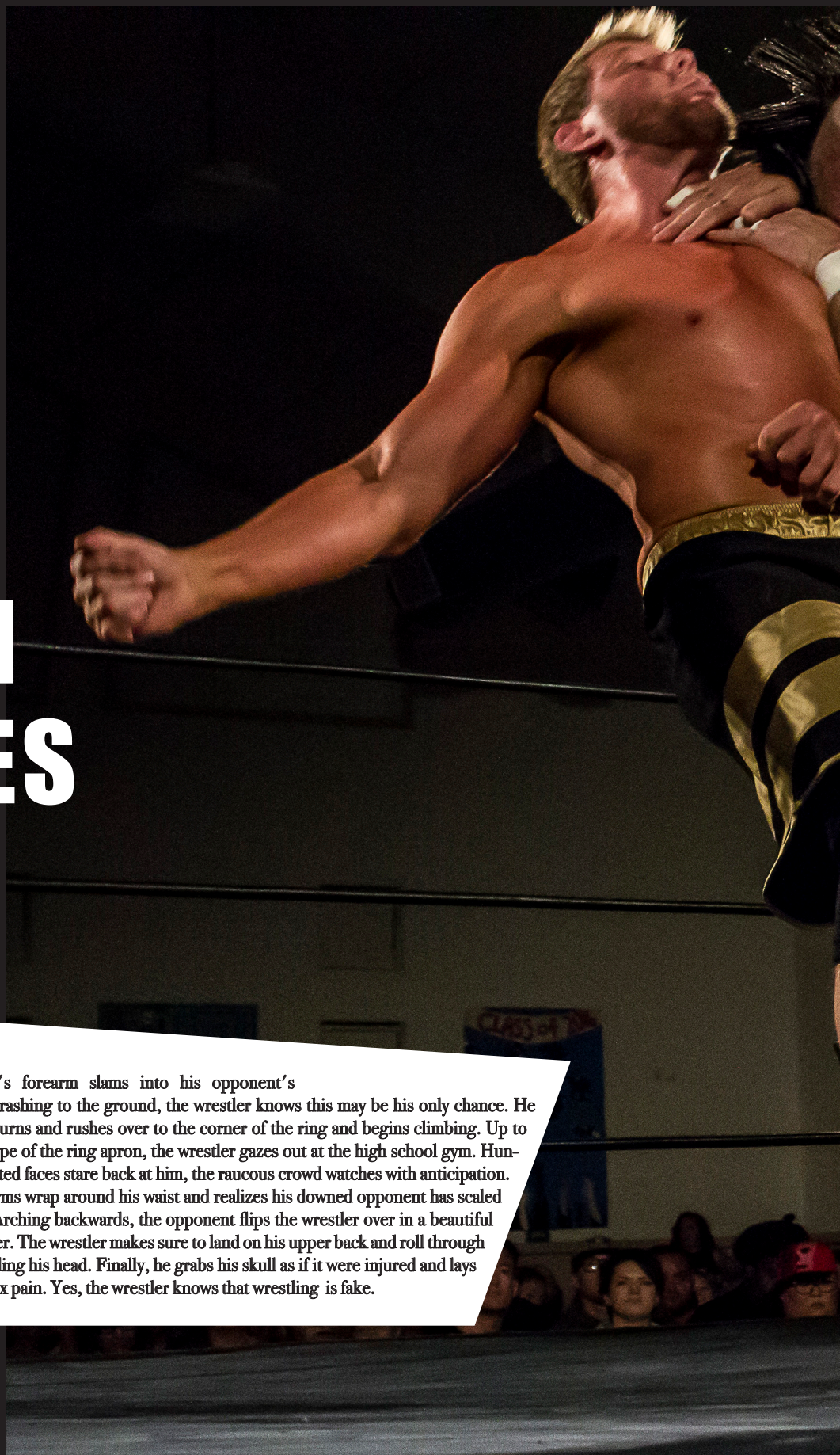
# BETWEEN THE ROPES

*Photography and story  
by Mitchell Walther*



The wrestler's forearm slams into his opponent's chest. Crashing to the ground, the wrestler knows this may be his only chance. He quickly turns and rushes over to the corner of the ring and begins climbing. Up to the top rope of the ring apron, the wrestler gazes out at the high school gym. Hundreds of excited faces stare back at him, the raucous crowd watches with anticipation.

The wrestler feels two arms wrap around his waist and realizes his downed opponent has scaled the ring apron as well. Arching backwards, the opponent flips the wrestler over in a beautiful German suplex maneuver. The wrestler makes sure to land on his upper back and roll through onto the ring mat, avoiding his head. Finally, he grabs his skull as if it were injured and lays prone, grimacing in faux pain. Yes, the wrestler knows that wrestling is fake.











*Top left: Former WWE Champion Jack Swagger prepares to lay into APW's own David Luster. Top Right: John Redibo sends Stryker Ngongoseke for a ride at APW's Gym Wars. Bottom: David Luster catapults Jack Swagger*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MITCHELL WALTHER

Wrestling is an age old form of entertainment. The art of staged fighting finds its roots in almost every culture. The masked men and women of Lucha Libre are well-known in Mexico, while America reminisces the strongmen of old carnivals that eventually became modern wrestling. While most are familiar with the lucrative World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), smaller indie wrestling promotions still exist all over the world.

These indie promotions hire wrestlers to travel everywhere, performing in any high school gym or bingo hall that will take them.

"When I started training in 2015 I didn't know how many indie wrestling promotions there were," Karl "The Big Effin' Deal" Fredericks explains.

Karl, known as "The Big Effin' Deal" in the wrestling world, is one of many touring wrestlers. A recent newcomer to the scene, Karl has gotten to see the recent explosion of indie wrestling first hand.

"I knew the worldwide, the WWE's, the new Japan Pro Wrestling's, the Ring of Honor's, the bigger ones. I didn't know I could go and travel as much as I have. As soon as I started wrestling it was a new world to me, and it

was exciting because obviously this where I've made my name, where I've honed my craft."

Often mistaken for a sporting event, it's important to know just what wrestling entails. Akin to a theatre performance or a magic show, wrestling is a staged fight with the intention of telling a story. It has more in common with the movie Rocky than with the UFC.

Like a magician who never reveals their

"WRESTLING IS MELODRAMA, WRESTLING IS MYTHOLOGY, WRESTLING IS ACTION, WRESTLING IS COMIC BOOKS. THE ONLY THING WRESTLING ISN'T, IS WRESTLING." *MAX LANDIS*

secret, wrestlers and fans are adamant that wrestling is real, in order to "protect the business," a phrase that refers to treating wrestling like it's real despite the common knowledge that it's not. The wrestler, audience, and viewer at home are all participating in a form of exciting escapism. American screenwriter, director, producer, and comic book writer, Max Landis, shows it best in his mini-documentary Wrestling isn't Wrestling.

**THUD.**

The wrestler's opponent rolls over onto him, lifts his leg and pinning the wrestler's shoulders to the mat for a three count and the win. The referee slides into position and throws down his hand.

One!

"It was a German suplex from the top rope," thinks the wrestler.

"It deserves at least a 2 count, make the other guy look strong, and make myself look resilient."

The referee's hand windmills around and hits the canvas gain.

Two!

As the referee brings his hand for the final count, the wrestler kicks his legs out, propelling his shoulders off the mat at the last second. The crowd let's out a booming cry of "two!" in response. With his opponent grimacing in false shock and dismay, the wrestler can't help but crack a smile. Now it's time for his comeback.





*Right: Joey Ryan "The King of Sleaze" makes his entrance at All Pro Wrestling's Halloween Hell in Pacifica. Above: Ryan uses his genitals as a weapon against "The Jungle Boy"*



Indie promotions aren't new, but their surging popularity is. Almost two decades ago, WWE was the only place to get work done. Boasting over 2.5 million buys on just their four main Pay-Per-Views in 2001, the WWE was king.

Now wrestlers can find a dozen places to work in any area. Karl has worked for All Pro Wrestling, Pacific Northwest Wrestling, Fist Combat, and many more promotions in just the span of two years, and all in California.

Kirk White, the owner of local Bay Area wrestling promotion Big Time Wrestling remembers early on in American wrestling history.

"Back in 1996 there were probably fifteen people that were with WWE or WCW or NWA that had TV time that you could book. There weren't nearly as many as you have now," White reminisces.

"Now there's more wrestlers available. There's more talent available."

This doesn't mean that wrestlers always have an easier time getting a job though.

"The wrestlers today aren't as grateful for the bookings they get. The business has been brought up on respect, and I don't think a lot of it goes on right now," asserts White.

"If you're not humbled, I have no use for you."

This weight of self-image and responsibility is everything for a wrestler. They act almost like independent contractors, promoting themselves and selling their own merchandise wherever they wrestle. The more people they draw, the bigger a wrestler will get. That means they have to get the crowd on their side, whether they are a "good guy" or a "bad guy".

"I spent the vast majority of my career wrestling as 'baby-face', as a good guy. September of last year was my heel turn when I became a bad guy," Karl explains when asked about grabbing the crowd's attention.

"A lot of it's feel. If I kick a guy and the crowd loves it, I'll probably kick him two or three more times," admits Karl.

"Today I was the victim of a good handful of chops to the chest. He started lighting me up and the crowd was into it he so kept lighting me up. It's that thing, pulling the emotion out of the crowd."

# KA-POW

Throwing himself backwards, the wrestler bounces against the ropes, propelling himself forward and he slams his shoulder as his opponent falls backwards landing on his upper back. The timing creates the perfect illusion of collision, and the wrestler rebounds off the ropes again to repeat the process. Then the wrestler smoothly picks up, his opponent gives a slight hop to make the process go easier. Once on his shoulders, the wrestler turns and plants his opponent onto the ground, making sure to carry him the whole way down and level out his body, minimizing impact. Standing above his downed foe, the wrestler raises his hands to the crowd, allowing his stance to spurn boos and jeers from the audience around him. He smiles again, but this time wider and less subtle, doing his best to communicate his cocky persona.



It may seem odd to analyze how to entertain people, but the art of crowd control in a wrestling match is just as touch-and-go as the death defying flips and dives the wrestler's take to tell their stories.

The Young Bucks, a Southern California tag-team made of up Matt and Nick Massie, have mastered this art in most countries around the world. Part of a team of indie wrestlers known as the Bullet Club, the Young Bucks have created a ring persona and merchandise system that has taken wrestling, and popular culture, by storm.

"We try to make it as much fun as possible," explains Nick, known in wrestling as Nick Jackson.

"Today's audience for anything entertainment wise has a short attention span, so we try to keep the fans attention with the ring style that we take part in."

The Young Bucks have also done a good job keep fans attention on their merchandise. By selling their shirts at Hot Topic, the Young Bucks, and Bullet Club, have outsold all WWE's merchandise sold at Hot Topic as well. They also created a mockumentary-style Youtube series called "Being the Elite" that breaks one hundred thousand views most episodes.

"The most rewarding part is watching a silly idea get over with the audience. You can see and feel it happening," admits Matt when talking about "Being the Elite" and connecting with the crowd.

This vein of success makes waves in what is otherwise seen a rather underground industry. Karl Fredericks sees stories like the Young Bucks as rugs of a ladder he can climb now.

"The thing is you can make six figures on the indies and it's crazy. It reminds me of a lot of rappers. You look at rappers today, they're not signing record deals," Karl elaborates.

"They're like, 'I'll put my money for the tour,' and they're getting a lot back. The Young Bucks are in Hot Topic, and that money is going to the [Young] Bucks, rather than the WWE shirts that are going back to the corporation. On the indies there are just so many places to work. You get that buzz and you can work anywhere."



Karl "The Big Effin' Deal" Fredericks celebrates defending his Internet championship at APW's Halloween Hell. | Mitchell Walther

Karl knows he still has way to go, but he's excited as his prospects.

"I'm just a kid trying to wrestle. I'm still driving myself everywhere but I love professional wrestling, and I want to give my life to this. It is a very good time to be a professional wrestler."

The hardships of the tour life can't be understated though. While the Young Bucks are living the independent wrestlers dream, it takes a toll. Between June and October of this year, the Young Bucks wrestled in North Carolina, England, Scotland, Georgia, Nevada, and Pennsylvania.

"That's the hardest part about what we do, balancing life," a fried Matt admits.

"I'm never not tired. I just try to be around as much as I can for my family, but also try to be on the road enough for my fans. I'll never get it perfect, but I'll keep trying. Also, lots of coffee - addiction levels. I'm jittery as we speak."

A wrestler can make six figure on the indies, but that cost can't always be counted in dollars. It is a raw passion that keeps these athletes going. The love of the sport melded with the love of art. Karl knows the hardships. He drives six hours to Daly City and six hours back to his home in Reno at 11 p.m. every time he wrestled for APW, his main wrestling promotion.

"Everything we do is so physical, every move has meaning," asserts Karl.

"You can't fake throwing your body into the ground. We're one-take stunt actors, and it all hurts. If you're good everything hurts, just lie. The beauty of indie wrestling is the accessibility. If someone has interest, there is an outlet. On November 10, APW is taking over the Cow Palace for a larger show. Kirk White's Big Time Wrestling (BTW) company meets monthly in the East Bay to entertain hundreds of people. New Japan Pro Wrestling, WhatCulture Pro Wrestling, and Ring of Honor televise what matches they can, hoping to gain traction with new generations of fans. It's the passion of the wrestlers that throw themselves around though that really drive the point home.

"Go to an indie show, it's a variety show," Karl implores.

"It's The Muppet Show, it's Saturday Night Live. You get the comedy. You get the good guys, the bad guys. There's something for everybody. It's fun."



The wrestler swings his legs out, flipping himself from a standing position. As he careens with ground though, his opponent is missing. Slamming into the mat, he's roughly dragged back to his feet by his opponent. The wrestler's head is positioned between the hooked arm of his opponent and driven down toward the ground. The crook of the arm is placed carefully so the wrestler's skull doesn't spike the mat, but his head is still rattled a bit. Then the wrestler is flipped over, and his shoulders are again pinned to the floor. This time though, the wrestler doesn't kick his legs out. The wrestler is losing tonight. He lays back and gasps a bit for air as the third hand from the referee comes down.

The match ends.

The wrestler has another match with someone new tomorrow night, and all stories must come to an end for now. X





# WE HAVE THE POWER

*by Kaila Taylor*

## *“HOW DO WE CREATE THAT REVOLUTION?”*

Almost mirror-like, the art is intended to help people of color see themselves in a world that doesn't thoroughly grasp the concept of equal representation. A world that acts as a broken mirror.

Lenworth McIntosh, who goes by Joonbug, is an established illustrator, film photographer, and part of an art group called The Black Mail Collective. This 30-year-old with Jamaican roots has found himself in Oakland after living in states Florida and Texas.

Starting with five black males, The Black Mail Collective's - originally The Black Male Collective - first mission was to depict the Black man's experience in America through their art. Now, with women as a part of their group, male turned into "mail" and the platform changed to be hyper-focused on people of color's experience as a whole.

"Everywhere I've been has lent itself, enhanced my ability to create what I see," Joonbug said.

"I'm an accumulation of all the places I've been and the people I've met."

His wrist goes up and down as he strokes the wall with paint.

In the thick of the busy streets of South of Mar-





*"Joonbug" Lenworth McIntosh paints his mural entitled "All Power to the People," for a group show "Natural Plain" at First Amendment Gallery in Downtown San Francisco on September 26. After finishing a session of painting at First Amendment Gallery, Lenworth McIntosh's strolls downtown San Francisco in search of pictures using his handy Canon rangefinder. | Richard Lomibao*



ket, or SoMa if you're a native, which is basically downtown San Francisco, but not the downtown with the brief cases and gentrification. He paints in the downtown that is the home to the homeless, or sans-abri if you're French, the downtown where sidewalks double as a place where many come to rest their heads at night.

"You got skills bro," and "maybe you should add some stars right there or the Golden Gate Bridge in that corner there," are some of the many things heard by Joonbug on a daily basis.

Passerbys seem incapable of passing by without smiling, commenting, or adding suggestions.

"I feel like I'm the first artist to paint out here," Joonbug utters.

"...or at least to paint black faces."

A lucky wall at Howard & 6th st. gets to be the home for the mural he is working on, until it is eventually painted over.

A friend, and fellow artist, Colt Platt expresses his appreciation for Joonbug's work.

"It's refreshing to see someone do something different, something that most would be afraid to

do."

He acknowledges everyone that acknowledges him, and speaks to everyone with such strong familiarity you would think he already knew them.

"There's a beauty in building that bridge between like the super poor and well off and showing that we have all these layers to us, but historically we've only been shown two sides," Joonbug sighs.

People typically become professionals at turning a blind eye when it comes to encountering people on the street, not him. He kindly accepts every comment and advice from those passing by with grace, knowing full well he is going to stick with his own ideas and do things the way he has always known how.

Occasionally he gets dangerously close to the busy traffic street to get a wide view of the progress he has made on his work, establishing what needs more work, and then walks back over paintbrush in hand.

Done for the day, he heads out at around 6 p.m.

It's about five blocks to get to the bart station, and he stops almost every 30 seconds to snap pic-

tures of his environment and the people around him. He is a man of the people to say the least.

Back at his Oakland studio he is in his element, like two puzzle pieces fitting together - but almost better, contributing to an aesthetic not even a Tumblr account could dream of emulating.

He sinks into the small loveseat growing more comfortable by the second soaking up every question like a sponge, dwelling on them.

"I feel relaxed right now. It's been a long day," Joonbug laughs.

'Power to the People' are the words that he wants to accompany the mural.

His work has no political intent but he does include messages within his work that are up to the viewer to decipher.

"So much of our lives are governed by people telling us what to do or whatever. Even like when your parents tell you what to do, there's a certain level of respect but after a while, especially when you're a teenager you start to rebel because you kind of have a problem with it," Joonbug says.





He explains that if people really want to dig deeper they are at liberty to.

He tells of a character he created of a tall man wearing a hat, a very simple hat one would assume, but like his other works this goes deeper.

"The deeper you go into this character the more complexities you find. The hat can represent so many things—it can be protection, it can be warmth, it can be just style, it can be anything,

protection.... can lead to different things," Joonbug added gesturing delicately with his hands.

"But they're all tied to the constraints of the black man's plight or the person of color's plight

here in America or throughout history, throughout time. There are all these things but it just boils down to a man wearing a hat," Joonbug continued.

Political messages have snuck their way into art since the dawn of time, art has always served as a visual relief from the real world issues while reminding us that they still exist. It has served as an escape and an answer.

"I've seen more decorative creators," mentioned Joonbug.

"That's why I hate pop art sometimes because there's a very thin line between decoration and substance."

Now more than ever our generation is seeing heightened racial tension. In response to whether that has created a turning point in the messages included into his art, he explains how everything that people do after these grave incidents, which show our country's true colors, is just "reaction shit."

He stresses the importance of attaching his messages on a level where the viewer will not forget, where it's an after thought as opposed to an initial.

"In protest you have a lot of room for error and a lot of complexity and a lot of fake shit because humans just love being seen," Joonbug explains.

"You have people that are definitely in it for the greater good then you have people that are mixing in that aren't there for anything but being able to say "I was there" then they go home and live their regular lives."

Desensitization is the common cold of our generation. Fortunately, we have social media to visually see all of the disgracefulness of systemic racism, but because it is online people become occupied with new posts and forget about the old ones.

What seems the most important to Joonbug is affecting people long term and causing real change with each stroke of his brush and each snap of a moment.

With growing comfort Joonbug becomes one with the small couch.

"I feel like... real change takes place within yourself." ✕

*Top left: McIntosh takes to a ladder while painting "All power to the People"*

*Middle: He details the lips on a face in his mural.*

*Bottom Left: In his shared studio space at Athen B. Gallery in Downtown Oakland on October 9.*

*Right: A stack of McIntosh's sketchbooks. | Richard Lomibao*





# TAKE THE ROCK

Building a community to serve those who served

by Anya Livshyts



**I**t is strange to see the San Francisco skyline completely pitch black. The shadows of skyscrapers cast a watchful eye over the marina. There is a stillness, broken only by the sound of the waves lapping at the Hyde Street Pier. The masts of the boats sway softly, untouched by the triangular appendages of gulls. A familiar scent lures us into the corner of the pier. The smell of coffee mingles with the salty air, and with it a shallow murmur of conversation.

A small group of veterans and organizers are already here, setting up registration and taking out the swim caps for every swimmer.

Looking out across the chilly water, towards the island in the middle of the Bay, one might ask, “why Alcatraz?”

Kirk McKinney, a commercial real estate developer and one of the coaches for today’s swim, believes that it’s one of the main things that draws people in.

“There’s something special about Alcatraz,” Kirk begins to explain.

“...We just thought it was so iconic and so San Francisco, that we figured that [Alcatraz] would be the thing, and that would hopefully attract people from all over. And it’s starting to do that.”

What makes Alcatraz so special, of course, is its history, particularly when referring to the multiple attempts that were made by prisoners to escape the

island in its years as a Federal Prison. During its heyday, the maximum security prison held the creme-de-la-creme of the criminal world, including Al Capone and Robert “Birdman of Alcatraz” Stroud.

According to FBI files, the attempts that were made to escape the Rock were deemed unsuccessful, with escapees being shot, captured, or found drowned. However, five were labeled as missing, and presumed drowned.

The records of the meticulous planning that went into these escapes have puzzled law enforcement, and the public alike. These stories have spurred excitement and a challenge to overcome for adventures seekers to try the swim from Alcatraz, in an attempt to prove that this escape could have, in fact, been plausible.

The “Take the Rock” Veteran Swim Challenge is an annual, non-profit swimming challenge that takes place in the fall. This year the event took place on October 1, with the final chance to qualify for the event the day prior, on September 30.

Consisting of a 1.3 mile swim, participants are dropped off via boats in the water near the shore of the island off the southeast side to swim back into Aquatic Park. Due to the 60 degree fahrenheit water, as well as the strong current, swimmers are surveilled by volunteers with canoes and boats during the entire swim, as well as joined by coaches and experienced swimmers in the





*Veterans swims in front of Alcatraz Island during the Take The Rock swim in San Francisco on Sunday, Oct. 1, 2017. | Travis Wesley*

water.

The event is free and sponsored by the Vietnam Vets of Diablo Valley, as well as the Nadadores Locos swim club. These two organizations help to pay for the insurance fees, and help put together the event. Working alongside with the organizers, they notify the Coast Guard of the event, and find volunteers who will use boats to keep the swimmers safe. It is open for veterans from all over the country, as well as family members and active service members.

“The idea is it’s serving those who serve and those who have served,” expounded Coach McKinney.

At this year’s 5th annual “Take the Rock” challenge, the event brought in 80 participants, with the eldest being in his 70’s.

Earle Conklin, a member of the Vietnam Vets of Diablo Valley, the Nadadores Locos swim club, and one of the main organizers of the event, explained that in order to qualify, certain conditions must be met during training at Aquatic Park in San Francisco.

“We have a lot of coaching, kind of in a seminar format,” Earle explains. “We get into the water, we start with some basic skills. We teach the people how to hold their hands and how to twist their body, how to breathe, and how to use the ocean to their benefit, to help them swim.”

“Participants in the event are not allowed to swim without completing this final preparatory swim.”

During the last day to qualify for the event, Earle explains why seminars like this are so important for swimmers.

“The main thing was to build confidence in our swimmers - so we had them swim a route that is actually more difficult than the Alcatraz swim, and the idea was to look at their technique, coach them a little bit, help them with their goggles and their stroke, and how they’re managing their body,” he says, gesturing through the swimming motions.

These exercises also help the swimmers develop stamina and endurance through technique development.

“At the end of the swim we were in the water for almost two hours, which is far longer than it takes to swim from Alcatraz. We did almost 2 miles.”

Without taking into consideration the effect of the current, the swim from Alcatraz should be a little less than 1.3 miles, according to data recorded from previous swims.

“So two things were accomplished: one was we got to see everybody swim, we got to do a little bit more coaching, and the other thing was is that at the end of the swim, we can tell people you have done a swim that is more difficult than the Alcatraz swim.”

Joining the group of regulars, and returning swimmers, were twenty active



duty members from Fort Huachuca, Arizona. They had driven up the night before in order to participate in the qualifying swim.

Miranda DeSpain, a member of the US Army, and originally from North Carolina, was excited to get into the water.

"Every year our commander likes to do different things like this. So this year he put it out and asked for volunteers, so we decided to volunteer. And we've been training for a little while, because it's colder here than our waters in Arizona," she expressed, blinking at the sunlight bouncing off the waves.

"I am excited for the experience and to be able to say that I actually did this, but I'm a little nervous because it's not like a swimming pool."

When it comes to events like these it is always fascinating to hear who is trying to accomplish what by participating in this feat. While Miranda would be swimming in order to set a personal goal and prove something to herself, Bill Chan would be swimming with something different in mind.

Bill Leon Chan, a full-time international business student at San Francisco State University, is a part of the VETS at SFSU program, which stands for Vets, Education, Transition, Support. This organization is active in helping current and former members of the Armed Forces in pursuing their education. VETS also provides benefits and community, both of which are vital for returning veterans.

"Take the Rock" is only one of the events that the veterans find out about while being a part of this program.

"I learned how to swim at an early age - my mom kinda threw me into the pool and it was either sink or swim," Bill laughs as he recalls his first experiences with swimming.

"Ever since then, I loved swimming. It's great exercise."

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**"WE ARE BOTH VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT GETTING VETERANS TO THE WATER, NOT ONLY TO FIND THEIR PURPOSE BUT ALSO TO FIND THEIR TRIBE." TERRI PARKER**

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For Bill, swimming is not only about the workout, but also provides a sense of community through the opportunities it has provided.

"Swimming has always given me great opportunities in life. Being able to swim when I was in the Marines, opened up the opportunity to join a unit that was more specialized in amphibious assault."

As for why he had decided to "take the rock", Bill had a few reasons.

"Growing up, it always seemed like Alcatraz was the prison that nobody could escape from because

it's the island. By doing this swim, I just really wanted to pay tribute to my aunt. She escaped communism by swimming from mainland China to Hong Kong, and I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for her doing that swim and risking everything, just for the idea of freedom."

This idea was echoed for many of the veterans and family members swimming. A few of the veterans had their children completing the swim with them, not only as a bonding experience, but also as a tribute to what the body and mind can accomplish, even when it has gone through so much.

For Terri Parker, former Coast Guard veteran, the swim is all about speed and passion. This being her 3rd Take the Rock Challenge, Parker wanted to focus on setting a personal best, while actively reaching out and introducing more veterans to this amazing event. "I did exactly what I set out to do. I have four veteran swimmers that I bring from the North Bay to SF every weekend, and I also got another veteran who's kayaking for us, so now I'm with my tribe."

Terri had initially found out about the Take the Rock Challenge from Earle Conklin.

"This swim that he [Earle] has invented, and has been doing for years, has given all of us veterans the opportunity to not only to hang out with each other and find our tribe, but also the benefits of cold water swimming," Terri elaborates. "We are really



*Veterans wait to depart for the Take The Rock swim in San Francisco on Sunday, Oct. 1, 2017.  
Photo | TRAVIS WESLEY*



*RIGHT: Bill Chan smiles as he finishes the "Take the Rock" swim from Alcatraz to the shore Oct. 1, 2017. Photo\Mitchell Mylius  
TOP RIGHT: Stephen Edge prepares for the swim.\Travis Wesley  
BOTTOM: Cora Henry smiles after finishing the Take The Rock challenge in San Francisco.\Mitchell Mylius*



passionate about that, because it's very helpful with things like PTSD, physical injuries due to the cold water and reducing inflammation - there's so many positive things about swimming in the bay."

The passion and thought that go into an event like this is overwhelming. On one side there is the physical feat that it trains your body for. On the other side there is a mental challenge where it helps with endorphins and a natural way to feel adrenaline and pride.

Terri underlines the importance of this swim.

"We are both very passionate about getting veterans to the water, not only to find their purpose but also to find their tribe. It's very difficult to transition into civilian life when you've been in the military, I don't think it matters how long you were in, you know, you are changed forever."

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 in 4 active duty members show signs of a mental health condition. When it comes to returning to civilian life after active duty, there are three major health concerns that are most encountered while serving in the military.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and traumatic brain injury are the most commonly found conditions in returning Veterans, and can be severely debilitating to quality of life. PTSD can be caused from witnessing or experiencing a traumatic experience, such as military combat, assault and

disasters. This condition can have lasting effects, manifesting in insomnia, anger issues, and a potential for substance abuse, among others. From the NAMI research, the rate of PTSD is fifteen times more likely in veterans than in civilians.

The rate of PTSD differs depending on the missions and operations a veteran was a part of, as show in a study from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (USDVA). Their statistics show that for the Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF), the rate of PTSD ranges from 12 to 20 percent in a given year.

The USDVA does provide resources on their website for ways of treating PTSD, TBI, and depression. There are questionnaires available, as well as resources for various therapies, including cognitive processing therapy, prolonged exposure therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy. An extensive catalogue of veteran stories, as a part of Make the Connection Program where families and veterans both can research, compare stories, and look at mental health solutions is also available. However, this is not the only way people seek respite from their problems. For some, leaning on a community, and a communal activity, is a treatment on its own. Exercise helps decrease rumination and negative thinking habits, according to Psychology Today, and being a part of a community that values exercise and camaraderie only helps with creating a

stronger will to continue exercising and swimming. Thus healing your mind and body.

As Coach McKinney put it, not only does it help veterans with PTSD because of its meditative and physical components, there is potential for coping and healing on a mental level.

"They start feeling healthier about themselves, about their bodies, and what's going on, and it really does help them move past some of the challenges that they are dealing with."

One returning swimmer in particular stood out to Coach McKinney.

"The second year we did this I had a veteran come up to me and tell me... he was considering suicide. And he said, 'Hey, swimming from Alcatraz was on my bucket-list. I wanted to swim, and then I was going to kill myself.'"

This swimmer went on to tell Coach McKinney that the camaraderie he experienced in this community, as well as the exercise and the beauty of the bay, changed his mind. Being a part of something bigger, something so hopeful and strong was life-changing for him.

"So after that, I was hooked - and that is the epitome of why we are here and what we are doing."

Serving those who serve, and those who have served. ✕





# 50 YEARS IN THE MAKING

PROJECT REBOUND HONORS A LEGACY OF HARDWORK

by Kiana Fillius

*James Forman speaks to guests at the Celebrating 50 Years of Project Rebound event in Jack Adams Hall at SF State on Thursday, Sept. 28, 2017. A Travis Wesley*

Families, pairs, and solo guests trickled into the dimly lit Jack Adams Hall found at San Francisco State University. Some dressed casually, donning clothes they probably wore all day, while others wore attire that was fitting for a prestigious awards ceremony.

Volunteers handed them red tickets and well-designed programs that read “Celebrating 50 years of Project Rebound” on the cover. On the back side of the clean cover was the program’s objective: “a special admissions program assisting formerly incarcerated individuals wanting to enter San Francisco State University.” Upon entering the dark room adorned with purple and yellow balloons, guests met the men behind the proud smiles, Jason Bell and Curtis Penn, the regional director and interim director of the program, who were happy to see the event off to a positive start.

The visitors, some new and some used to the campus of SF State, slowly made their ways to the round tables, covered by black table cloths and several cups of water, while caterers rushed through the hall, setting up trays full of steaming foods that waited to be devoured.

Family members of Dr. John Irwin, the founder of Project Rebound, settled themselves at a table in the middle of the welcomed commotion. The caterers, all matching with surprisingly clean, white chef coats and white pants, already rushed from table to table, refilling any empty glasses they could find.

As the hall continued to fill with forty, fifty, sixty people, Bell rushed to the stage, studying the crowd to find the right time to start the event. He dressed for the part with a black button-down and a diagonally striped tie to accompany his walnut brown suit. Penn finished his conversation with a guest and slowly moved towards the front of the stage, focusing his attention on Bell. It was already 4:45 p.m.; the whole affair was fashionably late by fifteen minutes.

“A huge obstacle for Project Rebound is funding,” shared Penn, his deep voice carried through the almost empty conference room on the third floor of the César Chávez building. “We need the funding to continue the outreach at a high level,” he explained.

Penn was wary of the two Golden Gate Xpress reporters with their cameras pointed on him, but decided that it would not become a nuisance for him. He and Bell were popular and caught the attention of several news outlets, including KQED. It was one week before Project Rebound’s 50th Anniversary celebration, but the event became an added stress to the interim director’s already busy days.

The 54-year-old’s days are based around a recruitment strategy to get more people in the program.

“We’re going to the jails and prisons and into underrepresented communities,” shared Penn as his demeanor softened with each word. “We do a lot of resource fairs where we connect with men and women who were formerly incarcerated who can benefit from a program that



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Recently, the program received a grant of \$500,000 and could spread to eight other California State Universities: CSU Bakersfield, CSU Fresno, CSU Fullerton, CSU Sacramento, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CSU San Bernardino, CSU Bakersfield, and San Diego State University.

Project Rebound started in 1967 thanks to Dr. Irwin, who went through the criminal justice system before earning his bachelor’s degree in sociology at University of California, Los Angeles. After earning his degree, he began teaching at SF State, where he felt a program was needed to help those in the prison system become acclimated to life and education outside of their current situation. He created Project Rebound with the intent of helping the formerly incarcerated find a path back into the education system.

50 years later, Irwin shared some similar experiences with the current interim director. The San Diego native can understand how difficult it can be for someone to transition from a prison to a college because he went through the criminal justice system himself. With the help of Jody

Lewen—the founder of the Prison University Project, which gives the men in San Quentin a chance to involve themselves with higher education—and Project Rebound, Penn could graduate from SF State.

As he tries to extend that same helping hand to those being

released by the prison system, he and Bell are pleased to look back at the success of their former students. In 2016, Project Rebound had 10 students graduate from SF State while their current students have an average GPA of 3.23. With such committed students, the program holds an eighty-seven percent retention rate and a graduation rate of eighty-six percent.

Penn and Bell wanted to properly honor Dr. Irwin and the students of Project Rebound with a celebratory event, but ran into several problems during the several months it took to plan it. One of the most glaring problems was the funding the event. Fortunately, with the help of President Wong and the Associated Students of S.F.S.U., the organization could pay for all the necessities for the celebration.

Hilda Villanueva, a marriage and family therapist from the county of San Mateo’s health system and a former SF State alumna, reached out to Penn about the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Workcenter in San Mateo. Villanueva wanted to let the people in the VRS program, who are mostly formerly incarcerated, help cater the event. Penn agreed and was excited to work with them.

As they planned the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration, the idea of an art gallery began to take off in Project Rebound’s small office. “The art gallery fell in our laps” exclaimed Bell, recounting the 23 pieces of art displayed in the exhibit. Each piece was created by a student in Project Rebound or someone that went through the legal system. Even though it was a last-minute idea, they had the chance to secure a spot at the art gallery located across from Jack Adams Hall, which usually needs to be booked months in advance.

“Early on we worried the speakers wouldn’t show up, although I knew Jody was good,” Penn remarked. With a little work, Penn convinced Honorable Judge Trina Thompson and Law Professor James Forman, Jr. to speak at the event.

The event ran almost seamlessly. Although it started later than usual, all the attendees seemed to enjoy themselves while Penn and Bell successfully honored the legacy of John Irwin and Project Rebound.

“Obviously the goal, the long-term objective, is to have a Project Rebound program at all twenty-three CSU campuses throughout the state,” Penn shared. ✕

“WE’RE GOING TO THE JAILS AND PRISONS AND INTO UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES” *Curtis Penn*



*Trina Thompson speaks to guests at the Celebrating 50 Years of Project Rebound event. | Travis Wesley*



# DREAMING, STILL.

Daca students at SF State remain hopeful through trying times

by *Destiny Arroyo*



*SF State DREAMers Holding Steadfast.*  
*Clockwise from top left: Maya Ochoa, Robert Arriaga, Jesus Peraza. Stills taken from Dear 45th, an Xpress Magazine video dedicated to Donald Trump. Watch it online at [xpressmagazine.org](http://xpressmagazine.org).*

## **“THIS IS WHY I THINK THIS IS BULLSHIT,”**

19-year-old Vanessa R. Cuevas exclaims. “How can they threaten to deport people when this is the only country we’ve ever known?”

After President Trump’s recent order on September 5, 2017 to end DACA within six months, hundreds of thousands of DREAMers are scrambling to see what they can do to prevent deportation.

DACA, which stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, is an Obama-era program which allows undocumented, young adults – who originally came to the U.S. as kids – to receive benefits such as safety from deportation and work permits. However, the fee that these DREAMers pay is roughly five hundred dollars out of pocket for every two years when their renewal is due. With that being said, there is a large misconception that U.S. taxpayers are paying for this program, but little do people know that DACA is actually a self-sustaining program, hence the large fee that they must pay.

In order to qualify for DACA, one must have/do the following: be younger than 31-years-old, came to the United States before your sixteenth birthday, lived continuously in the U.S. from June 2007 to the present, were physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012 and at the time of applying, came to the U.S. without documents or their lawful status expired as of June 15, 2012, are currently studying or graduated from high school, and have not been convicted of a felony or any misdemeanors.

San Francisco State University students and sisters Vanessa



R. Cuevas and Jessica D. Cuevas came to the United States from Mexico alone when they were only three- and four-years-old. Since they are originally from Michoacán, they were put on an airplane to get closer to the border. There they were picked up by two ladies that would eventually take them across the border in their car. They reunited with their dad somewhere in Los Angeles and he brought them to the Bay Area. About a week later, their mom was brought over and they were all together. They settled in a home in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and have been there ever since. They both currently work at a Cheesecake Factory near their home.

Vanessa is a third-year student with an undeclared major but plans to declare as a Political Science major. Jessica is a fourth-year Latina/o Studies major with minors in Education and Philosophy.

It was decided that Jessica, now 21-years-old, would wait for Vanessa so they could apply for DACA together. The process took around four to five months - they needed to have various documents on hand. Luckily, their mother saved all their childhood award certificates so that they were able to prove that they have been here since they were very young. When it was time for Jessica to start applying for college, she realized her options were very limited. Since she isn't allowed to apply for FAFSA, she could not accept going to Sonoma State University. Instead, she waited until the very last day to accept her state-issued financial aid (CA Dream Act) because she didn't get her acceptance to San Francisco State University earlier.

The two recently noticed that the program is taking longer than usual to send them their paperwork to renew everything.

"It's making us nervous," Vanessa explains.

"Usually they send us the letter by now."

They explained their frustration with not knowing what will happen in the near future.

"We don't know if we'll be working for four more months or two more years," Jessica says. "My only options would be to not work or to work illegally."

The girl's parents have told them that no matter what happens they will just have to move forward.

"I hope ICE gets us," 20-year-old Jesus Peraza says. "I don't like living here."

This is what Jesus once told his parents after living in the U.S. for a short while. He was originally born in Sonora, Mexico and came to the U.S. about twelve years ago. He lived alone with his mother and aunt until he was about five-years-old, when his mother married his now stepfather. They traveled to the U.S. with a tourist visa.

Jesus was told by his mother and stepfather that they were coming to the U.S. for about three months and would eventually return to Mexico. However, once they got there, he realized that wasn't true because his mother enrolled him in an elementary school in Paramount, California. It was there that he was able to learn English; his teachers

took extra time to help him which made it easier for him to pick it up.

"Kids would bully me and call me names," Jesus laughed, "but I didn't know what they meant."

Though the name-calling didn't phase him, he still felt like an outcast therefore he devoted himself to school. The language barrier was just one reason for Jesus' culture shock, along with food and the way people communicated. Christmas in the U.S. wasn't the same and even until this day, Jesus despises Christmas because in Mexico he was able to celebrate with his large family.

Jesus, now 20-years-old and a third-year psychology major at SF State University, is currently a DACA recipient. He hopes to continue school after his bachelors degree in order to receive his masters degree.

After hearing about Trump's decision, Jesus did not go to school that day because he realized that this decision not only affects him and others just like him, but also his parents. Luckily, he just recently renewed his DACA paperwork.

Since Jesus is undocumented and is under DACA, he is prohibited from leaving the country at any time. This has prevented him from studying abroad and traveling the world.

"Even though I have this program that some-

HOW CAN THEY THREATEN TO DEPORT PEOPLE  
WHEN THIS IS THE ONLY COUNTRY WE'VE EVER  
KNOWN?" -VANESSA CUEVAS

what protects me, I still feel restricted. I feel chained up to a system that doesn't allow me to be completely free."

He has friends that travel and it makes him feel stuck, or as he says "frozen."

"I stopped picturing my life in Mexico a long time ago... so it's scary to think that I may not have the ability to work, get married, have kids," Jesus continues.

"It's daunting."

Now when walking around campus, he starts to worry if he'll even be able to continue studying at SF State. He also describes that his immigrant and queer identities have been attacked since now President Trump began campaigning. "They might take DACA away from me, but they will never take away my education," Jesus says confidently.

Although there are several ways to get approved for citizenship here in the U.S., marriage was not an option for 18-year-old, Maya F. Ochoa. Soon after President Trump announced the want to repeal the DACA program, Maya's lawyer emailed her with the recommendation of getting married soon so she can apply for citizenship.

"I couldn't believe she told me that because I'm only 18... I shouldn't be having to think about that," she says, still stunned.

Maya, a first-year Chinese language major at SF State University, came to the U.S. when she was only five-years-old. Originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, Maya, her brother, and mother also came

with a visa on an airplane. They first established themselves in Whittier, California and her family continues to live there.

She is the first in her family to go to college.

In a non-marital attempt to get her U.S. citizenship, her father's sister and her husband have offered to adopt her. However, she refuses because she would then have to change her last name and live with her new legal guardians.

At times, Maya questions if it is worth it to stay here and she sometimes considers going back but resents the idea of having to start her life over.

"I appreciate that my parents brought us here to have a better life," Maya says slowly.

"And I'm not going to lie, we are more financially stable here than if we were to stay in Guadalajara, but I still feel trapped."

Maya, just like Jesus, wishes she could travel and study abroad. With pursuing a bachelor's degree in Chinese language, one part of learning a foreign language is the ability to use it in its country of origin, but Maya cannot leave the country.

Maya explains the reasons why people from all over the world, not just Latin America, come to the U.S. to escape horrible conditions in their own countries, such as war in the Middle East, government corruption in Venezuela, gangs in El Salvador, and drug cartels in Mexico.

"The government does not understand [these situations]," she said firmly.

"But if the script was flipped, they wouldn't like to be treated the way they are treating us."

One idea that Vanessa, Jessica, Jesus, and Maya came up with was the idea of not continuing school. This consideration did not come to their heads because they simply do not want to continue fulfilling the "American Dream," but because they are not sure that they will be able to. Sure, they can continue and finish school but the same questions these four ask themselves is similar to "what will I be able to do with my degree?" and "will I even be able to find a job because I am an immigrant?"

Though the future of these young dreamers is currently in the state of unknown, they continue to study with the hopes of prospering and growing in this country because the U.S. is the country they call home.

It was decided that Jessica, now 21-years-old, would wait for Vanessa so they could apply for DACA together. The process took around four to five months - they needed to have various documents on hand. Luckily, their mother saved all their childhood award certificates so that they were able to prove that they have been here since they were very young. When it was time for Jessica to start applying for college, she realized her options were very limited. Since she isn't allowed to apply for FAFSA, she could not accept going to Sonoma State University. Instead, she waited until the very last day to accept her state-issued financial aid (CA Dream Act) because she didn't get her acceptance to San Francisco State University earlier. X



# SEEING HOPE THROUGH THE SMOKE

*Photography and story  
by Nicole Green*



*A ceramic angel figurine lies amongst the ash in the Fountain Grove neighborhood of Santa Rosa, on October 14th, 2017. | Nicole Green*

The air smells like a mix of chemicals and about a thousand bonfires. It feels as if there's a cloud of sadness floating above the town and neighborhoods of Santa Rosa, California. Thousands have lost everything.

"Did you hear the story about the ring?" asks Ian Derammelaere, a firefighter from San Francisco's Fire Department.

"One woman was searching for a wedding ring," adds Eli Thomas, another San Francisco firefighter, dressed head to toe in fire gear.

The two firefighters, exhausted and worn out, are covered in ash and dirt. Ian and Eli, along with other members of their strike team, had been sent to Sonoma County in order to fight the North Bay Fires.

"There was a big slab of stucco, as long as a driveway," says Eli, while using his arms to mimic just how large the slab was.

"A lady called me over to help her move it. She goes 'hey, can you come help me lift this up? I want to look under it.'"

He begins to smirk as he continues the story.

"I was like, 'I am so flattered you think that I'm that strong!'"

Eli, with the help of other firefighters, decided to break the stucco up into pieces, making it easier for them to peel back. The woman explained to the men in yellow, that she was looking for a wedding ring. The area where the slab of stucco remained used to be her bathroom. There, she had an amour full of jewelry, which held the missing wedding ring. The woman continued to look through the rubble as Eli and the rest of the crew continued through the neighborhoods, searching for hot spots.

"I told my cousin the story about the woman who was looking for a ring," explains Eli.

"Later he called me and was like, 'Dude! Some lady is on the news talking

about how some fireman helped find her ring!'"

"And that was me," the exhausted firefighter says while grinning from ear to ear.

"It was a trip, I'm glad she found it."

Ash, toasted Hondas, and charred ceramic angel figurines are all that's left in the eerie neighborhood of Fountain Grove in Santa Rosa. Coffey Park, along with other neighborhoods in Sonoma County, mimic similar scenery. The county, known for its wine and natural beauty, looks like a scene from The Walking Dead.

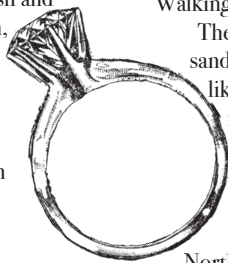
The wildfires ripped through 107,407 acres of land, destroying thousands of structures, many of them being the homes. Town landmarks, like a local Applebee's and Arby's, are now unrecognizable piles of metal. Those who wander the damaged town of Santa Rosa wear white surgical masks in order to protect themselves from the smoke and chemicals within the air.

Since the start of the fires on October 8, more than 2,900 fire personnel from around the country have been called to California's North Bay region. Those numbers don't include the hundreds of police officers responsible for protecting the areas of destruction or the thousands of volunteers helping those affected.

"This is a once in career type of fire," says SFFDs Jesse Bautista as he stares at the remains of a brick fireplace.

The four San Francisco firefighters, Lieutenant Jason Simmons, Jesse Bautista, Ian Derammelaere, and Eli Thomas begin to reflect on their week as they sit amongst the incredible amount of rubble.

"I turned on the news and they were talking about the Atlas Fire. It was just before 11 o'clock," Lieutenant Simmons recalls as he begins to realize what was going on.





*San Francisco Fire Department's Ian Derammelaere, sits in the driveway of a destroyed home in the Fountain Grove neighborhood of Santa Rosa on October 14th. | Nicole Green*

"As I'm watching, I pulled up one of the scanner apps. The next thing I hear is 'second alarm on a structure fire in Santa Rosa, vegetation fire in Santa Rosa, Sonoma vegetation fire, Glen Ellen vegetation fire, Kenwood vegetation fire.'"

He counts the numbers of fires with his fingers as he talks.

"It went to hell in about 20 minutes."

The fires in the Sonoma county region spread, like they say, 'like wildfire'. Up to 70 mph winds were the cause of the rapid spread. An estimated 90,000 people have been evacuated from areas surrounding the fires. Simmons, being one of them.

"I grabbed a computer and two leather firefighter helmets," Lieutenant Simmons explains.

"My wife was like 'why the hell did you bring the leather helmets?'," says Simmons as the group of four laugh in agreement with his decision.

He explains that the two leather helmets were the first helmets he received when starting his career. They symbolize a lot more than just helmets for the San Francisco firefighter.

Thankfully, the Lieutenant's home remains standing. For other Santa Rosa Natives, that is not the case.

"The biggest thing, the thing I keep reflecting on, is just download all your pictures," says Eli Thomas when discussing the amount of photos families have lost in the fires.

"That's huge," adds Ian Derammelaere.

"Those are the things that you can't get back. Those are frozen mo-



*Left to right: Ian Derammelaere, Jesse Bautista, Lieutenant Jason Simmons, and Eli Thomas stand outside of their engine on October 14th. | Nicole Green*



ments in time,” concludes Thomas.

Sophia Lassen, a senior at San Francisco State University was born and raised in Santa Rosa. Lassen’s family evacuated their home located in the neighborhood of Larkfield around 2 a.m.. Her family was woken by the sounds of honking horns coming from neighbors.

The fire absorbed Sophia’s neighborhood. With little time to grab valuables, her mom was able to grab a few photo albums before the fire destroyed parts of the home.

“Where I had grown up was virtually gone overnight,” recounts Sophia, as she looks down at her interlaced hands that lie on her lap.

Police have now begun to leading homeowners into the areas where the fires have destroyed their homes. Many have already begun rummaging through what’s left of their burnt belongings. Some homeowners, like the woman who found her ring, have found some valuables thanks to the help of fire personnel. Others, remain empty handed as their belongings have been reduced to nothing but ash.

What remains standing in these neighborhoods are dozens of a brick fireplaces that once warmed rooms.

*Helping Hands: The devastation of the Norcal fires spurred the Bay area into action in aid of those in need. Photos display the magnitude of community relief efforts. Photos: Alina Castillo, Oscar Rendon, Ørjan Ryland, Aya Yoshida, Sarabeth Maney // Mosaic Collage: Erika*

The destroyed neighborhoods aren’t expected to make building progress anytime soon. However, PG&E, Pacific Gas and Electric, already have crews reconstructing and replacing power lines. When the time comes to rebuild, Bay Area construction companies will be busy.

“Eventually there will be a positive side, it’s just going to take a couple years to see,” Lieutenant Simmons explains.

And Lieutenant Simmons is right.

The Bay Area has already come together to provide incredible amounts of support for the friends and families that have lost their homes. Thousands of donations poured into Sonoma County, causing donation centers to stop accepting further donated items.

Thanks to the incredible amounts of fire personnel, police, volunteers, and the support of the Bay Area, Sonoma County, along with the other areas of destruction, will flourish again.

Like Lieutenant Simmons said, it’ll just take some time. ✕



# We are a CULTURE, Not a COSTUME



*Miguel performed with traditional Native American costume at Big Time Gathering in San Francisco, Saturday, Oct. 21, 2017. | Aya Yoshida*



*Native American themed costumes are a common sight in costume stores during Halloween season. | Jazmine Sanchez*

The time has come where society once again shows us how absurd their choice in costumes can be. Sadly, it hasn't gotten any better throughout the years. We've seen things from misinterpretation of the Native American culture, to blackface costumes, to your "typical" Mexican in a sombrero.

Let's get one thing straight, none of these things are okay to ever wear. Speaking for all races and cultures, we are not a costume.

Every culture has its own unique history, and with that, a lot of it is carried on through what they wear. Fashion has been a part of our lives for centuries, and not only does it distinguish one culture from another, it also offers a cultural background for others to learn about.

When it comes to Halloween, dating back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, it used to be a day where the Celts believed this was the day the dead would return. Through time, it has become a day where people dress up in their choice of costume and collect candy. The biggest problem here though is the choices of what to dress up as.

More and more costumes continue to pop up each Halloween that ultimately bring up questions like 'do people not think about the statements they are making?' 'why would this ever be put out on the market?', and 'what, if any, cultural research has been done?'

Where does someone draw the line between whether they are misrepresenting a culture? Does wearing a slutty version of a geisha make you culturally smarter? Does wearing an Anne Frank costume labeled as "Child's 1940s Girl Costume" make it OK to represent a historic figure? According to 21-year-old broadcasting and electronic

communication arts major Hannah Pack, no.

"I don't understand how or why someone would want to dress up as something that symbolizes a sad part of the world's history" Pack questions.

"Maybe the thought process of this costume was to commemorate Anne Frank and those affected by the Holocaust. However a child's Halloween costume is not the right way to do so. To me, Halloween is about dressing up as something fun that you like. The Holocaust does not match this description."

This isn't the first time companies have put out costumes aimed for children that in the end show a lack of cultural education. Among these costumes we can find such things as the popular Disney film Moana, Maui Costume which sparked up a controversy among islanders. The costume was featured on Disney.com and according to the Huffington Post was removed. The costume featured a brown-skin body suit covered in traditional Polynesian tattoos.

"Let's face it, our symbols and our emblems, who we are as a people have been used by western society for their pleasure, not for ours," says Paul Kevin, a hula instructor from Hawaii.

"These companies should really ask themselves, what are we trying to do? I'm not saying don't be funny, but you have great license to pick and choose things and deal with it. If they can't be more creative than that, then they can't be creative at all."

With all the commotion cause by our current President, it's no surprise that many costumes this year are showing a wide range of racism seen in our day-to-day lives -- like dressing up as a border





*Costumes or cultural exploitation?  
Various costumes sold at Spirit Halloween in  
San Bruno. | Jazmine Sanchez*

be ok to advertise this costume as “fun.”

According to Gothamist, the costume was being sold next to Donald Trump masks. However, just last month, it was officially banned. The only problem is that the “sexy” border babe female version of this costume still exists, and it has sold out online at *Spirit Halloween*.

Recently, the *LA City Council* replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, according to the *LA Times* they were “siding with activists who view the explorer as a symbol of genocide for Native Peoples in North America and elsewhere.” A tremendous step forward for the Native American culture indeed.

With all these changes going on, why is it that people still choose to dress up in what they believe is Native American attire? If you look at any online Halloween store and search “indian costume” you’re guaranteed to find things that, if you’ve done your research, has nothing to do with the Native American culture.

Sherri Chiappone, 46, is Native American and originates from the tribes of Karuk, Yurok, and Shasta in California. She states that what her culture wears includes tons of necklaces, usually abalone, shells, accompanied by deerskin leather apron skirts filled with shells. What Halloween stores display as “Indian” is simply a slap in the face to their culture.

“I do not appreciate people not understanding cultures and thinking that it’s ok to dress and imitate what they think is another culture’s look,” Chiappone says.

“It hurts, as a Native American, to see that and I feel that kids and parents aren’t taking the time to understand or learn about our culture. That’s not who we are, that’s not what we look like.”

What is “blackface?” It refers to a non-black performer using character makeup to make themselves look black. This dates back to the seventeenth century when usually whites were entertained by those of dark skin. One famous performance in 1830 is that of Jim Crow, where a performer by the name “Thomas “Daddy” Rice, blackened his face with burnt cork and danced a jig while singing the lyrics to the song, “Jump Jim Crow.”

One recent show that targets this issue of blackface costumes is the hit Netflix series “Dear White People,” which all begins with the story of a group of white students at an Ivy League college putting together an offensive blackface party. The story then follows four black students on their journey to change these offensive acts.

Emenet Geleta, a 21-year-old student at San Francisco State University and a member of the Black Student Union feels that these companies are selling cultures in the most stereotypical ways.

“They get away with it due to the lack of cultural awareness. People get ridiculed for showing pride in their own cultures yet others want to turn around and dress up like them for a day. And that’s my problem with culture appropriation,” Geleta elaborates.

“Others want to wear braids and bindi’s, for example, to look “cute” or “trendy,” and those who are actually from those cultures get judged for it by going against the social norms of dress, or get stigmatized for showing their cultural pride.”

The main point is for everyone to have the decency to respect cultural appropriation on different races and cultural backgrounds, this especially includes Halloween stores. Here are some tips on how not to get yourself jumbled in the mess of offensive costumes:

1. IF IT REPRESENTS A CERTAIN CULTURE, DON’T WEAR IT.
2. ASK YOURSELF: IS THIS APPROPRIATE?
3. DO YOUR RESEARCH. ✕





Lizzie Cotterell

# ME. TOO.

In recent weeks our news feeds were full of two words — me too.

It's as if the conversation of sexual harassment has been desperately needed as a great sigh of relief came out with each "me too." These two simple words were revealing wounds of sexual harassment and abuse on a day-to-day basis that was overwhelmingly pointing to the everyday experience of being a woman.

This recent hashtag trend has been a campaign since 2007, started by Tarana Burke. This is not old news, nor should it be a surprise to anyone. Sexual harassment that happens on the streets, through co-workers, and even sometimes friends and lovers, is a widely known and accepted experience that all women feel or have experienced that we don't talk about amongst ourselves, but we silently nod in alliance.

I don't have to explain this behavior or my experiences to other women for them to understand what I have went through, because they too experience it on a day-to-day basis.

I think it's important to see for yourself how bad this problem truly is. And what better way than to flood our pocket computers with a simple hashtag.

This is such a deeply ingrained problem in our society that women, one by one, have to relive these experiences so that (most) men can understand. I wonder how many men scrolled past the countless "me too" posts and thought to themselves that it's not about them. The emotional labor that women have to carry to just be heard is absolutely astounding.

Personally, I have been getting honked at since I was a young girl. I would guess between the ages of 10 and 12 was when I really started to notice that this made me uncomfortable. I was only a kid after all, and I think we can all agree that grown men sexualizing young girls is sick.

As I entered high school I decided to pick up the sport of volleyball. A sport with little clothing. I remember my coach having to block the doors and even lock them because football players would watch us practice. And when I say watch us, I mean act like primitive apes shoving each other aside trying to get a better look at our asses.

When I was a junior in high school I found out that my virginity became a topic of debate in the football locker rooms and that boys had taken bets to see who would take mine.

At a high school party everyone had started to fall asleep, underage drinking having been the form of entertainment of the later hours in the evening. I remember specifically finding a chair to sleep on by myself, only to wake up to a boy's hands inside my pants.

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"I REMEMBER SPECIFICALLY FINDING A CHAIR TO SLEEP ON BY MYSELF, ONLY TO WAKE UP TO A BOY'S HANDS INSIDE MY PANTS."

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The summer entering my senior year, a "friend" of mine wanted to go for a drive. We went to viewpoint to smoke pot, or something, and on the way this "friend" of mine said he has wanted to have sex with me and he thought this was the night. When I said no he threatened to leave me stranded at 11 p.m. in a place with no service, no street lighting, and very far from my home. I engaged in sex because I didn't think I had a choice.

Few months ago I saw a drunk man following three women and he kept touching one of them after she repeatedly told him not to. My partner and I intervened and almost got in the physical fight with the guy because he was being socially outed as being a pervert.

In this current time in my life I get catcalled every single day, in fact I got my ass grabbed at a bus stop just outside of San Francisco State University on the day I decided to write this.

And you know what's fucked up about all of this. I accepted this as normal behavior for a very long time. When I was younger I remember counting how many people I slept with and I would even say, "I've had sex with four people but one of those times I didn't want to," without even batting an eye.

I credit the lack of education on consent to teenagers. It's only now just become a topic of real discussion and is widely accepted that consent stops when you say it does. That wasn't what I learned. That isn't what the boys around me learned. Hormones and alcohol certainly don't help. It wasn't until I was in a Women's and Gender Studies class did I figure

out that I was raped and molested.

As you might have figured, I posted "me too," I even told a snippet of my story to Facebook. My mom and dad both alarmed by my experiences. My father came to me and asked why I never came to my parents for help. He was bewildered this has been happening to his daughters when he himself has been a culprit of sexual harassment.

So what do we do from here? I feel as if survivors of sexual assault — of any degree — have done enough. What now?

Like my dad, a lot of men are shocked that this is happening. A few even started coming forward to admit they know when women are made uncomfortable by other men, even by them, and stood by idly. My dad was one of those men to realize his general outlook on women was geared towards the degradation of the sexualization of women.

I don't share my story to mourn it, on the contrary, I forgave myself for allowing myself into those situations years ago. I forgave the boys that abused me whether they know or not. I moved on because that's what you have to do in life. It's a vicious cycle. I share my stories, these interactions, because it is very much a truth of young women everywhere and I will use myself as the example.

I lose track of the girls at my high school that got too drunk one night and slept with so-and-so. I have told some dear friends of mine that their experience was by definition rape. But the guilt of a survivor is real and it's painful, so it's easy to just set it aside.

We're seeing on the news daily a new actor, producer, musician, director, or even our president being accused with sexual assault claims. Survivors of this abuse have had enough. It's time for a man-to-man conversation about sexual harassment and assault.

I am calling out to all men— the nice ones, the tough guys, the non binary — please intervene when you see another man physically or verbally assault women. Start having the uncomfortable conversation with your friends and family. Raise the next generation of boys to understand consent and the virtue of your own body so that our future daughters don't have to say— me too. ✕

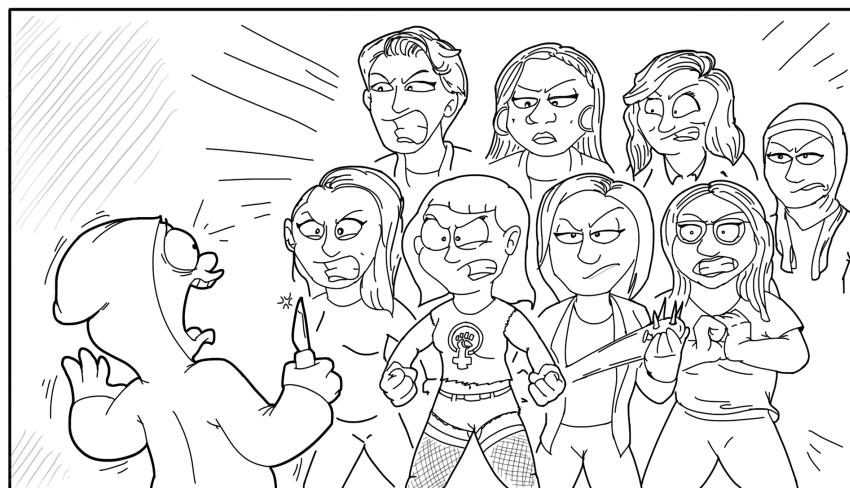


Illustration by Joey Fajardo





# Bugging Out

By Agnes Mogstad

*Quinten Frye laughs while holding the Chile-Lime Cricket Tostadas at Mosto Bar. \ Mitchell Mylius*

## Craving Crickets

The bar is dimly lit and the music is loud. The ceiling is decorated with hundreds of empty beer glasses placed vertically next to each other to show the labels. The shelves behind the counter carry bottle after bottle of tequila and mezcal.

Mosto Bar doesn't have many tables, but the ones they have are occupied by men and women imbibing in colorful drinks. At first glance, it looks like just another tequila bar with an assortment Mexican dishes on the menu. But upon taking a closer look, some see-through plastic boxes in the kitchen reveal the unusual ingredients of two of their dishes – insects.

Mosto Bar serves spicy mealworms and cricket tostadas – one of the only places in San Francisco to do so.

As the population of the world increases every year, so does the necessity of more food, which will

## Insect Farms

As the population of the world increases every year, so does the necessity of more food, which will put more pressure on the environment. However, eating insects can be part of the solution.

Edible insects contain a lot of protein, vitamins, and amino acids. Crickets contain sixty percent protein compared to steak, which contains about thirty percent. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations crickets need six times less feed than cattle, four times less than sheep, and two times less than pigs and chickens to produce the same amount of protein.

Andrew Brentano, founder and CEO of Tiny Farms breeds and distributes crickets in Oakland. His small, modern type of farm can currently produce hundreds of pounds of crickets per week. It all started five years ago when he and his wife decided to try insects for the first time. They basically went out in their garden, caught a few grasshoppers and in their kitchen, wrapped them in bacon and fried them up.

"They tasted delicious. Almost like bacon-wrapped shrimp!" Brentano explains enthusiastically.

Since that day they have developed their successful cricket farm. Today, they sell their crickets to restaurants and companies that use them in their cooking and products.

However, it is fully possible to breed crickets in your own home.

Brentano explains how you can buy live crickets in a pet store and keep them in a box with egg cartons. The insects will eat just about anything – some vegetables or chicken feed will do. When they are grown you simply put them in the freezer and they can be used

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**"If you stop thinking about what you're eating, it tastes good."** – Marike Duckstein

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## Bugs: Mexican style

Back in Mosto Bar, 35-year-old culinary director Quinten Frye opens the plastic boxes containing the dead insects. He pours the mealworms in a small ceramic bowl. The fried crickets are lined up on three small corn tortillas with guacamole, cilantro, and sour cream. They look like a miniature version of regular tostadas. Since the crickets are both fried and seasoned, it is hard to tell what they really look like. But if you look close you can see their tiny legs sticking out from their bodies. Frye first started cooking with insects eight years ago when he visited Oaxaca in Mexico. Since then he's been experimenting with them in different dishes and salsas.

"The insects are becoming more popular on the menu. I think people are excited to learn more about them and try something out of the ordinary," he says.

On the high-top chairs by the window, two students from San Francisco State University are waiting to try edible insects for the first time. Marike Duckstein a, 21-year-old psychology major, and 20-year-old BECA major Sabrina Mora are a little nervous, but mostly excited.

"I think the crickets are gonna be crunchy," Mora says.

"I don't know what it will taste like. Maybe chicken?"

The girls go for the bowl of spicy mealworms first. You can hear the crunching as Mora and Duckstein put their teeth in the crispy cricket bodies.

"Interesting," Duckstein says frowning a little. "I don't know, not my favorite. It's ok."

"They're good, kind of salty," Mora exclaims while grabbing a second one.

"Yes, almost like roasted sunflower seeds," Duckstein agrees.

Next up are the tostadas. The brownish crickets are almost hidden under the sour cream and guacamole. The students admire the small, delicate dish before digging in.

"The mealworms were way scarier than the tostadas. They're so small and cute," Mora laughs.

"If you stop thinking about what you're eating it



*Kory Cogdill (left) serving cricket tostadas to Marike Duckstein (middle) and Sabrina Mora (right) at Mosto Bar. | Diego Aguilar*



*Modernizing Farming: The crickets bred at Tiny Farms live in egg cartons. Photo Courtesy Tiny Farms Inc.*

## Cultural differences

Two billion people in the world eat insects. Mosto Bar is trying to show Americans that it's possible to make delicious dishes with bugs. However, many Americans still think it's creepy.

"I think people have an idea in their head that bugs are gross or creepy but most of the time people try them, they are pleasantly surprised," Frye explains.

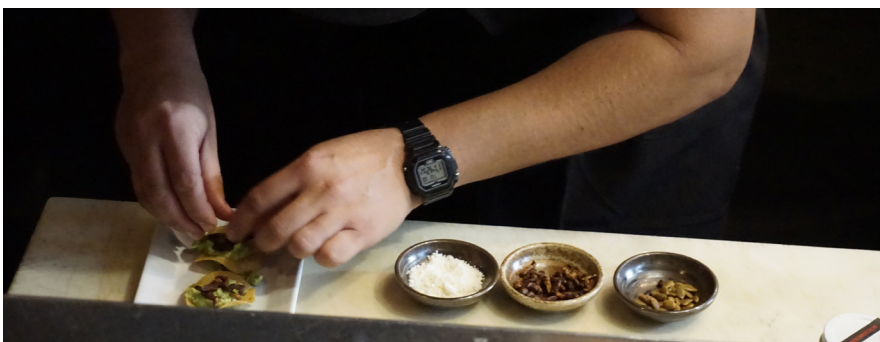
He hopes bugs can be more normalized as food in the future.

Cricket distributor Andrew Brentano also thinks education is key. People don't know how to cook with bugs and that's what has to change.

"Most people warm up to the idea once they have tried it," Brentano says.

Even though more and more people, and restaurants, are welcoming insects into their lives, it will probably take some time before we include them in our regular diets, like in other parts of the world. Eating insects, or entomophagy, is an old tradition. The ancient Romans and Greeks ate them. People in Africa, Asia and Latin America still do, but in Europe and North America it is not as usual. According to The National Geographic, one reason for that is that after Europe became agrarian, insects were seen as destroyers of crops rather than a source of food.

Changing culture can't happen overnight, but saying yes to bugs would pay off in the long run. After all, bugs just might be the food of the future. ✕



*Chef Quinten Frye putting crickets on the cricket tostadas that are served at the Mosto Bar on Valencia Street. | Diego Aguilar*

