

XPRESS

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

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ON THE FRONT AND BACK COVER:

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(LEFT)**

**CHLOË RAINWATER, 30
(RIGHT)**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This time of year seems to test us constantly. The weather surprises us daily with an unexpected downpour or sunshine beaming so hard you could have sworn it was July. Resolutions came and went, mementos of them lying around motionless—five pound weights in the closet, a journal with two pages filled. Spring itself feels like one giant tease, an almost summer, but we don't deserve it just yet.

Xpress Magazine was tried and tested and tired this spring. As a shorter staff—with half the writers and a fourth of the photographers we usually have—all of us had to pick up the slack. More reporting, more writing, more going the distance. A shorter staff also meant more pages to fill.

For the first time, *Xpress* is able to show off some poetry in the magazine. Two beautiful pieces, one of

which was written by our Social Media Editor, Amelia Williams, which goes to show that unexpected talent can sometimes be hiding right in front of your eyes. We also brought back an old *Xpress* feature: an advice column, written by our Art Director, Chloe McDaniels. Here's the benefit of experiencing the many pitfalls and pleasures of love: she knows what she's talking about, and she's here to help you, baby!

There are still so many stories that need to be told, and that's what we always try to do here at *Xpress*. Stories of legal(ish) pyramid schemes that can leave relationships torn, bank accounts withdrawn, and lives changed. Of the conspiracy movements that are changing the world around us, as our world becomes more and more about our lives online. About obsessive subcultures that dwell among us, be it tough guy motorcycles or the iconic company that started with a cartoon mouse.

And yes, this issue also has a large LGBTQ+ section inside—reminding us that even in the community of San Francisco, some voices

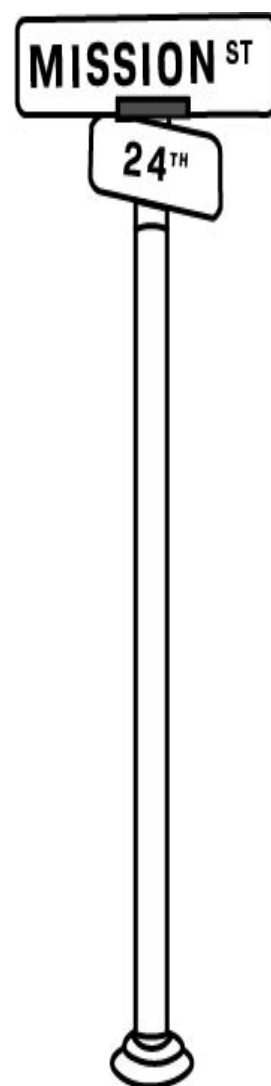
are still left out. Lesbians in search of a scene, drag queens changing the stereotype, the experiences of transgender folks—these are topics often left out of the mainstream LGBTQ narrative. Let's change that.

Flipping through the pages to come, we are reminded of why we do what we do, and how much there is still left to say, to show, to learn. Short staff and all, *Xpress* will still keep on keepin' on, bringing you stories that are simply begging to be written.

I'm proud to serve as Editor in Chief of this publication, even though my time here is limited. The months ahead won't be easy, but will most certainly be worth it. I can't wait to show you what *Xpress* is made of.

—Annie Gieser
anninemgieser@gmail.com

right now i am in the Mission
 i walk one of three paths that
 my feet do. i let go, they just do.
 this one
 from bart escalator to doorstep
 is one big L from mission to cesar chavez to alabama.
 Mission Street on the upper 20s is an acoustic tunnel,
 on the weekends
 the wheezing hydraulics always precede the lacquered cars
 second only to the biblical emcees.
 on the corner across from mission pie,
 two doors from the white people in line at la taqueria
 a man plucks at his guitar
 i can hear his fingers latching onto this stark winter
 i hear it over my keys, knocking at my solar plexus.
 over the two men talking to themselves,
 over rubber and leather guided feet on the sidewalk
 stepping around the piss stains
 i mean that in the best way.
 a man looks into the face of his baby strollered in front of
 him
 he is talking about a meal of hypotheticals
 an impossible salad and turkey and soups
 although i doubt the baby has left the boob yet
 if you don't speak spanish you would never have known this
 but i do
 y me cayó una lágrima cruzando la calle



UNTITLED

BY AMELIA WILLIAMS

RUBBED RAW

BY MARGOT REED

I started smoking because I thought I was pregnant. Now, I am stuck with a bad habit and a man who only pretended to love me—late at night when he got tired of loving himself. I also stood next to the microwave and drank—anything to prevent that poor sucker from coming into this wretched world. Somedays, I think of the poor thing. I picture him and I at the beach playing in the small waves of the tide. His blonde hair poking out of his blue hat. He would start to cry the minute the salt from the water reached his pale blue eyes. He'd be my carbon copy. Still to this day, he pops up in my head when I'm smoking a cigarette. I press my lips up against the filter mirroring the way they pressed against the lips of his father. I think back to that night. I clung to him the way the moisture saturated the windows of his car. The artificial car light mimicked the faint moonlight, reflecting off the dew drops of our entangled limbs. My body filled the empty space of his—my head in the crevices where his collarbone and neck met...my potbelly stomach filling the negative space of his.

The ocean waves crashed onto the shore as my mind scattered to try to find a comfortable level of consciousness after being left so exposed. Rubbed raw I searched for some sort of comfort only to be left as cold as the salty sea. I listened to everything he told me that night.

"Don't worry," he said. "It will be okay," he continued. The second I looked into his pale blue eyes I believed him.

I believed him every time after. Every time he parked in the third spot from the walking trail and began to kiss me, every time his hands explored the depths of my body, every time I was twenty thousand leagues under the sea while he remained at the surface. I believed him even more when I was finally granted entrance into his bedroom—foolishly thinking it was a step up from the back seat of his car. I believed him when he told me it would be okay, as he entered the parts of me no man or I have ever gone before. And I believed him even when he left me the next morning, with nothing but the idea that I was not enough for him.

Three months later I light a cigarette peering into the eyes of the man who replaced him. A replicated image of the disasters that I had failed to learn from—continuously carrying the emotional burden of a relationship while they got their dick wet. My lips pressed against the filter mirroring the way they pressed against theirs.



CHLOE CARES

I really do care

DEAR CHLOE,

I HAVE BEEN WITH THE SAME GUY FOR A LONG TIME AND THE ONLY PROBLEM WE'VE FACED SINCE THE START OF OUR RELATIONSHIP IS LONG DISTANCE. FROM THE BEGINNING WE'VE LIVED STATES AWAY AND NOW HE'S GONE FOR SIX MONTHS OUT OF THE YEAR. WHILE HE IS DOING GREAT AND I AM HAPPY FOR HIM, IT IS HARD TO BE SUPPORTIVE WHEN HE IS GONE SOMETIMES. I FEEL A WALL BETWEEN US BECAUSE OF THE DISTANCE AND IT MAKES ME JADED. THERE IS NOBODY ELSE I AM INTERESTED IN BUT SOMETIMES IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I AM ALONE RATHER THAN IN A RELATIONSHIP. HOW DO I CHANGE THIS FEELING?

-LONG DISTANCE LOVER

Dear Long Distance Lover,

Distance can separate people physically, but that doesn't mean it has to drive a wedge between you two. My family and one of my best friends, live nearly four hundred miles away from me and sometimes the distance can make me feel isolated from them. But the fact that I have their unconditional love and support is what keeps our relationship thriving. Even though we don't talk everyday and only see each other every few months, I know that they will always be there for me. I suggest you remind yourself of this with you boyfriend. Despite the distance, you are supporting him and are committed to him just as he is to you. I understand that it is hard to change feelings, especially when there are physical factors that feed into them telling you to think otherwise, but don't let that cloud what you two share. When you are feeling lonely, take a step back and think of all the ways your boyfriends shows his love for you. Or, if you are able to, give him a call and communicate that you miss him and that you are proud of him. When you are apart, remind yourself of the sweet memories you have when you are together to hold you through the separation. Love is strong and can carry through distance, always remember that.

- C

DEAR CHLOE,

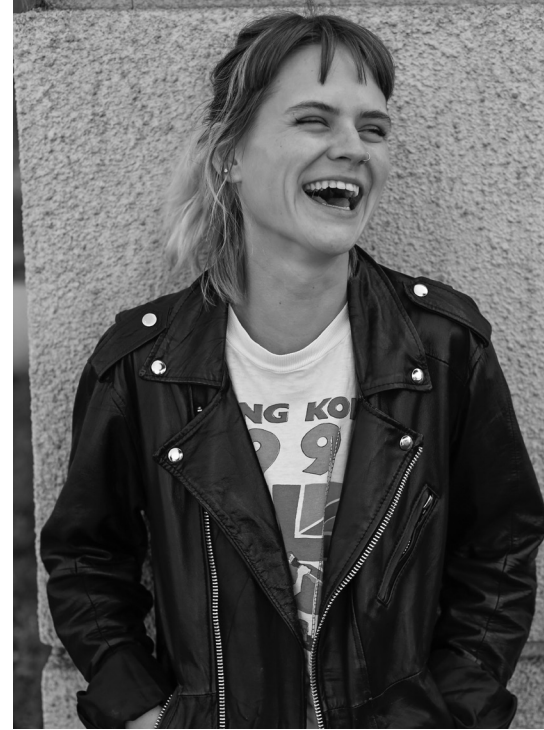
HOW DO YOU BREAK UP WITH A PARTNER YOU STILL LOVE, BUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES AREN'T RIGHT? I LOVE THE PERSON I'M CURRENTLY DATING, BUT MY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE IS CHANGING SO MUCH, AND I FEEL THAT MY RELATIONSHIP IS NOT MY PRIORITY. HELP, PLEASE?

-LOVE LOST

Dear Love Lost,

While I can't empathize with you romantically, there have been times where I've needed to cut ties with someone that I have deeply cared for because the circumstances weren't right. From what I've heard, love is tough. You can still care for someone, love them, and be there for them—romantically or not. I suggest that you tell your partner, first and foremost, that you love them and care for them. Transparency and communication are key in any healthy relationship. When breaking up with your partner, be fully transparent. Tell them what is going on in your life right now that requires time and space to be single. If your partner has the same love and care as you do for them, they will understand the boundary you are setting. While they might be understanding, they are also probably going to be hurt, just like you might be. While it may seem selfish, you need to look out for yourself first, and suppressing your feelings can be equally harmful for you and your partner. It will be painful and difficult to learn how to remain friends, but it will be a learning experience that you two can go through together—and remember to keep the communication open. Just because you are breaking up with someone does not mean that you no longer love or care for them, so make sure that you let your partner be aware of that.

- C



DEAR CHLOE,

I STARTED HOOKING UP WITH A COWORKER, WE'RE THE ONLY PEOPLE ON THE FLOOR WHO ARE AROUND THE SAME AGE AND GOING OUT IS A LOT OF FUN. I LIKE THEM A LOT, BUT I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP RIGHT NOW. SHOULD I CONTINUE DOING THIS OR IS THIS DANGEROUS TERRITORY?

- CORPORATE AND IN LOVE

Dear Corporate and In Love,

While having a friend with benefits is fun, it can also be difficult water to tread through—even more so if this person is a coworker. First and foremost, it is important to establish that you are not looking for a relationship and this is solely casual. You don't want to unintentionally hurt anyone's feelings and while you may think it is clear, this might not be so obvious to them. If this person has feelings for you or is searching for something more, then I recommend you end the fling out of respect for them. Although, if you are both willing for the casual relationship then by all means continue to have some fun! I do suggest that you try to remain professional and do not let the fling interfere with your corporate life..

- C

NEED RELATIONSHIP ADVICE?
EMAIL CHLOE YOUR QUESTIONS AT
CMCDANIELS1997@GMAIL.COM

AN ALL-AMERICAN HEARTBEAT

BY JOSHUA TUFFS

Key in, ignition on. Kill switch off, starter on.

After a brief cough, the starter motor kicks the engine awake. With a twist of the throttle the engine roars itself to life, emitting a divisive sound. Adjectives such as 'loud' or 'obnoxious' come to mind. In fact, entering the phrase 'why are har' into Google auto-completes to the question, 'why are Harleys so loud?'

And at an average of eighty decibels unmodified, which is equivalent to a passing freight train at fifteen meters, Harley-Davidson motorcycles are not exactly quiet. But ask a Harley-Davidson rider to describe the sound and a category of words ordinarily reserved for describing orchestral symphonies is brought forward.

Soulful, unique, beautiful. They harbor a love for their motorcycles.

However, modest is not a descriptor that's used. And not much about Harley-Davidsons are modest. Large wheels, loud exhaust, and piles of chrome make for head turning machines.

For decades that has been what has moved Harley-Davidsons from show-room floors into garages across America. Buying into an image, a culture, gaining access to a family bonded by a shared love.

That identity has kept Harley-Davidson alive and well since the companies inception in 1903. But with their stock now at a five year low, Harley-Davidson is finding itself unable to connect with the newest generation of motorcycle

riders. This is largely due to increasing competition from Japanese manufacturers, and although the company is desperately attempting to rebuild their image to save their business model, they may be disenfranchising some of their most devoted customers along the way.

This is not the first time Harley-Davidson has hit a snag in their sales numbers. In the early 1980s their sales were down, and the company was searching for a way to get people onto their motorcycles.

"The story goes: In a board meeting a marketing executive took out a piece of paper," explains John Becker. "On it he wrote down three letters; h, o, g. Hog: Harley owners group."

Becker is a member of the Golden Gate Harley owners group chapter as their media liaison officer, and also works for the dealership, which sponsors the chapter in his self-described retirement job. Every Harley owners

group chapter must have a dealership sponsoring them in order to be officially recognized. This means that worldwide, the Hog organization is the largest factory sponsored riders group in the world. The decision to directly tie dealerships to the community, while simultaneously adding corporate resources to building that community was a brilliant one, and is largely credited for making the Harley community what it is today with over one million Hog members worldwide.

If you need proof of the strength of the community the program has built, ride over to Rainbow Pizza in San Mateo, California on the third Wednesday evening of the month. The meetings start at seven, but if you arrive a half hour early you're already too late.

You might picture a gathering of fifty some Harley-Davidson riders as a sea of leather and denim clad bodies topped by grimacing faces that return your gaze with unwelcoming looks. But attend a

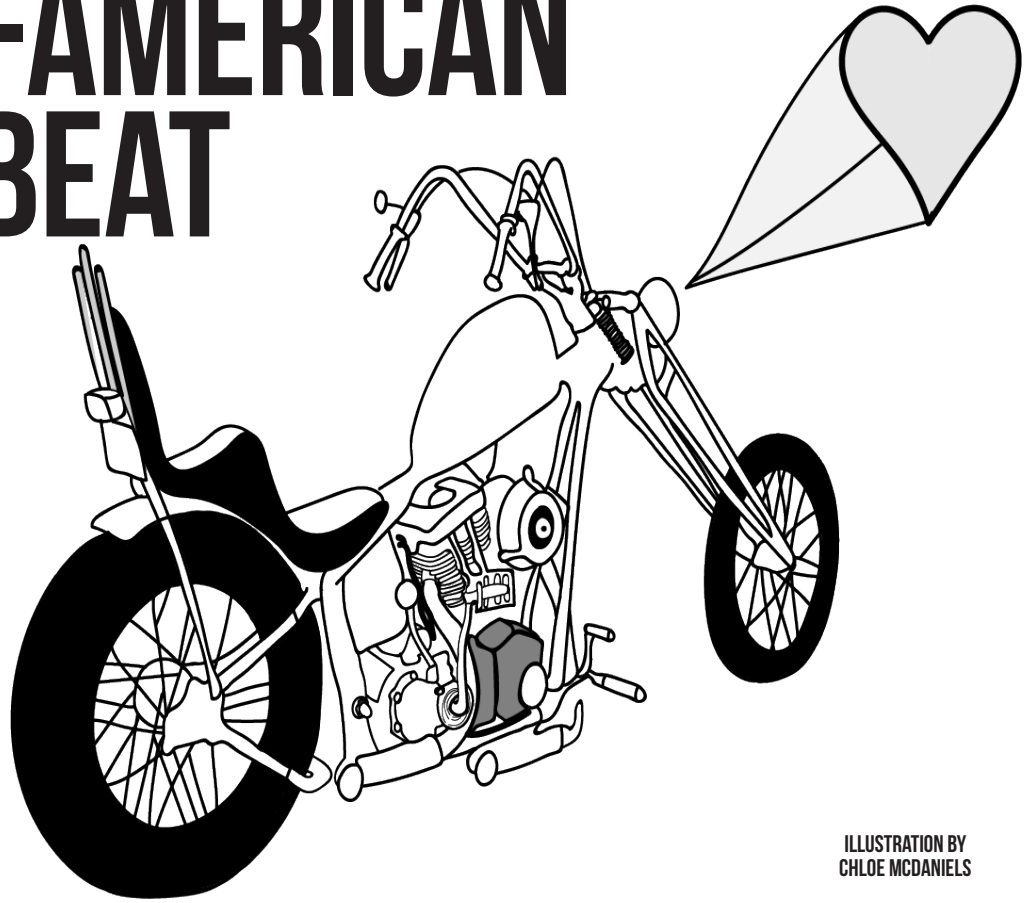


ILLUSTRATION BY
CHLOE MCDANIELS

Golden Gate Hog chapter meeting, and you'll realize you were only half right.

A sea of leather and denim clad Harley-Davidson riders with bright eyed faces and wide smiles, as they greet old friends and prepare to eat the largest single serving pizzas you've ever seen is all there is to be found.

Over the course of the meeting, many mundane topics are covered: Membership fees, upcoming events, promotions at the dealership, and so on. But in no way are they covered in a mundane way.

Joking comments are shouted from the audience. The director, Allyn L., opens the floor to stories from other members over the past month. Tales of all sorts are told—from taking a British Harley fan on his bucket list ride across the Golden Gate Bridge to the process of finding a lost riding vest.

It's a family, and a large one at that with one hundred and seventeen mem-

bers. But instead of being connected by bloodlines, they're united by a shared love, shared memories, and plenty of

"BUT HARLEYS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THE 'BEST' BIKE. THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A HARLEY."

-CHRIS GUIMOND

traded jabbing jokes. It is, however, an older family.

"This group is a bunch of old farts" laughs Leslie F., the chapter's secretary. And a quick glance around the room to see the amount of grey in the hair of the chapter members confirms her joke is based in reality.

It's no real surprise. Statistically the older and male base of motorcycle riders are Harley-Davidson's bread and butter. According to figures published by the motorcycle industry council,

Harley-Davidson has a fifty-five percent market share on male riders over thirty five years old.

But when it comes to younger riders, many of them are choosing to look elsewhere in the motorcycle industry for their bikes—particularly to Japan. One of those riders is Adam Rosney.

"Japanese bikes are smoother, cheaper, more reliable" says Rosney. "I went with a Yamaha because they just never let me down."

Rosney now rides a Yamaha Star Bolt, but grew up riding dirt bikes and racing motocross. He used to ride a Yamaha R6, a bike that is classified as a superbike—essentially a street legal race bike. But was eventually drawn in by the cruiser culture.

"Just cruising around with your buddies, hitting up cool little restaurants and bars" explains Rosney. "That's really what it's about."

But when it came time to choose a cruiser, he went with a Yamaha for their reliability and price. According to Rosney he walked out the door with his Star Bolt for roughly nine thousand dollars. In comparison, a Harley Iron 883, which produces similar power with a similar look, has an MSRP of \$8,999. The difference is that the Yamaha price included dealer fees and a warranty, which means all the service so far on Rosney's bike have been covered.

He also appreciates the smoother ride and modern technology the Star Bolt comes with. Because of design differences between the Yamaha and a Harley-Davidson, the Yamaha puts less of a buzz into the riders hands.

And where the Yamaha is water cooled—because it uses a radiator similar to a car does—many Harley-Davidsons are still air cooled, meaning the air passing by the engine as the bike moves is responsible for cooling the engine. Air cooled engines are the reason that motorcycles were historically allowed to lane split in traffic, to keep air moving past the engine to prevent overheating. But now, water cooled engines allow for the onboard computer to more accurately keep the engine at an optimal operating temperature.

The Milwaukee-Eight

Classic Harley design, modernized

In 2017 Harley-Davidson introduced a new line of motors dubbed the Milwaukee-Eight. These motors join a long line of large Harley V-Twins, but were updated in several ways in order to meet customer demands.



Valves per cylinder

Harley's new motors have four per cylinder for eight in total, hence the name. This increase in intake and exhaust flow resulted in a ten percent increase in torque produced.



More efficiency

A higher compression ratio and the use of two spark plugs per cylinder led to an eleven percent fuel economy increase.



Reduced vibrations

A new counterbalance inside the motors cuts out seventy five percent of the vibrations at idle. Allowing for a smoother, more comfortable ride.



Ambient heat

The addition of a hybrid air and liquid cooling system means that the engine runs smoother in hotter conditions. And riders report less heat being transferred to their legs while at idle.

INFOGRAM BY
JOSHUA TUFFS

Source: Harley-Davidson USA

Made with infogram

"I don't know why you wouldn't want your bike to run better," Rosney laughs. "Might as well use new technology."

But for many Harley-Davidson riders, the old-school design of their new motorcycles is part of the charm. Including Rosney's friend, Chris Guimond.

"JAPANESE BIKES ARE SMOOTHER, CHEAPER, MORE RELIABLE" SAYS ROSNEY. "I WENT WITH A YAMAHA BECAUSE THEY JUST NEVER LET ME DOWN."

"They're not the most reliable, not the fastest, not the most ergonomic" Guimond continues. "But Harleys aren't supposed to be the 'best' bike. They're supposed to be a Harley."

Like Rosney, Guimond grew up riding dirt bikes and racing motocross. But now he rides a Harley-Davidson with a massive one hundred and seven cubic inch engine, thirteen percent larger than the standard engine in a Honda Civic. For Guimond, a Harley is not about being on the most modern bike, and he actually appreciates that his bike is air cooled with old school styling.

"It feels like I'm sitting on a piece of American history" explains Guimond. "It's about the heart and soul of riding. It's an old school feel. It's about freedom."

And largely speaking, what gives a Harley so much of its character is their V-twin engine. The first Harley-Davidson V-twins were produced in the early 1900s, and they have stuck with the design ever since. The large bore and relatively short stroke of the engine creates their iconic deep sound.

Despite their differences, both friends agree that "there's just something about Harleys". And for Rosney, if money were no object he knows what he would be riding.

"I'd be on a Dyna" answers Rosney. "No doubt about it."

For many younger riders, the choice to buy something besides a Harley is largely a financial one. Even now, Harley employee Mirian Acevedo began her riding career on a smaller Yamaha, only moving onto her Harley bike once she had an employee discount.

"I think the price tag and the larger engine size discourages a lot of new riders" Acevedo explains. "The motorcycle safety courses are taught on little Hondas or Kawasakis, so that's what a lot of new riders feel comfortable on and are drawn to."

Harley-Davidson has aptly recognized this, and has begun producing the Street 500—the smallest bikes Harley has produced in the last four decades.

They're aimed at hitting an area of the market that Harley has been struggling to reach—new riders who are intimidated by large motorcycles. But Acevedo, who works at San Diego Harley-Davidson, notes that they haven't succeeded in propping up sales.

"I've heard stories that ten years ago we used to sell twenty five to thirty bikes a day" Acevedo says. "But now we sell two to five bikes a day."

Again, even with a motorcycle marketed for beginners, the price tag is significant. According to Acevedo even the five hundreds can end up retailing for close to ten thousand dollars. For comparison Honda's Rebel 500, their direct competitor to the Street 500, starts at just \$6,199.

But perhaps worse of all, the Street 500s are being received poorly by core customers.

"The 500 cc bikes are the joke of Harley" Acevedo laughs.

The new bikes in many ways break away from the traditions of Harley-Davidson. And until recently, tradition has been Harley-Davidson's go to. Perhaps Harley-Davidson should reconsider going back to focusing on their core customers, and their Hog chapters.

When asked which countries the Golden Gate Hog chapter and San Francisco Harley-Davidson have received visitors from, Becker quickly rattles off a dozen countries all over Asia and Europe. A huge part of the success of the Hog program has been their ability to build a truly global community.

According to Harley-Davidson, over half of all Hog chapters exist outside of the United States. And the community and culture surrounding Harley is strong as ever; some indicators of

strength are large scale events like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally which attracted over five hundred thousand riders last year.

This sort of customer base has been hard earned by Harley-Davidson. They're obsessed with the bikes, and more than willing to spend the money on them. Some riders estimate upwards of seven thousand dollars in modifications, while others—like Becker—have simply stopped counting.

And these are the kinds of customers that come back to the brand. Tim Barcey, or T-Bar, is another member of the Golden Gate Hog chapter. And he recently purchased a 2018 Harley-Davidson CVO Street Glide, which is estimated at \$39,949.

The riders love of their bikes is only accentuated by the community they enjoy them with. And the friendliness of the Harley community can even transcend actually knowing one another.

"You see another Harley rider, and they're automatically your friend" Acevedo explains. "It's more than just a motorcycle. It's a lifestyle."

"JUST CRUISING AROUND WITH YOUR BUDDIES, HITTING UP COOL LITTLE RESTAURANTS AND BARS THAT'S REALLY WHAT IT'S ABOUT." -ADAM ROSNEY

So while Harley-Davidson's sales may not be soaring, they've still got a strong enough customer base to keep them afloat. The only question now is: Do they continue to pursue bringing new riders into the Harley-Davidson family, or do they double down on their existing customers and Hog chapters and maintain their traditions which have kept them alive until now?

Only time will tell. But for now, the heartbeat of Harley-Davidson rumbles on, loudly. **X**

LGBTQ+



JEZEBEL YANA, 21, SHE/HER



NON-BINARY



ANDROGYNOUS



TRANSGENDER



BIGENDER



LESBIAN



NIKOBI, 26, SHE/HER (LEFT)
PHALON, 29, HE/HIM (RIGHT)

ERASURE OF THE L IN LGBTQ

STORY BY GREG RAGAZA

PHOTOS BY ADELYNA TIRADO

A tall, slender woman, probably in her late forties, strolls up to the bar, opulent in her beige fur coat. The bartender, who just finished up a transaction, walks over to her with a welcoming smile.

“What would you like?” the bartender queries.

“I want a fresh limarita and please don’t use agave-based syrup to sweeten it,” she requests with a haughty tone.

“Of course,” the bartender says as she grabs a coupe glass, brushing the rim with lemon. She turns around and in one motion grabs the bottle of tequila and pours it in a shaker. Without taking her eyes off the pouring liquor, she adds another bottle. She puts a strainer on the glass and pours the translucent green liquid in, adding fresh lime juice and a slice of the fruit.

“Enjoy!” she serves with smile.

This is a dance that Lydia Rodriguez has been performing ever since she started working in the food industry at nineteen. Now at thirty-seven, Lydia is the lead bartender at the recently opened Jolene’s Bar in San Francisco. Lydia helped set up the bar, letting her maneuver confidently through bottles while making drinks for the nuanced patrons the bar is garnering.

Jolene’s Bar has rapidly gained popularity in the city, especially among the femme queer and lesbian community. Word spread of the bodacious boob wall, which is constantly getting censored on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Lydia, who is lesbian, says that the bar is intended an all-inclusive space for everyone in the community, which is apparent when one walks into the bar greeted by a bright pink neon sign that says “You Are Safe Here.”

“The vibe of Jolene’s has all of my favorite aspects of working in a bar because we’re so inclusive,” Lydia says as she takes a sip of her beer. “We have brunch versus crazy club nights with dancers, and then we have happy

hour where we see a lot of business people to older people, and older lesbians having cocktails at five in the afternoon. We want to reach our whole community, not just one section of the community.”

In recent years, many lesbian and gay oriented parties and events have started to rebrand themselves, and Jolene’s Bar does not label themselves as solely a lesbian bar. Jazmine Viera, twenty-six, is a dance instructor by day and go-go dancer for queer parties at night.

“I have danced at a lot of individual, back then identified as lesbian, parties that now identify as queer parties,” Jazmine recalls. “Just ‘cause the scene has taken this pivotal turn of trying to make everything inclusive.”

It is important to note that the acronym LGBTQ (and the various identities it represents) and queer are not synonymous. Queer is an umbrella term that can be used to define sexual, gender, and romantic identities without limiting oneself to one label.

**“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE LESBIAN SPACES
ACTUALLY BE CALLED LESBIAN FUCKING SPACES.”**

—MIRANDA DANCISIN

Jazmine has been dancing for queer parties the past five years, and adds that it is both a pro and a con to have things become more encompassing of the LGBTQ spectrum. The pro is that everyone can have a good time free from being judged and harassed. But it does beg the question of what is going to happen to lesbian spaces and identity.

“So many parties have sacrificed the “L” in making the parties more politically correct,” Jazmine argues.

There has already been a major purge of lesbian spaces in San Francisco.

In her book, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*, author and SF State professor Nan Alamilla Boyd covers the long history of a once thriving space for the lesbian community in San Francisco.

One of its most famous bars was Mona's 440 Club, San Francisco's first lesbian bar, located in the North Beach district back in the 1930s. Mona's inspired other lesbian bars and nightclubs to open and North Beach flourished. However, these establishments didn't last long when the city started heavily policing gay and lesbian spaces in the fifties, Boyd writes. Lesbian spaces are still consistently being made invisible today.

"THE BOYS HAVE EVERYTHING—THEY HAVE THE CASTRO AND THEY HAVE THEIR OWN CIRCUIT PARTIES."
- JAZMINE VIERA

Take San Francisco's Castro district for example, it is renowned as a LGBTQ haven, yet most, if not all, bars and nightclubs there are geared and advertised toward gay men.

"The boys have everything. *The boys* have everything—they have the Castro and they have their own circuit parties," Jazmine exclaims as she gestures her arms as if encircling the globe.

"They have essentially monopolized the queer scene, especially in San Francisco."

The most recent bar that proudly paraded as a lesbian bar was The Lexington Club (The Lex), which closed back in 2015. The Lex's slogans were "Your friendly neighborhood dyke bar," and "Every night is ladies' night."

"We had one bar," Lydia says of The Lex. "When that closed down, we lost something. Yeah there were parties here and there, but we didn't have a home base."

Even then, the parties shifted away from being centered for lesbians. Miranda Dancisin, who is thirty-five and identifies as lesbian, has been hosting parties for ten years. She has personally experienced some backlash in calling her events lesbian parties. One called "Party XO," which she has been throwing for seven years, was the party that Jazmine first go-go danced at.

"I have geared my party toward lesbian and queer women," Miranda proudly says. "I rarely hire straight male DJs to play at my parties, but everybody is still invited—as long as you're a decent human being and you're going to be respectful, you're invited."

There has been a lot of discussion within the community regarding what terms should be used when it comes to spaces, events, and parties. Promoters and organizers have to find a balance between not sounding exclusive, while still trying to keep certain identities alive.

"When I throw a party, it is automatically a welcoming space for everybody," Miranda defends. "I think the problem in our community is, if

your terminology isn't directly quoted then people think you're not invited, which is not the case."

"I would like to see more lesbian spaces actually be called lesbian fucking spaces," Miranda asserts.

No matter the terminology, Miranda affirms that the most important part of throwing parties that are directed toward queer and lesbian women is the need for safe spaces. A space where they can feel comfortable having fun without having to worry about any form of misogyny.

For more femme presenting queers and lesbians, sometimes it's a struggle to enjoy a night out when spaces are not necessarily welcoming to them. Sophia Andary, widely known in the community as Sophie Andr, is the event organizer of Lipstick Lesbian Meetup and co-chair of the Women's March in San Francisco. Sophie moved to the Bay Area from Los Angeles back in 2008 with hopes of being able to freely express her sexuality without clashing with ideals of her Middle Eastern family and culture. But upon moving here, she realized that the Castro was not very queer or lesbian women friendly.

"There were times where I would go unnoticed for more than fifteen minutes waiting to be served," Sophia sadly says. "[I've] been told before 'go to your straight bars,' and I am like 'dude I am gay.' It's a gay bar, but it's a gay men's bar. It's not for women."

Sophie eventually came upon Lipstick Lesbian Meetup, where she ended up taking over as the event organizer even in her busy work and activist schedule. She knows the importance of holding a space not only to feel safe in, but to be able to meet other people who share the same identity, struggles, and experiences. She also believes that Jolene's Bar is a great step in the right direction.

"Jolene's is creating a space that doesn't exist in the Castro," Sophie says. "Creating a space where people can be themselves."

For event organizers and promoters like Sophie and Miranda, they work to give lesbian and queer women a place to be seen. A place to be heard. A place to party. A place to be lesbian. A place to be who they want to be.

"It's important we have lesbian and queer spaces because this is where connections are formed," Miranda stresses. "I want it to be an experience that a lot of times we don't have at other clubs and bars. I want them to be able to let it all loose and maybe meet their future wife." **X**





JEZEBEL YANA, 21, SHE/HER

THE COMING OUT EXPERIENCE

Story by: Nikko Avellana

Photos by: Niko LaBarbera

At seventeen years old, Mar Pierce was nervous.

She had just realized that she was bisexual and, although nervous, built up the courage to come out to her mom. Pierce's mom accepted her bisexuality with support and admiration.

This was the beginning of Pierce's coming out experience, and it was the first time in her life she felt comfortable exploring her sexuality and gender identity. A year later, Mar realized she wasn't bisexual, but pansexual. And so she would, again, nervously come out to her mother—who responded in the same supporting way as before.

However, at the age of twenty, she had another realization. Mar was transgender. So, just as when she came out as bi and pansexual, she told her mother. Her feelings of anxiety and apprehension faded based upon her mother's previous support, but this time around, her mother did not accept her for who she was.

"Basically she was like, weirded out by it, and she was like 'are you sure?' and like 'this is a big decision,' like 'I need you to wait, and not do anything about this,' and I was like—**'Fuck that.'**"

The twenty-two-year-old cinema major with fiery-orange hair had made it clear; nobody will stop her from living her life. For Pierce, and many other trans people like her, coming out is both a liberating but vulnerable experience.

The realization came to Pierce one day while living in the dorms at SF State.

She was shaving her face one morning in the bathrooms when she thought, "I could just shave my armpits right now. I could totally do that and it would be so easy. So I did it, and it felt amazing. And I was like, what the fuck is going on right now?"

Pierce had an easier time coming out to her friends because of how accepting they were of her identity. "It was maybe strange for them at first, but they definitely got used to it." Her dad was also accepting in that he, in her words, "didn't give a shit" and was "totally cool with it." Pierce would giggle as she talk-

ed about how casually her dad acted to her coming out. For Pierce and many other trans people, support is one of the most important things in her life. Whether her parents or friends agreed with her or not, they cannot change who she is, but they can offer their understanding and acceptance.

Rae Sweet, a nineteen-year-old non-binary queer activist and public speaker, never exactly felt like they were "in the closet."

"When I discovered myself and as I was figuring myself out, I just kind of was open about it. It was very much accepted in my family and my close circles so it wasn't a big deal. It didn't feel like a whole coming out experience." Sweet explained that coming out to their closest people was as simple as saying they like a certain color.

At first, Sweet was open about their use of they/them pronouns, but they weren't so proactive on getting others to be strict with using them: "I was out as genderqueer and I told people I used they/them pronouns. . . [but] I told people it was fine if they called me my deadname [the name given to them at birth] and if they called me she/her 'cause I was scared of becoming a nuisance," they recall.

It took about eight months after coming out that Sweet started to realize they needed to enforce other people calling them by their correct they/them pronouns and chosen name.

They/them are gender-neutral pronouns. Rather than gender being specifically blue or pink, there's actually a lot of purple in between—they/them is an option for those who do not identify as either male or female, but somewhere in the gender fluidity in between.

All while selling clothes, Sweet's job at the Human Rights Campaign has them educating others about the store, human rights, their role in the community, pronouns, and who Harvey Milk was while also advocating for LGBTQ rights. Rae also does public speaking at high schools, middle schools, and campus queer clubs about gender, sex-

“Either I was gonna come out and I was going to fight for who I was, or I was gonna commit suicide. And I came pretty damn close to suicide, decided that’s not the way I wanna go. I wanted to fight for something, I wanted to fight for life.”

uality, growing up queer, and being trans. Sweet is able to use their experience to educate others on what being trans is like and how to find support.

Unlike Pierce and Sweet, Jezebel Yana, a twenty-one-year-old trans woman from Los Angeles, had far less support during her coming out experience. Yana’s family was resistant to her identity from the very beginning of her coming out experience, and they still have yet to accept her gender preference.

“Growing up in my family, I had been really honest and open about how I felt, and I was very fem. I liked she/her pronouns, and I would use them despite my parents not liking that.” It wasn’t until she was ten when she realized she didn’t have to accept the masculinity that accompanied the male gender roles her parents wanted her to fall into.

“Once I learned I could rebel, I started doing that more and all the way up until I left [home] at seventeen, I’d been fighting them on that.” Yana would try to get her parents to see her as a woman by embracing and being assertive of her pronouns. She would have a hard time coming out to anyone else at the time as her parents continued to suppress her identity.

In the days leading up to her coming out, Yana weighed the pros and cons and came to the conclusion to just tell everyone at once. “I was like, I just want to rip the band-aid off,” she says while laughing a bit to herself. “I threw myself out there, and I did get hurt, and I did feel scared, and a lot of times it was kind of aggressive from where they were coming from.” She faced misgendering and rejection from people she thought would accept her.

An article written by Kevin A. McLemore titled *A Minority Stress Perspective on Transgender Individuals’ Experiences With Misgendering* says that, “being misgendered is an example of an identity interruption—a situation in which an individual receives feedback from other that is incompatible with one’s own self-identity.” Examples of misgendering, as stated in the article include, “using a gender pronoun that is inconsistent with a person’s preferred pronouns, gendering an otherwise neutral name, or denying a person access to a gendered space like a bathroom.”

Once she left her parent’s house, Yana took control of her own life and left that toxicity behind. “I wore what I wanted to. I started wearing dresses, started wearing a lot of fem clothes that I never got to wear.” For her, staying true to herself is worth more than molding herself into the shape her parents want her to be.

Just like Yana, Rory Duran would also have to choose to be himself regardless of the amount of people that rejected him. The nineteen-year-old trans man came out in a small town and has one word to describe that experience: “Bad.”

“This [town] was small and conservative. So, it was really hard coming out at home. It was kind of weird because my school was really LGBT positive and really open,” he explains with a shrug and a heavy sigh as he runs his fingers through his short hair.

Duran’s relationships would end up strained. His mother got Alzheimer’s disease when he was in the seventh grade. His dad was a bad role model for him and an overall unpleasant person. So he ended up living with his sister, Ada, and her daughter. But they still wouldn’t accept him for who he is.

“Every morning I would wake up, I would put on clothes that I felt comfortable in, and they would just be like, making fun of me.” The constant verbal abuse and his family’s refusal to accept his sexuality motivated Duran to move.

Out of his sister’s house despite not having another home to live in. He lived in a tent for an entire summer just to avoid her mistreatment.

His strength and will to live as himself is further proven by his decision to come out: “Either I was gonna come out and I was going to fight for who I was, or I was gonna commit suicide. And I came pretty damn close to suicide, decided that’s not the way I wanna go. I wanted to fight for something, I wanted to fight for life.”

After coming out, Duran explains that he no longer felt, “like a shell anymore.” He says, “I felt like I could achieve like, being happy . . . I wasn’t just playing the part of what I thought I was supposed to be doing. Instead I was doing things that I wanted, that made me feel better, that ended up making other people feel better too. Because, in the end we’re all connected.”

And Duran is right: we all are connected. But more than that, the experiences of coming out are, and can expose the hardships—or acceptance—trans people experience just by being themselves.

For trans people today, coming out can mean many things. Rejection, joy, violence, liberation, uncertainty, or love. Although some are greeted with waves of support, others aren’t so lucky.

However, “coming out” may be the wrong choice of words. Perhaps, it is more of a “coming in” as they come into themselves with budding confidence in the person they have always been. ■

RAE SWEET, 19, THEY/THEM



WHAT'S A QUEEN TO A NON-BELIEVER?

STORY BY: AMELIA WILLIAMS
PHOTOS BY: NIKO LABARBERA

"THAT BASS WAS TICKLING MY TIAIT, I LOVED IT."

Rumor has it, you can find a drag show in San Francisco anywhere, any day of the week. There's *Rupaul's Drag Race (RPDR)* viewing parties on Mondays, drag brunch on Saturday and Sunday mornings, weekday happy hours with the queens at bars in every neighborhood, and nightly in-your-face dive bar death drops.

No matter the date, Tenderloin gay bar Aunt Charlie's Lounge is full of queens and common folk. On Tuesdays, it's Chasers night with back to back performances that go well past midnight.

But this is not an episode of *Rupaul's Drag Race*.

The show, which took drag from a queer enclave's art form to a Monday night staple on VH1, brought drag as entertainment, culture, and language to even the blandest corners of middle America. In its decade on the air, *RPDR* has featured drag queens from all over the country (some even from out of the country) and from all manner of backgrounds—to a point. With over one hundred contestants to date in its decade on the air, not even ten performers have been transgender or non-binary, and most concealed this fact while on the show.

No cisgender woman has ever appeared on the show. There are plenty of drag queens and kings who don't identify as cis men, but where are they? Most are here, in our backyard.

Many millennial queens still draw inspiration from *RPDR*, despite the narrow gender representation. Silk Worm, twenty-five, moved from Atlanta, Georgia to the SF Bay Area at eighteen to attend Stanford University. She began her transition as a trans woman after she left high school, and in the midst of her theatre degree, got on the stage.

Her look tonight is shocking, but not because she's in a leather harness and

pasties or glittered and cinched to the gods like her fellow performers. There's no makeup and no wig; her hair is braided in two long plaits that hang past her collarbones. She's in a purple blazer, slacks, and a yellow scarf.

Her song of choice is "The Way I Am" by Ingrid Michaelson, which was most notably featured in a 2007 Old Navy commercial, "if you are chilly, here take my sweater..." She does not roll around or gyrate or belt out her lip synching. Her presence is sweet, demure, like she could have been in that commercial. Someone in the hazy bar murmurs, "this is the cutest fucking thing I've ever seen."

"*Drag Race* actually inspired me. San Francisco is inclusive; I'm often not the only trans performer. I do drag with my partner a lot, who's a cis woman, and I think that was weird for her. New York has a similar vibe, anything goes. Atlanta is very polished, which feels less inclusive. The drag scene has the same problems as others—who gets booked first. It's the same way that feels weird just being trans in the outside world." By "polished," she means the scene in Atlanta is limited in its representation of gender and less welcoming to performers like herself.

Silk Worm has lived in the city since 2012, happily. While her move from Georgia was not an escape, her personal and medical needs off the stage weren't as accessible.

"SF has a lot of problems with racism and classism, but most places I've worked ask my pronouns, I have better medical services, counseling, housing," she says as she takes a smoke break in the down-pour.

Aunt Charlie's is one of her regular spots, and it's full of regulars. It has a red neon sign outside and a nondescript door on Turk Street. It's on the kind of block where some shadowy figure calls you "friend" and offers you speed. Inside is an

LOMA PRIETTA, 23, SHE/HER





intimate, if not cramped atmosphere bathed in red. Crimson lanterns hang over the lights, and little paper houses lined with Christmas lights and cotton snow line a shelf above the bar. The drinks are cheap, and many patrons are already drunk. A woman in a Victoria's Secret tracksuit laughs to her friend, "Bitch I gotta pee."

The stage is a swath of well-lit space at the end of the bar. The queens mainly stay in the lit space, but venture down into the crowd, collecting dollar bills held out by ants, but respectful fingers. There is no groping, no slurs, and everyone gets tipped. On this particular night, none of the performers are cisgender women, sometimes called "bio queens" or more respectfully, "female-identifying drag queens."

Another queen in the lineup is Loma Prietta (yes, like the 1989), "San Francisco's best natural disaster." Unlike most performers who flock from out of town, Loma grew up in San Francisco. She began watching *RPDR* in high school, but queen Loma wasn't born until 2016. While she does identify as a gay, cisgender man off the stage, drag created a space for her to confront and manage her ADD and anxiety.

"I think for a lot of people, people do drag as an alter ego, like the mild-mannered techie. I moved around schools a lot. I did not have real friends. Drag has been therapeutic for me. It became a way to develop social skills I didn't have. It's a social profession. You don't get to not talk to people."

But during a mashup number of mid-2000s meme songs (think the Rick Roll'd song and "Friday" by Rebecca Black) with no pants on, you'd never know. Loma is "pretty," highly femme, and grounded in realism—but not much. Her makeup involves glueing down her eyebrows and powdering her face to a flat surface so her features can be redrawn more femininely. She makes her own wigs, which live on shelves above her desk in her bedroom, and curates her

costumes around the glamor of the eighties and nineties. She claims to have accumulated over three thousand dollars worth of garb, but that's low balling it. Relatively speaking, Loma is aware of her privilege within the queer community.

"I don't want to say anything that incriminates me, I don't want ten angry Facebook messages, but there are a lot of discussions about *RuPaul* fans in casting trans performers. There's a lot of controversy. San Francisco prioritizes trans, non-binary, and femme performers in ways other cities don't. There's definitely a glass ceiling. But that's why they kick ass in SF. But my perspective is radically different than someone that's been doing it for ten years. I surround myself with kind and supportive people with good intent. The island of misfit toys, those are my friends."

Rockm Sakura by day lives as Brian Steven Johnson Bradford, a cisgender gay, Asian man. Her aesthetic is vivacious anime character. Her exaggerated, drawn-on "eyes" take up most of her face, the contour and foam hip pads soften her face and prepare her body for the costume to come. She has been a pirate, Joan of Arc, and a literal book of manga. Within a bedroom full of sherbet-colored wigs and costume jewelry, between performance of garrish pops songs and scissor splits, Rockm Sakura occupies her own place in Bradford's identity.

"In drag you're celebrated for things you aren't praised for as a dude, like my femininity. My first time in drag I saved the makeup wipe."

Bradford moved to San Francisco a year ago specifically for the variety of stages for Sakura. Sakura performs her own numbers, assists her fellow queens, produces YouTube content, and choreographs for others. She lent these moves to a younger queen, Loma Prietta, for her performance in the annual pageant Mother: Star Search at Oasis nightclub.

Rupaul, debatably the most visible drag queen of our time, has said before that "drag loses its sense of dan



BRYAN STEVEN JOHNSON BRADFORD 27, HE/HIM

ger and its sense of irony once it's not men doing it, because at its core it's a social statement and a big f-you to male-dominated culture."

Well, yes, drag is indeed a subversion of patriarchal expectations for men. But it has also historically been a thread to bind queer and trans youth together in families they may not have had otherwise. This is best illustrated in the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*, which pulled back the hairsprayed, "yaaas queen" curtain to reveal how much joy queer, trans, and marginalized youth in New York City derive from drag and the pageant-like "balls" they would gather to perform at during the 1980s AIDS crisis. It also revealed how many performers did not neatly prescribe to gender, and how many of them suffered, if not died for it. In 2019 in San Francisco, you wouldn't have guessed anyone had a problem with anyone.

Female drag queen Snaxx is one such who would disagree with RuPaul's stance on drag. Snaxx, aka Carissa Hatchel, is a cis woman who, by multiple accounts, is the first cis woman to have won Oasis nightclub's Star Search pageant back in January. Her number was a mashup of a song about pizza and a body positive anthem in which she stripped down to her pasties and showered in silver paint.

Another Bay Area native, Snaxx spent ten years working in early childhood education before she became Snaxx. A theatre background had led to costuming jobs, and in 2016 she was

asked to assist with a long-time San Francisco classic, the drag production of *Golden Girls* at the Victoria in late 2016. Her name, Snaxx, was actually lifted from the content of the show, in which character Blanche goes to the kitchen for a snack.

"Drag is an exaggeration of gender and a protest of the binary anyway, no matter what gender you start as. It's a heightened version of myself, a mix of all my interests."

Like most queens, Snaxx is both a drag daughter and mom. Most queens need a wing to tuck under, and a community to shape their taste and confidence. Drag moms and families are a lot like the mom who kissed your boobies and made your lunches; they pass down makeup techniques, critique music choices and show up to see their daughters perform. Snaxx herself would not be onstage if her drag mom had not made it clear that she was "allowed," that her gender did not exclude her. Her daughter, Roma Holiday, has already started her own show in Alameda across the water.

"The structure of drag families is really, really crucial, especially in the earlier days. Drag families function as your real family. People literally didn't have a place to live." Her biological family do not patron her performances. "I don't think they really get it."

Snaxx has also joined the national movement Drag Queen Story Hour, where queens read books and sing songs to children at their local libraries. Her local branch is in Alameda,

which she claims is not as viable for queer people as the city, but the kids love it. The education doesn't stop with the classroom.

"When you have this expectation of gender and gender roles, that's when it gets confusing. It's an opportunity for kids to see people express themselves. It will continue to be normalized. It's really hard. I'm very broke but I'm so, so happy."

Kai Kai Bee Michaels was one of the judges that night who gave the crown to Snaxx. Like Snaxx, they were a bit older when *Drag Race* first came out, and it wasn't their foundational introduction to the art form and community around it. Michaels, who identifies as non-binary and uses both she and they pronouns, grew up in Detroit and discovered drag through the gay-straight alliance at their university.

But it wasn't until they moved to the Bay Area ten years ago, that they saw it as a viable outlet. Before drag, Michaels loved cosplay. One of her favorite characters is Steven Universe's three-eyed Garnet, of whom she wears two pins on the lapel of her hoodie.

"I was born female but I've always struggled to identify with my femininity. I've always felt more comfortable expressing my masculine side in my day to day life." Both drag and cosplay allow Kai Kai not only to engage with femininity, but to tell a story. At Cher's Tribute Night at Oasis, she is a pastel-goth cannibalistic mermaid, devouring one of her backup dancers who's dressed as a campy sailor.

"Sometimes it is a little obvious I'm not a boy and sometimes I've felt weird being in majority femme spaces. When I first came out I got some pushback from girls, like 'drag is for men.' A lot of [the stigma] is generational, but that's not an excuse."

Kai Kai, like Silk, is game for wherever they get booked. Even within the city's sizable queer community, there are still gatekeepers of sorts. For Oasis, that job belongs to "Otter."

By multiple accounts, he is Oasis's backbone, or like that singular palm tree in a mirage. He gives every queen an audience during rehearsals, corrals them onstage from the dressing room at showtime, and participates in the occasional bit. Oasis is the culmination of the legacy of Heklina, a local drag queen whose show, Mother (formerly Trannyshack), if it were a human being, would be old enough to go to the bar to see it. Due to its notoriety, the show has standards, but they aren't on the spectrum, and it's up to Otter to uphold them.

"I'm from Ann Arbor, Michigan. It's rigidly defined as gay men performing as drag queens. The ethos here is it doesn't matter if you were born male-bodied or female-bodied. Can you entertain the crowd? Tonight we have cis women, gay men, trans performers. I want everyone to feel they can get on that stage." He has even been known to book the rare straight man.

By the time the show's over at Aunt Charlie's, it's almost last call. Some of the queens are still hanging out by the bar, some left as soon as they counted their tips, some are wearing pants again. The rain that has dominated the first quarter of the year has relaxed, let up a bit so people can smoke their cigarettes and call their Ubers in peace and dryness. For a few scant hours there will be peace, then on to the next one. **X**



NOAH BARNETT PUTS THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON HIS EYE MAKEUP IN PREPARATION FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AS LOMA PRIETTA AT AUNT CHARLIE'S LOUNGE IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

UTOPIAS OF THE QUEER COMMUNITY

A PHOTO SERIES BY ADELYNA TIRADO

Go-go dancers Madison Eker (left) and Nicole Duminie (right) share a kiss under a mistletoe at Jolene's Bar's first Holiday Queer Party in San Francisco, California. Jolene's Bar is a new queer bar in San Francisco that opened in Dec. 2018.



Pi Marloff (left) and Alisa Wrinkle (right) practice tango dancing during Abrazo's Queer Tango class at Finnish Hall in Berkeley, California. Abrazo is a SF Bay Area Queer Argentine Tango organization and hosts Beginner and Intermediate tango classes on Sundays.





Duke Daisies (pronoun they) (left) and “Sea Wead” (right) (pronoun they) share an intimate moment during Queer-Roke at El Rio bar in San Francisco’s Mission District. Queer-Roke is hosted every Wednesday at El Rio. The bar has been around since 1978 and well-known as a LGBTQ+ space.



GENDERFLUID



AGENDER



Jen Shockey of Rebel Kings of Oakland performs during their Christmas Drag King show at White Horse Bar in Oakland, California. White Horse Inn Bar is the oldest standing GLBT Bar within the United States, standing at 85 years.



DEMIGIRL



DEMIBOY



Lola M’Call and Dylan Moxxy of Dylan The Jeweler showcase their business at The Queer Marketplace Event at the SF LGBT Center. The Queer Marketplace was a pop-up event to showcase local LGBTQ+ businesses.



GAY

FRINGE MOVEMENTS RISING: THE SLIPPERY SLOPES OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Story by: Joshua Chan

Illustrations by: Chloe McDaniels

IT SEEMS LIKE SOME NEW VIRAL TREND COMES UP EVERY WEEK ON SOCIAL MEDIA. One day, it's something harmless like people dancing to Drake's "In My Feelings" on top of cars, another day someone is dumping a bucket of ice water on their head for charity, and then, you see a post that seems just *weird*. That post seems more conspiratorial and paranoid, and it's easy to just stare at it in disbelief, as this post might claim, for example, that vaccines cause autism. And then, it turns into the same sort of reasoning that eventually leads to more dangerous consequences. This is how fringe movements, or extremist movements, on social media become, well, *not so fringe*.

A recent measles outbreak in Washington left fifty-three infected. According to a local Washington newspaper, *The Columbian*, forty-seven of those infected were not immunized. Conspiracy crusades such as the anti-vaccine movement rely on a variety of rhetorical tactics, establishing logical and emotional appeal in order to establish a sense of authority. These movements use Facebook and other social media platforms to gain a larger audience by establishing chat rooms that target potential con-

verts, sharing faulty information without context.

"Most conspiracy theories rely on the idea that there is a secret knowledge that is being hidden from people intentionally, and there are people that have control over this information to maintain power," said Orion Steele, a SF State communications professor. "Most conspiracies I know tend to argue that it's possible to manipulate information when you get it from another source, and therefore the only reliable source of info is your own senses. If you can't see it, it doesn't exist. If you can't hear it, it's not real. That's one of the main rhetorical strategies that most conspiracy theorists use to say the moon landing was faked, the earth is flat, or that vaccines cause autism."

Another rhetorical strategy commonly used by these movements is also that they appeal to emotions, hoping that the evidence set forth isn't questioned.

"They're trying to differentiate communities. There's a wide swath of political people saying we're free and independent, that the government 'shouldn't get in our lives.' The problem with all these movements is that they're not based in science," said John Ryan, another communications professor at SF State. "They don't offer evidence . . . It's all pathos driven, trying to get you to feel something."

In 2017, the *Washington Post* reported on a measles outbreak in Minneapolis, Minnesota among its Somali immigrant community that was a direct result of anti-vaccine groups. In this case, the Post reports that anti-vaccination activists re-

peatedly invited anti-vaccine movement founder Andrew Wakefield to talk to worried parents, especially in the Somali community, about the claim that vaccines cause autism in children.

The result of Wakefield's targeted campaign coincided with a sharp decrease in Somali American vaccination rates, from ninety-two percent in 2004 all the way down to forty-two percent in 2014. The Minnesota Department of Health was able to show that anti-vaccine activists were able to take advantage of fears and faulty education regarding vaccination.

One of the arguments made by some anti-vaccine groups is that vaccines are framed as "inorganic" and filled with chemicals that shouldn't be in the human body. For example, Heather Dillard, a nurse in Springfield, Missouri, told the Associated Press in 2015 that "I have the right to decide what I put in my child's body," in response to criticism of her anti-vaccination stance. This reasoning eventually leads to other explanations that don't accurately represent the problem, but instead complicate it even further.

"Social media is a great equalizer of free speech, and it's used a lot by people with many different points of view. It's also a misunderstanding of how vaccines work. We have a biological substance that stimulates our own immune system unlike other medicines, such as antibiotics killing bacteria," said Larry Vitale, a senior lecturer at SF State's school of nursing.

"Vaccines are different. They don't kill anything, but they stimulate by alerting our immune system to a bacteria or a virus that will invade our system. What people don't understand is that there are sometimes preservatives, and so they'll make reference to a microscopic amount of some preservative and say that it shouldn't be injected into a person."

That preservative is thimerosal, which



the FDA has already deemed not harmful in small doses. That kind of logic Larry described can eventually lead to complacency, and that complacency can lead to further problems healthwise.

“It’s been said that when people fear the vaccine more than the disease, you have resistance. Once the fear of the disease subsides, the idea is why do we need to take them? The reason is that they’re not eradicated yet,” said Vitale. “Just last year in the Bay Area, there was a notable outbreak of measles, and it was amongst people who weren’t vaccinated. A huge drain of public health resources to investigate this, and all of the persons who were involved in the spread were those who could be vaccinated but weren’t.”

According to a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report from this year, the measles virus was transmitted by six patients in the Bay Area in March and April of last year. All six had parents who deliberately rejected to vaccinate their children. The MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, and rubella) has been recommended for all people born in the United States since

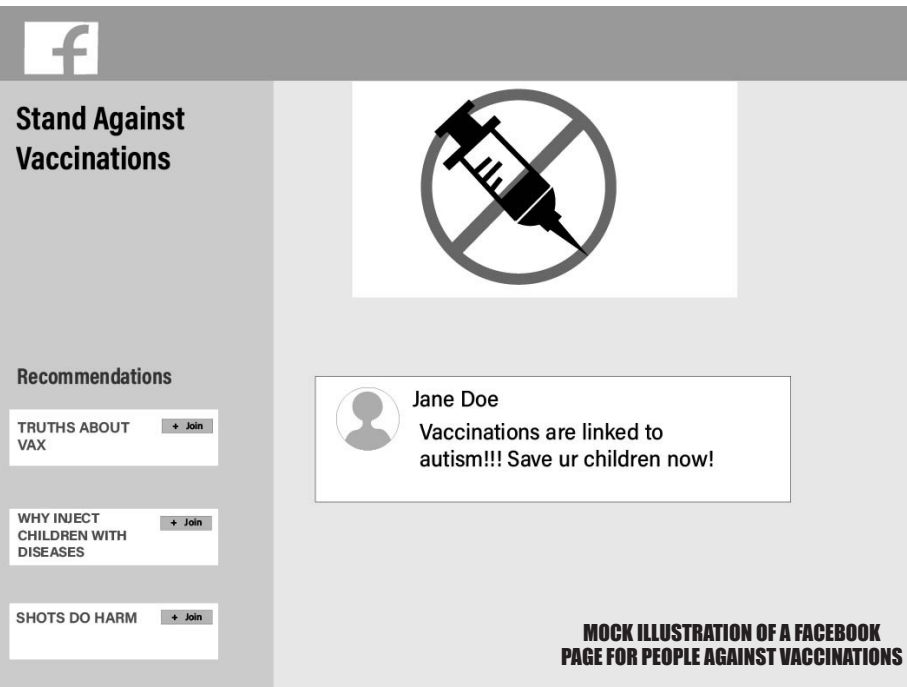
“THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE GET USED TO EASE AND NOW WE NEED TO TAKE THE EXTRA STEP: HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW.”

- JOHN RYAN

1957.

Even more dangerously, such movements might also be stepping stones to different, more dangerous ones. For example, Steele pointed out that the anti-vaccine movement is very different from ideological groups like the alt-right in what they want to achieve, but both engage their audiences and spread their messages through similar social media platforms. They both thrive on the lack of thought when it comes to new information and they both are predicated on a distrust in institutions.

“I think that a lack of education in critical thinking is what allows those ideas to flourish,” explained Steele. “The more people are exposed to those ideas without having the tools to challenge them [or] understand why they’re flawed ideas, they spread like wildfires, whereas the goal of the alt-right is to ac-



complish white supremacy. And that is a very big distinction.”

One of the challenges compounding a lack of critical thinking is that social media platforms often let such content go mostly unchallenged while censoring other, more innocuous content. For example, Facebook tried to integrate Snopes into news feeds for certain articles in a short-lived partnership, while suggesting anti-vaccine content in search suggestions.

Not all speech is protected, nor is all speech protected equally. Miriam Smith, associate professor of media law at SF State, argues that while the line is fairly muddy for what constitutes censorship, there are a few distinctions. For most people, their social media accounts don’t constitute a public forum under the law, since places like Facebook and Twitter are private companies.

“It’s up to the private company, otherwise a regulation needs to be narrowly tailored. They can draw their own line and set their own standards,” Smith said. “It’s a judgement call and they’re under increasing pressure to stop calls to violence, calls to terrorism, depictions of animal cruelty, child endangerment. And a lot of hate speech ordinances fail because they’re not narrowly tailored. It’s far easier since they’re not the government.”

And so while fringe movements and

conspiratorial ideas spread like wildfire on social media without much regulation, it’s becoming more and more important to figure out where such information is coming from.

“The problem is that we get used to ease and now we need to take the extra step: how do you know what you know,” Ryan said. “It takes more work. Anyone can publish a book, but I have to figure out who you are. What’s your agenda? Where’d you go to school? There’s a lot less of that happening.”

Thinking about sourcing for fact-based information is a start, but it’s also not everything when it comes to thinking about the information we take in on a daily basis.

“A former teacher at SF State named Alexis Litzky told me one time that she named it everyday intellectualism: the willingness to go about your everyday with a critical eye, to evaluate the movies you watch, the music you listen to, the interpersonal interactions you have with other people, with a critical eye,” Steele said. “It’s no one activity or action or lesson plan in a classroom that’s magically going to solve these problems. We need to do everything that we can as a culture to encourage people to think about that stuff, to engage in critical thinking every minute of their life while they are conscious.” **X**



BUILDING PYRAMIDS

Story and illustrations by Jacob Tucker

Jose Garcia is living the American Dream. The twenty-one-year-old Bakersfield, California resident's family immigrated to America from Mexico when he was eleven. He grew up getting into trouble, getting kicked out of school and hanging out with the wrong crowd. Though he came from a broken family, he and his mom made ends meet by working in the fields of California's Central Valley.

But not anymore.

A look at Jose's Instagram page has him showing off his gold watch, going to corporate events, and posing with sports cars. He's achieved this flashy lifestyle by joining a company called PHP, or People Helping People.

It, like many other companies in the

United States, uses a business model called multi-level marketing, or MLM.

This business model has driven multi-million dollar companies such as Herbalife, Amway, and Cutco to their levels of success and prominence.

PHP sells life insurance, and Jose brings people onto his team to do the same.

"I'm not making millions yet, but I do have the chance to do it," he explains. "You can make residual income, so everything adds up."

Many Mexican immigrants like himself and his family dream of coming to America, making a lot of money, buying a nice truck, and building a nice house back home. Jose will tell you about the new Chevy Silverado that he actually bought, the great people he's working with, and the land he just

bought in Mexico to build a house for his mom. Just like any American Dream success story, he's worked hard for it.

"How successful you are depends on how hard you work. It's capitalism, man," he says. "Whoever works hard gets paid out. You grind, or you don't eat."

The more people Jose brings into the company, the higher commission he will get on his sales. That's how to make the real money in multi-level marketing. Right now, he has seventy-five people on his team. Seventy-five is a lot of people, but it still seems doable, right? Jose reached that level in just two years. Surely, with hard work and dedication, success (i.e. big bucks) can be had through this side job with a minimal investment.

This is the pitch common to nearly all

multi-level marketing businesses: Make some sales, recruit some more people just as you were recruited, and the money will start flowing in. Easy. Anyone can do it. Sign up now. It's a pitch that sounds particularly appealing to the economically vulnerable: Immigrants, single moms, and college students. A 2018 study by AARP shows that 18-25 year olds joined MLMs more often than any other age demographic.

"WHOEVER WORKS HARD GETS PAID OUT. YOU GRIND, OR YOU DON'T EAT."

The problem appears when you start doing the math.

If, to reach Jose's level of success, a prospective distributor would need to recruit seventy-five people, then all of those people would need to build their own structure of seventy-five, and so forth.

After five iterations of this, we reach two billion people.

Though PHP is growing, it is almost guaranteed that it won't grow that big. Most who join won't achieve the success they were promised. According to one study conducted in 2011 and published on the Federal Trade Commission's website, 99 percent of participants in most MLM's don't make money. Like Jose said, it's capitalism. If you don't work hard, you don't eat.

That's just a lot of people not eating.

Stacie Bosley, assistant professor of Economics at Hamline University in St Paul, Minnesota, is one of the only economists in the country who studies multi-level marketing companies, which sometimes identify themselves with other names like network marketing, affiliate marketing, or direct sales.

"Direct sales," according to Bosley, "is the umbrella term that includes all companies that utilize a distributor network to distribute their goods and services."

Think door-to-door salesmen. Bosley became interested in MLMs when some of her friends and family became involved with direct selling companies that emphasized recruiting rather than retail sales.

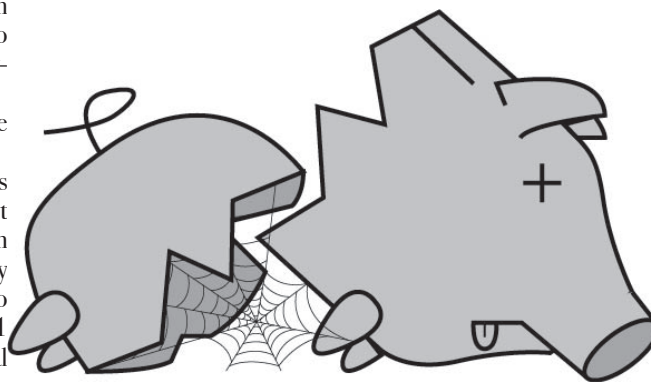
Many of them lost a lot of money, including retirement savings.

This focus on recruitment is what differentiates MLMs from direct sales. While direct sales consist of product sales without an online or physical retail store, MLMs grow and build their membership from recruitment.

MLMs incentivize members to recruit by offering commissions on sales made by anyone on their "team," and by anyone recruited further by those members. This chain of recruits is called the downline, and the theoretically exponential size of this downline is why MLMs seem so appealing, especially for those wishing to generate a passive income.

If you draw this business model out on paper, you will find that you've drawn a pyramid; one in which all the money moves upward towards the top.

That's why there's another name for this business model: a pyramid scheme.



Pyramid schemes are illegal. While there is no federal law that strictly defines what a pyramid scheme is, there is a practical definition established by case law.

According to the FTC's website, a company is a pyramid scheme if they "promise consumers or investors large profits based primarily on recruiting others to join their program, not based on profits from any real investment or real sale of goods to the public."

Multi-level marketing companies avoid the pyramid scheme label by offering products and services. As long as a company can demonstrate that all involved make most of their revenue from sales of products rather than from recruiting, then they can avoid the pyramid label—and prosecution.

"Multi-level marketing has the veneer of a product or service," continues Bosley, "but the fundamental activities remain: pay to participate, recruit other people to do the same, and you will ultimately be re-

warded with greater payment."

The people that are successful are often those who can get in first. For the vast majority who join, however, getting to the top is a much higher climb. Usually though, they don't see it that way because it's often advertised as an easy side gig.

Carlo Padula is re-reading Dante's *Inferno*. It sits on the desk of his office in SF State's Italian studies department. As he describes his time working in an MLM, he picks it up. "I was in the *Inferno*. I was in hell."

The sixty-two-year-old professor had joined a multi-level marketing company called Star Services International for two years when he was still living in Italy. A friend of his had told him that he had come across a good opportunity to make money without working. Though he was doing alright running his gardening store, he figured the opportunity couldn't hurt.

"I lost money—a lot of money," he says, shaking his head. "I invested a thousand dollars a year, and I lost everything. Everything."

Star Services International, much like PHP, sold insurance policies. Carlo said that initially, he fell in love with the theory.

"The theory is perfect, but to apply the theory into practice is insane," he explains. "They present it as easy and that you can make money without leaving your job. But it's not true. It's a job, a twenty-four-hour job sometimes."

After two years in the company, however, Carlo had lost money. "My structure crumbled after one year," he admits, "because I didn't want to push people to do something that was not correct. Telling them to go to their grandmother and sell her the product? That's her retirement."

To be successful, he had to be deceptive. He knew what working for the company involved and how little money there was in it. He knew that the product was not something for everyone. If he could convince people he cared about to join but they didn't do well, he would have to let them bleed out and find someone new.

"You have to cut heads," he explains. "If your structure is dying, then you just start another structure. You are not caring for the people who are losing their money and leaving their jobs." He reflects for a moment. "When I realized this, for me I have some principles that are higher.

A friend is a friend, not because they can make you money."

Carlo said he is thankful that he was able to preserve his relationships over the job. He knew other people that didn't fair the same. "People get divorced, it's broken friendships," he says. "The first ten people are usually people you sell the product to, and those people are usually your friends and your family. You tell them that it's because you love them."

"I INVESTED A THOUSAND DOLLARS A YEAR, AND I LOST EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING."

When Jose first joined PHP, he wanted to tell everyone about it. When he shared the opportunity with his friends in their group chat, one of them replied that it was a scam. Jose didn't like that very much.

"He called me a hater," Amaris Maestas explains. "Now to this very day he's shaming me about how 'oh, you can't support your family, you can't do this, you don't got shit up north...' shit after shit after shit."

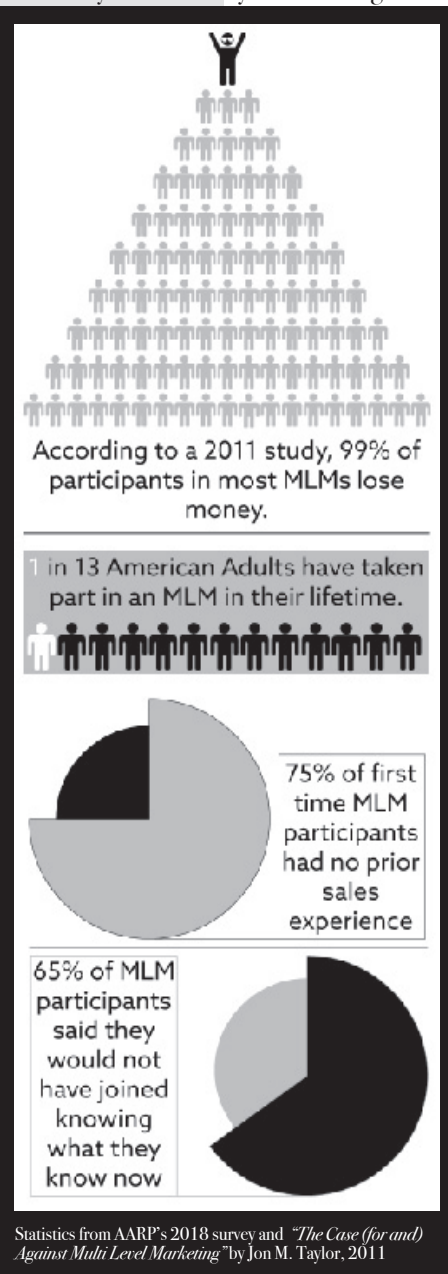
Amaris, a twenty-year-old business major at SF State, had encountered the company before. While a student in Bakersfield, she had gone to one of their meetings thinking it was a job interview for a normal company. The meeting took place in a small, nondescript office building. In a room that was set up more like a presentation than a job interview, a young man was boasting to two young women about how he was going to upgrade his BMW.

"As soon as I walked in the door, I knew exactly what was going on," Maestas says, slapping her hand on the table. She knew about the MLM business model and was already not a fan. She left, telling the friend she had brought that they had walked into a pyramid scheme. When Jose told her friend group about it, she said the same thing.

Though they had been friends for two years, this disagreement ruined that. Jose saw Amaris' attitude as the result of ignorance, while Amaris saw Jose's as the result of brainwashing. They didn't see each other for a while, until Amaris and her mom were at the dollar store and she saw Jose and a business partner in suits handing out fliers.

"Yeah, I mean I talked to everybody,"

explains Jose. Jose says that Amaris' attitude was frustrating to him because he saw it as a way to build people up by offering them an opportunity. "When somebody is telling us that the company's fake, it doesn't work, or something like that, I don't like it," he says. "You're stopping someone from doing something that they want to do. Why stop them from doing just because you don't see yourself doing it?"



In her hometown of Bakersfield, Amaris says MLMs are common because the population is the perfect target. Amaris, who describes herself as light skinned Mexican, says that there are a lot of poor Latino people in her community. "Most of the white

people there know this is not for them, but the Mexicans, this is their target. Mexican people and low-income students."

MLM companies usually focus their attention on "affinity communities," valuable to MLMs because of the tight knit relationships and high social interactions within. Immigrant neighborhoods, churches, and college campuses provide the perfect petri dishes to spread into.

One company, Vemma Nutrition Company, focused its attention specifically on college students.

When Luis Contreras was invited to his friend Alex's house in 2014, she wouldn't tell him what it was for.

It was his first year at Chabot College in Hayward, California. He and Alex had grown close only recently. When he got to her house, he found that he wasn't the only one she invited over. A group of strangers all found themselves in her living room. They were all hanging out and making small talk, when a couple of them asked the group if they wanted to try some drinks. They went into the kitchen and brought out cans of an energy drink called Vemma Verve.

"They tried to be slick about it," says Luis. "That was their way to try and leave an impression. It was their way to say, 'Hey—this is a good drink. If you guys like it then you should be a part of it.'"

They began talking about the drinks and the company, Vemma. They told the group that they could make a lot of money, and that eventually, they could even get a Mercedes. After watching some flashy music videos showing the Vemma Lifestyle, they said that all you had to do was sign up, and they would send you cases of the drink to sell at a retail price.

While Luis was skeptical, he went to

"HE KEPT SAYING, 'YOU GUYS CAN BE THE NEXT MEGA SUPERSTARS, YOU COULD BE THE NEXT BIG THING.'"

two more meetings. After all, it was his friend that had invited him and he trusted her.

At the third meeting, things got weird. A guy who was higher up in the company

explained how they would pay five dollars a day for the product, and that they would start off at the bottom. But, if they stuck with it, they could make a lot of money and the company would give them a car. “He kept saying, ‘you guys can be the next mega superstars, you could be the next big thing.’”

At that point, Luis had done his own research and had talked to other friends of Alex’s who were also skeptical. He told her it wasn’t for him, and she said that was okay. Then he tried convincing her that she should leave, too. That’s when she got defensive. Luis remembers her saying, “This company is my passion, this is my role. I wanna become successful, and I’m not going to let somebody talk to me like that and get in my way.”

That was the last time he saw her.

The now twenty-three-year-old Luis, who transferred to SF State, doesn’t know what happened to Alex after that. Vemma, however, didn’t go unpunished for its aggressive recruiting of college students.

In 2016, the FTC responded to complaints by parents whose kids were telling them they were going to drop out because they found something better. The company was fined \$238 million for operating an unlawful pyramid scheme and misrepresenting income claims. They were also ordered to restructure their company and change their business practices.

Though they complied, the changes to their business were minimal. Vemma still sells energy drinks and health products and still uses a multi-level marketing structure

The Vemma Case is only one of a handful of cases against MLMs successfully prosecuted by the FTC since 1979. That year is important because in 1979, the FTC fought a case against one of the biggest MLMs at that time and today: Amway.

Douglas Brooks is an attorney, consumer advocate, and legal expert on MLM’s. In the Netflix documentary, *Betting on Zero*, he represented a group of mostly undocumented Latino immigrants who had lost money in becoming distributors for Herbalife. He explains that the 1979 Amway case shaped the legal environment that allowed MLMs to grow to the level of prominence they hold today.

“Prior to the Amway decision,”

Brooks explains, “it was clear that if the compensation plan allowed people to make a payment for the right to receive a payment when new people joined the business, it was a pyramid scheme.”

The Amway decision determined that as long as the company could show that it has rules, then it can be protected. The problem with this, however, is that it is very difficult for the FTC to prove whether or not these rules are being followed because MLMs are not required to provide accurate information about distributor income and attrition rates—in other words, they don’t have to say how much people make and how often they fail.

IS IT A PYRAMID SCHEME?

five tips to help you avoid the bottom of the pyramid

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH

MLMs with a bad rap won’t have a good reputation online. Do a Google search!

2. ASK FOR INCOME STATS

Not just what they tell you, but official documents with distributor earnings.

3. ASK ABOUT ATTRITION

What percentage of people fail? If they can’t tell you, watch out.

4. HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Find out how much you will be spending per year, not just what you will pay up front

5. THINK ABOUT IT!

Never sign up for something you haven’t given a couple days of thought to. If it’s a real opportunity, it can wait.

“The confusion is by design,” said Brooks. “They make these plans so complicated and confusing so that the person who’s just joining really can’t understand. Unless you have someone who’s had some experience sit down and explain it to you, you’re not going to understand it. And if you did understand it you’d probably run away from it.”

This means that it’s not only difficult for the FTC to prosecute these companies, but it’s also hard for consumers to decide whether or not they’re signing up for a scam. “If you’re a prospective distributor and you want to find out if the company is a legitimate business or a pyramid scheme... how are you going to determine if that is really happening? There’s really no way for you to do that.”

Whether or not MLMs like Vemma are pyramid schemes is important, but for Brooks, it isn’t the only concerning feature of the industry. For regular franchisors, like McDonalds for instance, they are required to make sure that franchisees have the ability to be successful. They aren’t allowed to let a new McDonalds open right next to the old one if it means that old one will go out of business.

MLMs, however, encourage the opposite. As a distributor, you are encouraged to recruit. Those new distributors are your own competition, making the prospect of actually making money from retail sales unlikely.

“Regardless of if something meets someone’s definition of a pyramid scheme, there remains the issue of if these are viable businesses?” Brooks emphasizes. “How are we going to know if the industry doesn’t have to disclose even basic information about how their distributors are performing?”

Multi level marketing isn’t going away any time soon. This means that those of us who are starving, debt-ridden students have to be careful when we find ourselves in fishy meetings and offered business opportunities by friends and family. But who knows? Maybe you could be successful. That’s why Jose works hard to bring people into his company.

“What if they could come into the company and do something great?” said Jose.

He’s not wrong. You could be a part of the successful one percent, maybe even one of the wildly successful fraction of that number.

Maybe the next time you want to buy a lottery ticket, just join an MLM instead. **X**

OBSESSIVE DISNEY DISORDER

BY INGRID MERA

“My first memory of Disney goes back to 1994. *The Lion King* had just come to theaters, so my mom and aunt took me and my cousin to see it. Being the cool six year olds we were, we insisted on sitting a few rows in front of our parents.” explains Katy Vitus, “The time came when Rafiki held Simba up on Pride Rock, I got out of my seat and threw my hands in the air in the middle of the theatre. That moment changed my life forever.” Childhood memories often consist of playing in the parks, posing for pictures, and eating sugar. In so many ways, Disneyland embodies just that. 🐻 Disneyland became a place where kids could be kids, and adults could soak in the idea of being a kid one last time. As years went on, kids became adults, continuing the tradition of visiting the happiest place on earth. To some, the park continues to epitomize that, which is a reason thousands visit yearly, monthly, and even weekly. Urban Dictionary.com even has a diagnosis for such folk: Obsessive Disney Disorder. 🐻

“Disney was able to transform me into this dream world as a kid. It made me feel like anything was possible and it taught me to never grow up because it really is a trap,” says Vitus, a Disney fan from Oregon. 🐻 Walt Disney, began his career with illustrations in Kansas City, sitting on his sister’s bed; she suffered from measles. Walt would use the illustrations to keep her company and entertain her as she was bedridden. 🐻 Mickey Mouse made his first appearance in Steamboat Willie at the Colony Theatre in New York on November 18, 1928, where he became iconic for his voice and movement, shaping a personality

that would personify what Disney would come to be. 🐻 In 1940, Walt began visiting amusement parks, as he envisioned opening one of his own that would bring people from around the world to enjoy being themselves. On July 17, 1955, Disneyland opened. Millions of people, already touched by Walt’s animations, watched from the comfort of their own home on TV through the broadcasting, some even attending the ceremony. 🐻 In 2017 I became an Annual Passholder for the first time ever and besides the birth of my children, that was the happiest moment of my life. I try to get to the parks every other month if I can,” explains Vitus. 🐻 Katy, an annual passholder to Disneyland in Anaheim, California, resides in Oregon and has taken her love for Disney to the internet. Going by @mainstmuse on Instagram, named after the parks’ Main Street, she visits the parks every other month. She has become popular for her Etsy.com shop where she creates her infamous retro Mickey Mouse ears, which are available to purchase every few weeks with new colorway drops as well as apparel for other Disney fans to enjoy. 🐻 “You don’t know what you’re missing. It is not about the lines, the prices, the horrible pain in your legs when it’s all done. It’s about the people you’re with, if you love them you’ll have a great times,” says Noelle Villalobos, a cast member at Disneyland. 🐻 Fans continue to manifest their love for their childhood memories, some of which they hope to pass down. People around the world save up yearly to experience Disneyland and everything it has to offer, regardless of the price.

"IN 2017 I BECAME AN ANNUAL PASSHOLDER FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER AND BESIDES THE BIRTH OF MY CHILDREN, THAT WAS THE HAPPIEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE."
-KATY VITUS

"To me, it is this place where I can be myself and let my freak flag fly, everyone else who is there with you is the same on some level," explains Kaitlin Czurylo, a Disney blogger known as @wishuponstarrynight on Instagram and resides in Chicago, "I can dress head-to-toe Disney, skip to Fantasyland to ride the tea cups, eat way too many sweets (and chicken tenders), and meet a princess. Like, come on! I get to be that second grader again, playing around in a whole world created to inspire the love of magic in everyone."

In 2018 Disney announced the rise in park admission prices, which upset several people. The reason was in hopes of helping with crowds with the upcoming opening of Star Wars' Galaxy Edge, in summer of 2019. Disney implemented new ways to control entry into the park, including prices, hoping that it would create a balance between both parks. The highly-anticipated Galaxy Edge spans fourteen acres and will merge the popular theme of Tomorrowland and Star Wars. The price for an Signature Annual Passport increased from \$849 in 2017 to \$999 in 2018.

"The prices going up at Disney don't get to me. I pay it and move on," describes Jenny Flake, a Disney food blogger, who posts all delicious snacks on her Instagram account @disneyhungry.

The craze for the culture does not end here, as several people across the country travel to conventions such as the D 23 Expo in Anaheim, which merges all things Disney under one roof including Pixar, Marvel, and Star Wars. The expo features benefits to fans as it pushes previews of upcoming films

as well as additions to parks across the world.

"The nostalgia and romanticizing of my experiences there will always make it worth to me. Will I need to cut back on trips? Yes. But I would never stop going to Disney."

explains Kaitlin.

Conventions and museums have also become an important way to stay connected to the magic for fans who do not live near a Disney park.

The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco opens the door for Disney fans to experience a timeline of Walt Disney through his ups and downs. With new refreshments to the exhibitions, two to three times a year, visitors embody the history of their favorite characters and the man behind it all. Opening in Spring of 2019, Mickey Mouse: From Walt to the World, the new exhibition to the museum will give the world a view into the character who shaped art and entertainment over the past nine decades.

"The museum was created by Walt's daughter Diane Disney Miller, so it is a biography of Walt Disney's life through his daughter's

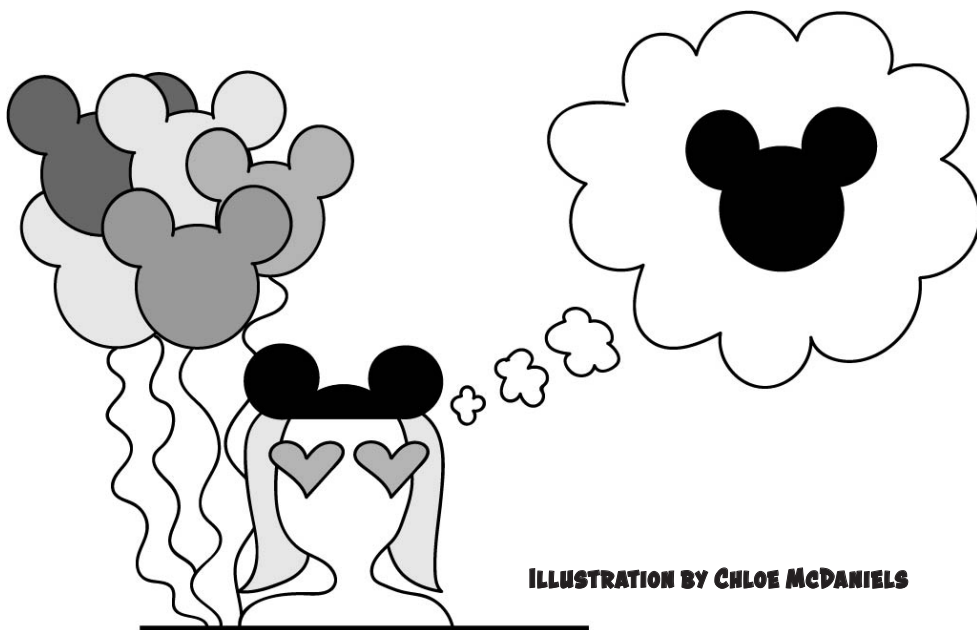
eyes," explains Kirsten Komoroske, the executive director at the Walt Disney Family Museum. "We have a lot of audio from Walt Disney himself and it is interesting to hear his story form himself, a lot of people want to get inspired."

As new additions continue to emerge throughout the upcoming decades, Disney continues to influence people and instills their desire to never grow up.

"Disney, to me, is the ultimate comfort. I know the movies, I know the history, I know the parks. On the whole, Disney sparks joy and happiness... what's so wrong with that." says Czurylo.



"YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING. IT IS NOT ABOUT THE LINES, THE PRICES, THE HORRIBLE PAIN IN YOUR LEGS WHEN IT'S ALL DONE. IT'S ABOUT THE PEOPLE YOU'RE WITH, IF YOU LOVE THEM YOU'LL HAVE A GREAT TIMES."
-NOELLE VILLALOBOS



EVENTS

MUSIC

APRIL 3

T-PAIN AT THE REGENCY BALLROOM

APRIL 5

CASS MCCOMBS AT THE FILLMORE

APRIL 6 & 7

ANDREW JACKSON JIHAD AT THE CHAPEL

APRIL 9

GIRLPOOL AT THE INDEPENDENT

APRIL 10

THE PIXIES W/ WEEZER AT THE ORACLE ARENA

APRIL 19

EARL SWEATSHIRT AT THE REGENCY BALLROOM
UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA AT THE GREEK THEATRE
SNOOP DOGG AT THE ORACLE ARENA

APRIL 22

THE 1975 AT THE BILL GRAHAM CIVIC CENTER

APRIL 22

ICEAGE AT THE NEW PERISH

*SEE WWW.BANDSINTOWN.COM FOR MORE INFO



ON CAMPUS

APRIL 9

WRITERS SERIES AT JACK ADAMS HALL

APRIL 9

OFF TOP TUESDAY AT THE DEPOT

APRIL 22

ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR AT THE DEPOT

APRIL 24

BROKEN MIC AT THE DEPOT

APRIL 24

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE RECITAL IN
KNUTH HALL

FREE

APRIL 1

CONCERT AT THE MAKE-OUT ROOM

APRIL 2

BREWCAD E FREEGAME NIGHT

APRIL 3

FREE YOGA & COFFEE AT SOMA LULU-
LEMON

APRIL 4

THROWBACK THURSDAY AT VIRGIL'S

APRIL 8

CYBERPUNK CINEMA NIGHT

APRIL 9

PERFECTLY QUEER: LGBTQ READING
SERIES

APRIL 11

ORINDA THEATRE MOVIE NIGHT

APRIL 13

OUTDOOR ROLLER SKATE GROOVE

*SEE SF.FUNCHEAP.COM FOR MORE INFO

ONLINE



A VERY EXPENSIVE HAYSTACK BY AMELIA WILLIAMS

San Francisco is one of those places that really is just as gang-busters as the folklore and grape vine portray them to be. It is also one of the most expensive. Living here without a tech salary means you have to get creative when rent is due. Communal living and intentional communities have helped hundreds of people around the city stay in a place that inspires and sustains them by shacking up with sometimes dozens of strangers. These people are drag performers, art therapists, tech startup guys, and gardeners. What could possibly entice people to forsake their personal space? For some it was the city's business opportunities, for others they were escaping monotony, and some just wanted to emulate the hippies of the 1960s. Read up on why seven individuals choose communal living, and what the future holds for them.



RETRO GAMING GAINING A 1UP BY JOSHUA CHAN

For many, video games are nostalgic, as much a part of the living room as the television. But the rise of new technology could leave many older games unplayable, especially in the digital era. The closure of Nintendo's Wii Shop Channel earlier this year is a stark reminder of the fact that as more and more games are hosted online, server shutdowns could lead to large swaths of gaming history being left in the dark. In this article, writer Joshua Chan finds where future challenges for games preservation lie in the digital-focused future. The future of gaming might be on the horizon, but these two groups are also making sure that gaming's past can also co-exist in the present, for generations to come.

BEYOND THE STORY



BEYOND THE STORY WITH JACOB TUCKER

Go Beyond the Story with our Multimedia Editor, Jacob Tucker, as he sits down with Xpress reporters and asks the questions that didn't make the published cut. This semester he sits down with former Editor in Chief, Boone Ashworth and current Social Media Editor Amelia Williams. While Ashworth opens up to Tucker on his story, "Out of the Fire, Up in the Air," in the episode "Up in Flames," about how the Carr Fires of 2018 had affected him and his family, Williams delves into the pros and cons of communal living in San Francisco. See both episodes and the other five episodes online!

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