

X P R E S S

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY



MAY 2019

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Here, we question everything. On a local level, we wondered why our campus gives platforms for certain voices, and how San Franciscans afford the perpetually rising rent. Living in the center of a tech-obsessed universe, we speculated about how tech is changing us on a day-to-day basis: Will robots be the new baristas? Will ride-sharing services replace hefty-priced ambulance rides? From languages eternally lost, to living with a serious mental illness, *Xpress* inquired as to whether change is always for the better.

But through hopeful pursuit, we discovered some voices of positive impact. Between all the riff raff, kick-ass women are standing up for their voices to be heard—either through punk music or trading in their feet for wheels.

Earlier this year, my grandpa passed away. While my family was going through his stacks and stacks of books, letters, and papers, we found something remarkable: A to-do list. Of the long list—written in his delicate, shaky cursive—here are a few of my favorites: Conquer a long held fear. Try therapy. Reposition yourself as an optimist.

*forgive someone
smile more*

At eighty years old, my grandpa was still working to better himself. He knew himself to be a work in progress, a constant change in motion. This semester, I tried to incorporate parts of his to-do list into my own, questioning who I was daily. Let us all remain works in progress, never fully satisfied with the answers.

This May is bittersweet for *Xpress*—much of the staff, including myself, is graduating. I am so immensely thankful for all those who worked day & night this semester. Exhausting as it was, we pulled off some beautiful work and I couldn't be more proud. To my editorial team, go home and get a full night's rest, *finally*. It is well-deserved. To the writers and photographers who gave it their all, thank you for reminding me of why I do this. To Cruze (pictured left), thank you for the pure love and much-needed days in the park. And to our advisor, Don Menn, thank you for impelling me to discover my capability and reassuring me day in and day out. I am eternally grateful.

Cheers, everyone. It's time to celebrate.

Annie

—Annie Gieser
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absorbed fertility of soul
fathom the fragility of my leaves.
reflection, eye the beauty of the fallen sun caressing me soft,
one by one delicate petals soaked
with desire to thrive.

superior to the horizon ——

a straight line

prised symmetry of light

shun through glass

imagined to constrain my roots.

glistening armor —— wet

not drenched but

dewy to succeed structure of complexity.

intoxicated by sight of rays

“don’t trail the clouds”

beautifully surprised through simple knowledge

stretching within the pot.

sultry exhibitor

i spring from spiritual, mental, physical and emotional elements

through endless creation.

i’d drown

if i allowed myself to indulge

all the water they’ve forced on me.

my bud will blossom.

my beauty will grow younger.

infinite living beyond,

beyond the window-sill.

connection lost at dusk

until dawn.

growth has become simple, again.

no need to fear, i have no feet

on the ground

they’ve situated ——

metal vessel bottom.

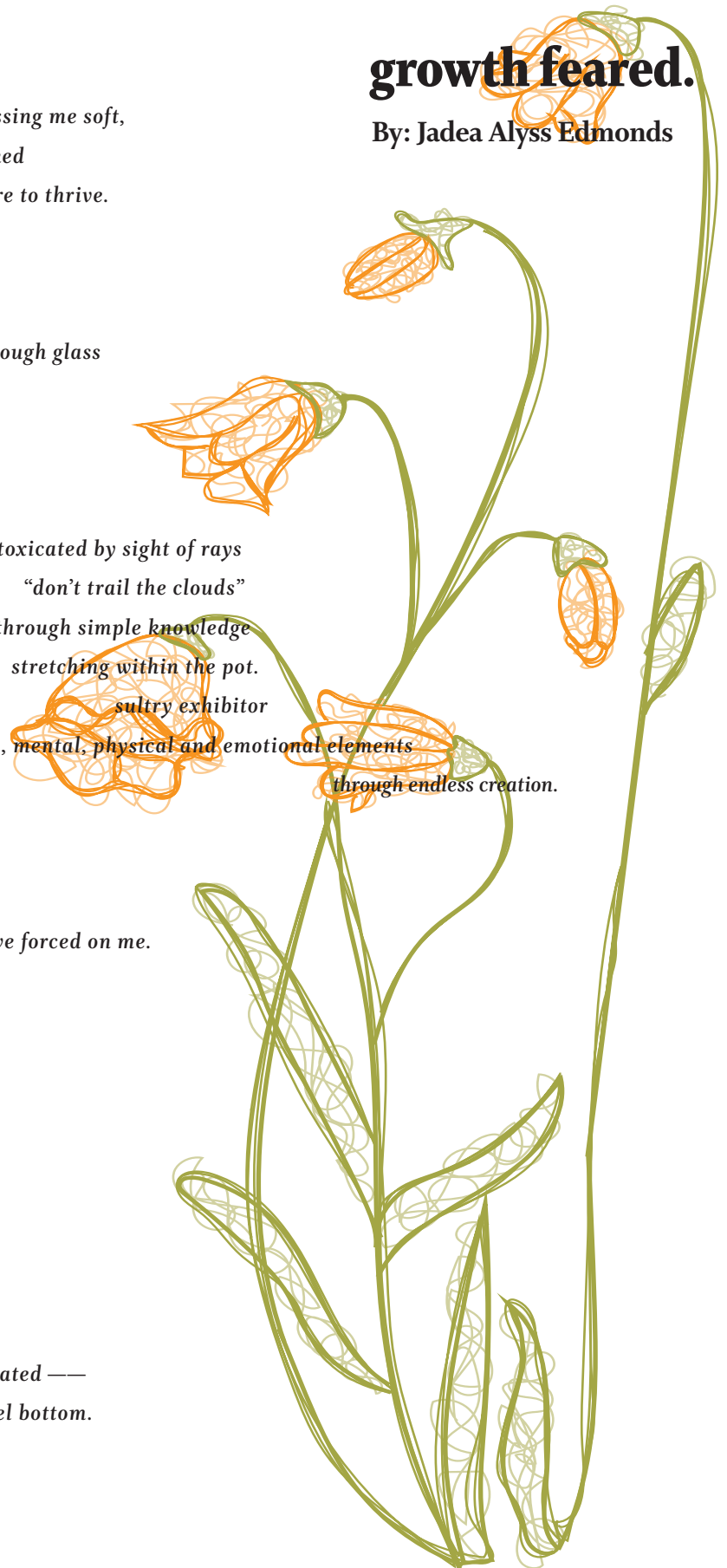
only to wait for tomorrow

to substitute simple for complex

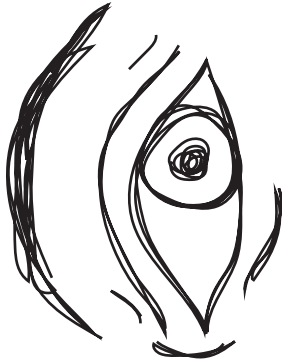
growth feared.

growth feared.

By: Jadea Alyss Edmonds



He's Come to Get Me



In the park I felt a breeze
from your hands
fire emanating from your eyes
& I knew you still felt nothing. Ached

all over
dry and torn, I went back to
the dance floor with the stained glass windows
echoes tricking me into
believing I meant something more
“but that piece just isn’t there.” A

tired song played
over the crowd of red eyes
wishing for me to fail
it was my drink i slipped on, i think
though i know there must’ve been
glass
& blood somewhere.

I knew he was never going to get me.

By: Max Alexander Kennedy

CHLOE CARES

I really do care

DEAR CHLOE,

FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A MAN HITTING ON YOU IN PUBLIC? A LOT OF STRAIGHT GUYS WILL ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO APPROACH AS MANY GIRLS AS THEY CAN BECAUSE IT'S BOUND TO WORK EVENTUALLY, BUT I'M WONDERING IF MOST WOMEN FIND BEING APPROACHED BY MEN TO BE ANNOYING AND POSSIBLY THREATENING. WHEN, IF EVER IS IT APPROPRIATE FOR A MAN TO TALK TO A WOMAN HE DOESN'T KNOW IN PUBLIC?

-SINGLE LIFE

Dear Single Life,

Speaking from my experience, it is more about the way a man approaches me, starting with the first thing he says, that make or break how comfortable I feel. It's when I get cat-called or men are aggressive from the start that I begin to feel threatened. Because ninety percent of the time that I reject a man, they become even more aggressive and turn hateful. First and foremost, this game of persistently hitting on women, to me, borders harassment. Don't be the guys bothering all the girls at the club so you can get some action. Secondly, if you approach a woman, pay close attention to how the woman you plan on approaching is reacting. Has she even seen you yet? Has she smiled or gestured you over? Some girls could be out having a girls night or, making sure we don't assume anyone's sexual preference, is not attracted to men. Then, pay close attention to how she is acting through your interaction, does she seem comfortable to you, whether it be making eye contact with you or her friends? Also take in the context of the time, place and setting. More so often, I get uncomfortable when men hit on me during my routine because I'm afraid they will know what routes I take, which has actually caused me to change the bus I take to work. Sometimes some girls aren't so subtle and some girls aren't so uncomfortable, but like I said, pay close attention to how she is feeling and never approach her from behind or catch her off-guard because I guarantee you she will be uncomfortable from the start.

- C

DEAR CHLOE,

I'M IN LOVE WITH ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS, BUT ALSO THIS FRIEND USED TO DATE ANOTHER ONE OF MY CLOSE FRIENDS. WHAT DO I DO?

-FRIEND IN LOVE

Dear Friend in Love,

You can't help your feelings for someone, but you can control whether or not you act on those feelings. How both your friend and the person you are in love with are coping with and processing their relationship should be a deciding factor in whether or not you should express your feelings to this person. I suggest you take into consideration how your other friend would feel if you acted on these feelings. If you are worried that asking them might cause problems, it could be a sign that you are treading in a dangerous territory. Even though you are entitled to your feelings, you can still be cautious about who you are hurting in the process. Also, weigh in how this might affect your friendship with your best friend. Are the feelings mutual? If not, you might be risking potentially hurting two friendships. For me, acting on feelings with friends has only made things worse, but also my experiences are not the same as everyone and some friendships can blossom into healthy romantic relationships. Step back and really consider the things at risk and if they weigh out the potential problems that can arise. Make sure to take of yourself and do whatever is necessary to process however which way the situation plays out—good or bad. If you do end up deciding against telling your bestfriend you are in love with them, it might be beneficial for you to get some space for them and see other people. I suggest you try to detach yourself from this sticky situation, momentarily, to help clear your head. I wish you the best of luck and may love be on your side!

- C



DEAR CHLOE,

I'M SLOWLY FEEL MY PARTNER DRIFTING AWAY FROM ME, (NOT AS CLOSE AS WE WERE) IS THIS BECAUSE SHE IS WANTING SOMETHING ELSE THAN ME? OR AM I HAVING EXPECTATIONS THAT THEY AREN'T AWARE OF?

-DRIFTING PARTNER

Dear Drifting Partner,

To me, it sounds like you and your partner need to sit down and have a talk about each other's feelings. First, I would try to step back and see if you are expecting things that you haven't been communicating with her. Second, sit her down and see if she is doing the same with you. The problem, possibly, for both of you seems to be expecting something without telling each other what it is. They can't read your mind, and sometimes need to be asked. Hopefully this can bring you back together and you can both strive in being better partners together. Be aware though that sometimes people can't always meet your expectations, even if they try, and that is okay. You try to work things out from there and see what new possibilities can bring you back together. But first, try by talking.

- C

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



Women on wheels

A photo series by Mira Laing

Alina Mayer is photographed with her skateboard in Venice Beach, California.



Patricia Batchelor is photographed in her car in Gardena, California.



Colleen Jones poses for a portrait at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, California.



Alice Thiu poses for a portrait with her custom-made bike from her bicycle company THESIS at Crissy Field in San Francisco, California.

Words in Red

Editorial and photo by Amelia Williams



Cynthia Gradilla, 24 (left)
Tiphane Coles, 21 (right)

The Monday morning pro-life advocates came to campus, I got my period. I had been anxiously awaiting its arrival for the last two weeks, and smiled as I looked down at my bloody underwear. I am an unwed, twenty-four-year-old living at home trying to finish my bachelor's. I am no one's idea of a mother. But I would not have to make that decision today. As I stepped out into the quad and threw away my tampon wrapper, there it was. A looming, hexagonal display of death, gaslighting, and guilt.

Images of fetuses, ranging from ten to twenty-two weeks, are blown up to the size of adults on tarps on poles and neighbored with archive pictures of Holocaust victims, Jim Crow lynched bodies, and the Rwandan genocide. There are police officers everywhere, standing under trees in twos and threes with arms crossed. The pro-life advocates are shockingly average people. You would see them in line at the grocery store, or the farmer's market. There are GoPros on tripods set up in a perimeter, facing the tides of students. When asked, they give fake names, as our *Golden Gate Xpress* staff have debunked. Some of them hover around the perimeter of their banners, protected by metal roadblockers, beckoning to whoever will listen and passing out pamphlets. You wouldn't be able to hear them, however, over the screaming of our student body.

"You should be ashamed of yourselves! You're a fucking disgrace!"

"You're living in a liberal bubble!"

That's a fair point. San Francisco is not the Midwest, the South, the East Coast, or even like a lot of the rest of California. San Francisco State is a campus that has suffered violence and starvation for the well-being and education of its students, so why would we let Evangelical-backed go about their business?

Some students claimed the group, Project Truth, was violating the First Amendment. As many valid points were made about the use of triggering pictures of aborted fetuses and the allusions to white supremacist movements like Nazi Germany and Jim Crow laws, these people are entitled to their right to tell this to us. They were called slurs, expletives, and derogatory names, and they paid to be here. A vast majority of students were opposed, offended and enraged.

It is, unfortunately, their First Amendment right to speak their minds, and our campus allowed them the space to do so.

At the time of writing this, it is Wednesday, April 17, the last day they were scheduled to protest for an alleged eleven hours a day. On Monday they took it down before the 4 p.m. rain, and on Tuesday they were gone by midday, replaced by three separate inflatable obstacle courses for the students. Were they for us as a reward for our activism or a consolation prize to our trauma? **X**

Need an Emergency Lyft?

Story by Megan Jimenez

Photos by Ellie Doyen

Nothing says ‘welcome home’ more than throwing up a week’s worth of food.

Sheila Huitron was puking her guts out for days, upon her return to San Francisco after a couple weeks’ long vacation to Indonesia.

“I couldn’t keep any food down at all,” she stresses. “Because it lasted for days, it was finally time to try to go to the doctor.”

Huitron is a nineteen-year-old student at SF State and, like many at this campus, had moved away from her family in Southern California. While living in the Bay Area, she has built a strong network of friends and maintained a comfortable relation with her landlady, but still has no direct access to a car.

At the urging of one of her best friends, twenty-three-year-old SF State student Anthony Gamboa, they arranged to leave for the hospital. An ambulance was absolutely out of the question.

“If I’m not unconscious and I’m still breathing, Uber Express me,” Huitron laughs. “I’ve had so many experiences with needing to go to the hospital. I can’t afford that.”

“If I’m not unconscious and I’m still breathing, Uber Express me... I’ve had so many experiences with needing to go to the hospital. I can’t afford that.”

-Sheila Huitron

So, Gamboa ordered the Uber ride that would take them straight to the Daly City Kaiser Permanente Urgent Care. They informed the driver that it was an emergency situation and they needed to get there as quickly as possible. Huitron felt violently sick the entire time, and had no idea what was wrong.

When at the hospital, she gets looked after by a medical professional, and receives IV treatment for dehydration. After a few tests, nothing is conclusive, and the two of them order another ride home to Parkmerced.

The round trip cost for emergency transportation? Approximately forty dollars.

Twitter has been circulating a popular tweet by @reesxe that reads, “If I have a medical emergency don’t U DARE call an ambulance y’all better uber my ass to the hospital bc we not about to pay 5,000 for a ride in the wee-yoo wagon.” Despite slight exaggeration, the sentiment received about 75,000 retweets and 277,000 likes.

According to Nick Rapoza, a kinesiology major working as an emergency medical transport (EMT), the average cost for an ambulance ride is one thousand to two thousand dollars, easily, without any form of health insurance.

“The biggest expense is the monitoring during the ride,” Rapoza says solemnly.

The price difference can be attributed to labor costs and monitoring devices that ambulance companies can perform. Rideshare drivers can offer you a cheaper seat, and perhaps some complimentary snacks.

Gamboa wholeheartedly agrees with Huitron’s decision to call an Uber to the hospital. To him, an ambulance is not even an option.

“I would also wait to the point I would definitely need to go to the hospital, before making the decision to Uber,” says Gamboa.

More folks seem inclined to put their faith into the hands of rideshare drivers over licensed medical staff. An ambulance is an extra expense most working-class people cannot foot the bill for. Let alone university students living in the Bay Area.

The San Francisco County Fire Department lists fee estimates from 2018 for ambulance services. A ‘Basic Life Service’ ride in San Francisco can cost \$2,098 total. There is also a \$39.73 per mile charge, and a ‘treatment without



Paramedics arrive in ambulance to CPMC Van Ness Campus.

transportation' service can cost \$466.

Now, emergency is not a universal term. There can many different situations categorized as emergency situations, but which ones warrant an actual need for ambulance services?

Most ridesharing app users take a vehicle from Point A to Point B, no medical services needed. Most drivers expect the same, although things do not always turn out that way.

Alex Guibert, a twenty-six-year old SF State cinema student, has driven for Uber for about a year. It is a convenient job for him to have while he is enrolled in school.

"Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, it's pretty cool," Guibert says smiling. He attests that most of his customers are respectful, and in some situations, can actually help him network in the realm of cinematography.

"I did have one experience when picking up a customer," Guibert begins slowly, "She sent me a request in the app that said, 'Please pull up to the curb as close as possible.'"

Guibert says he assumed there was some sort of disability involved with the request, so he pulled up to the curb as per the riders' request. He describes a woman wobbling toward the car being supported by a man, and the man helped her into the car.

"She gets in by herself and goes, 'I need you to drive kinda fast, I think my ankle is broken,'" Guibert recounts, a bit sheepishly.

Unfortunately, there was not much that Guibert could

do about the speed. He picked up his rider on a busy street in downtown San Francisco, during major afternoon traffic congestion. The destination was an urgent care facility in the Marina district.

"I'm not like an ambulance, I don't have any bells and whistles to get people to move," the Uber driver remarks, recalling the nervousness and responsibility he felt in that moment.

This is a mild call as far as ridesharing medical emergencies go. Guibert even admitted he once drove himself to a hospital for a broken finger, out of necessity.

"But I don't have the heart to say no," Guibert admits, his tone getting soft, "I feel obligated to see them through to their destination."

Though Uber may be the cheaper alternative, ambulance services provide more than just a ride to the hospital. Unlike Guibert, Rapoza works as an EMT who takes patients between medical facilities and, occasionally, handles emergency calls.

"I want to work for 911," Rapoza says good-naturedly, "But someone has to get that old lady somewhere."

Rapoza has one of those personalities that puts everyone else at ease. He's cordial and charismatic, with a personability that clearly helps in his line of work.

"People get confused about what an EMT is," he says, "It's not our job to diagnose people. We can't even diagnose someone as dead."

He further explains that the role of an EMT is to treat their symptoms until they can be transferred into the hands of an advanced medical professional. They are not authorized to determine if someone is officially deceased, but rather can perform up to seven minutes of resuscitation in a revival attempt.

EMTs are usually first responders to a medical transportation scene, and possess the most basic level of medical know how. Rapoza took a rigorous eight week course to pass his school certification exam, and then took a national certification to confirm his medical prowess. Generally, EMTs are not certified to perform treatments involving needles or breaking the skin.

“There are four questions we usually ask,” the kinesiology student explains. These questions generally involve asking potentially disoriented clients their name, the current date, why they need medical services, etc. If the person in need cannot respond coherently to any or all of the questions, they may be considered a danger to themselves, or others.

“If you can’t vouch for yourself, we can’t let you go,” he says shrugging.

It is his job to be a patient advocate, to verbally check in with anyone requiring their services on scene and direct them to the best course of action suiting their immediate health. Patient advocacy means fighting for someone’s well-being, even if they might be resistant.

Health is the immediate priority, money is not.

For some situations, like broken bones and nausea, it’s possible to avoid taking an ambulance. Consciousness might be a good place to draw the line at ‘emergency.’

“If you can handle it, handle it. But don’t put someone’s

life over money,” Rapoza says sternly.

Though far from their originally intended purpose, ride-sharing companies may be recognizing how they contribute to the medical community.

As of April 22, 2019, Uber announced it would work with city officials in San Francisco to improve emergency response times. Uber will provide rider location data to the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management and RapidSOS, an emergency communication company, and will directly contact local police officers.

Uber will add an emergency button to the app, which sends driver, rider, and vehicle information to the aforementioned parties. The company has established this feature in response to reported sexual assaults by drivers, as well as any general emergency. However, spotty data usage may deter the effectiveness of location finding.

In addition to its usual ride offering services, Uber Health is a more recent initiative launched by the company. This is not an emergency situation service. Uber Health aims to take patients and caregivers to and from their medical appointments, with the ability to schedule rides ahead of time. The company has hired two healthcare professionals, Aaron Crowell and Dan Trigub (from Lyft), to their staff to aid their introduction into medical transport.

Ridesharing services are evolving to meet consumer demand. Uber drivers might have to learn how to adjust. Guibert offers some advice to other Uber drivers that may get a rider in distress, or in need of medical attention.

He smiles warmly and assures, “keep your cool, it’s just another ride.” **X**



A person exits an Uber in front of Zuckerberg General Hospital.



ROASTS AND ROBOTS:

HOW AUTOMATION MIGHT CHANGE THE WAY WE EAT

Story by Joshua Chan Photos by Niko LaBarbera

On Market Street in San Francisco near the Montgomery BART station, there's a tiny, sleek storefront with a black sign reading "CAFE X." It blends in with pretty much every other piece of brutalist, almost oppressively gray concrete architecture around it. At first glance, it looks like it's almost hiding from the towering skyscrapers that are ever so common in this part of the city.

But inside, it's a very different story.

The small storefront has two large televisions plastered on it and two short kiosks that stand diminutively—their screens prompting people to customize their drink. Unlike most coffee shops, there aren't that many people inside, nor are there many people working inside. Instead, the people that would normally make the coffee at this shop are replaced by a white, robotic arm that waves back at customers when they look at it. People go up to the kiosks, pressing through a cavalcade of options for customizing drinks: three different types of coffee bean options, oat milk, or organic cow milk, a size for your drink, and a choice of extra flavoring. Like every other tech company from Silicon Valley, there's also an app to mobile order if you want to avoid the wait.

Cafe X is one of a few businesses looking to further automate the restaurant industry, although it still relies on some human involvement. Sam Blum, marketing and communications manager for Cafe X, explained that human involvement is used to create a certain atmosphere within the shop, and still has workers that restock items such as plastic lids and napkins inside.

"By automating the highly repetitive tasks in the beverage making process, our team of coffee bar specialists, who work at our locations, can focus on coffee education and customer service," Blum said. "Similar to high-end retail, providing the best possible experience not only for customers who are getting beverages to go but also for those who

wish to stay. We staff all our locations."

Creator is an automated San Francisco burger restaurant, which recently got a positive review from Soleil Ho, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* new food critic. For Creator, automation allows for higher quality food at a fairly low price—all burgers are just six bucks.

"At Creator we are able to spend much more on the cost of ingredients than other restaurants at our price point, and scale up advanced culinary techniques that are nearly impossible by hand," said Steve Frehn, co-founder of Creator with Emunah Hauser, their communications manager. "This means we're making it more accessible for more people to support ranchers and food producers who are doing the right thing—and making these high quality ingredients and culinary techniques available to more people."

But what about scenarios in which human involvement might not actually provide more benefit? Most people would point to a vending machine, but most vending machines don't usually dispense full meals. That's where a company like Redwood City's Chowbotics has decided to focus its business. Chowbotics specializes in vending machines (they've named theirs Sally) that make prepped salad or rice bowls with other pre-sliced ingredients. Unlike competitors such as Cafe X, Chowbotics seems to have focused much of its marketing material around healthcare for businesses rather than hospitality.

"Healthcare has a need for twenty-four hour service because they have night shifts," said Emily Baratzadeh, marketing manager for Chowbotics. "Hospitals don't sleep, so offering a fresh food solution available for twenty-four hours is critical."

When asked about the impact of automation on labor, Baratzadeh stressed that there still needs to be human involvement at some point, especially when it comes to stocking the Sally vending machines with precut ingredients.

“Our robot really enhances the production of customizable meals, but it doesn’t replace the human element,” Baratzadeh said. “You still need to chop and prep and cook the food, but it allows you to have someone put together their own food.”

Outside of the healthcare fields, there’s also potential for the use of automation when it comes to food safety. For example, Jeff Clark, a food safety researcher at the University of Arkansas, recently wrote for Food Safety News about the potential of automation to make food service safer. Clark notes in the article that “human hands have an instrumental role in contributing to risk of foodborne illness transmission and foodborne illness outbreaks,” with much of the risk relating to the inconsistency of hand washing.

“The idea is that a large number of foodservice health outbreaks are human errors,” Clark said. “The idea being that automation will maintain that is more difficult to maintain with humans.”

However, Clark still believed that there is still the need for humans, and that jobs aren’t necessarily just going to disappear with the rise of automation. And such belief seems to check out, according to statistics from the Brookings Institute, an economics and policy focused think-tank, which found in its recent report on automation and artificial intelligence that automation would have a fairly high impact on food service compared to other types of jobs.

“We find that food service occupations tend to be some of the most exposed to potential disruption from labor-saving technologies, with even the least exposed job in the group—chefs and head cooks—having an above average automation potential of 53.7 percent,” said Jacob Whiton, one of the report’s co-authors.

Furthermore, it’s usually more repetitive tasks that are more conducive to automation, but that hasn’t necessarily stopped its use in serving food.

“Back-of-house jobs like line cooks and dishwashers are the most at risk, which makes sense given that common tasks in these occupations

tend to be fairly repetitive and routine, and are therefore more amenable to replacement by robotics,” Whiton said. “That said, wait staff and counter attendants too are ‘high risk’ by our reckoning, meaning that more than 70 percent of tasks in those jobs are potentially automatable.”

Clark cited a 2015 report from Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor David Autor to say that there was historical precedent to the idea that automation wouldn’t necessarily replace workers, but that they’d be needed in different places. For example, Clark cited an example of the fear of automation taking away textile jobs in the 18th and 19th century, where the ratio of population to jobs increased, and there were eventually more jobs and less people to fill them.

According to Michael Chui, a partner with the McKinsey Global Institute, a consulting firm that analyzes management decisions, one of the best ways to mitigate automation’s effects is to retrain workers.

“Number one is making sure that, if you believe that there will be enough work to do but that type of work will change over time, and that if activity changes, then how do we put resources such as money, courses, time, and support in order to help workers develop the skills of the future, so I think that’s high on the list,” Chui said. “Along with that comes a whole bunch of other things to worry about: If I’m spending hours learning a new skill, how do I make sure I have enough money to feed my family?”

The rise of automation in labor will still take time, further according to Chui, and as such, concerns about automation taking over labor might be overblown. Chui used the widespread growth of technology adoption like the personal computer, which didn’t necessarily wipe out certain types of jobs such as bookkeeping and typewriter manufacturing in an instant when it was first introduced. Chui believes that the sentiment could be similar for automation and labor.

“It’s because we’re people. As a result, we think it’s important to take time seriously. It would take years, it doesn’t happen overnight.” **X**





PUNKS AGAINST PATRIARCHY

STORY BY CHLOE MCDANIELS

PHOTOS BY JAMES CHAN

In a dark bar illuminated by neon lights, bodies clad in an array of colored leather and latex make their way from the wood-top bar to the front of the stage. A purple light casts down as NEON takes their positions on stage. Drummer Chelsey Del Castillo smacks her drumsticks together to click the band into their first song. Marissa Magic's sharp and short guitar chords echo Rosie Cochinx's heavy bass riffs as high-pitched muffled screams spew out of Grace Ambrose's mouth.

An intimate room of banging heads and jumping bodies riles up, but a mosh pit has yet to form. Mindful of the bodies around them, "excuse me" is repeated as people migrate through the crowd. Featuring Drama, La Sucias, and Special Interest, the bill for the Ivy Room on April 16th consisted mostly of female or non-binary folks—something that NEON and similar bands try to curate into their own intersectional punk scene.

Female bands and musicians in the San Francisco Bay Area are trying to make an inclusive space—a community that is independently created and aims to dismantle the capitalistic, racist, sexist, and patriarchal punk scene.

Being excluded from line-ups, turning shadowing opportunities into sexual innuendos, preying off young fans, and expecting that these women can't play simply because of their gender are some of the constant struggles women face in the punk scene.

Growing weary of being taken advantage of, being told how to play their music, or assuming that their gender has any correlation with how well they play, these bands started to curate their own punk scene that is far from the typically male dominated one.

In the early 1990s, Riot Grrrl, a feminist driven movement, was formed—which aimed to revolutionized the male dominated punk scene. A band that operated in the Riot Grrrl movement, Bikini Kill, did not make their music for anyone to like it, they just wanted to make music for women who were angry with the cis-male dominated sexist scene. In 1991, Riot Grrrl and singer of Bikini Kill, Kathleen Hanna, wrote a manifesto for the band's fanzine with a few demands that are parallel to what these women are still trying to curate today.

According to Chelsey, facing sexism from male sound engineers is the most classic experience she and other females face when working the show: "They talk to you as if you don't know what your instrument should sound like or how it works, and even if you don't know what they are talking about they get upset at you," says Rosie. According to Rosie, it comes down to microaggressions—when men think that they are being nice, but what they are saying is really off-putting.

Oakland-based punk duo Kayla Billos and Xaina, have faced sexism not only in their current band, Stranger Than Fact, but throughout their punk career, which dates back decades to when they were children.

"If I knew you were going to be so good I would have mixed you better," or "wow, that was so good, I'm sorry I told you what to do at soundcheck," Xaina recalls on working with male sound engineers.

"You'll never be a musician first," says Roary Rackett, a former drummer of Stranger Than Fact.

Some male engineers at venues have tuned Kayla's drum kit without her permission. "We're not taken seriously," she says.

The idea that these women could possibly be good musicians is so far removed from their brains, Xaina echoes.

Sami Perez, 24



The discrimination varies from sub-genre to sub-genre, but in hardcore punk Xaina sees more overt sexism at shows. Brute violence with each other and stupidity and ignorance when it comes to understanding women—from being talked over to completely unlistened when she spoke up. The only way Xaina has seen women get attention in the hardcore scene is for them to be louder, drunker, and more aggressive than their male counterparts.

Sexism in the punk scene isn't just geared toward the women performing, but also extends to female sound engineers like Sami Perez, who recently recorded Stranger Than Fact's new album. For the past nine years, Perez worked her way from intern to engineer staff at the Women's Audio Mission (WAM) in the SoMa district of San Francisco. Through her connections at WAM, Perez worked her way into a job as a sound engineer at recording studio Tiny Telephone where she recorded Stranger Than Fact's album.

Sami says that she experiences sexism more from being a sound engineer than playing bass in her band The She's. "I've definitely gotten taken advantage of," Sami recalls of when some male sound engineers let her shadow them at venues. Meanwhile, they are feeding her drinks and some even expecting her to go home with them.

As a native to San Francisco, Perez says she has seen a progression of women getting involved in the music scene, which she attributes to the many girls and women WAM trains. "Every venue I go to and every studio I go to, there is a girl working there and we can talk about what it's like to be a girl in this industry," she recalls.

"A lot of these women bands deserve to be in the

mainstream," says Maggie Grabmeier, former singer and rhythm guitarist of the pop-punk band, The Total Bettys. But until they are given the opportunities by people with power in the mainstream, whether it be festival bookers, larger band's management, venues, or people who are choosing which music goes on the radio, they will remain in the dark, she explains, "It's hard to break into that world because it's harder to find success—the odds are stacked against you."

"The problem isn't that there aren't women doing these things, it's that there is sexism in hiring. It's certainly not womens' fault," Maggie adds.

When she had a say in what bands she could play with, Maggie would chose bands that had women, people of color, non-binary, and queer people. In the punk scene, this intersectional community has a do-it-yourself attitude, according to Rosie. They curate their own shows, promote themselves, and can stay true to their "silly messy" at-

titudes without worrying about not being taken seriously.

But a lot of the sexism in a scene is not something she can witness. It's when her band doesn't get booked, doesn't get paid, or the conversations behind their back is where sexism—living under the surface of the scene—according to Xaina.

Turning herself into a social experiment, Xaina found that as a sound engineer when she put a male name on a her resume she would get calls from the same companies she sent an identical resume but with her name, which received no call back.

Whether it be men in bands that prey on young fans or that one asshole who is drunk and moshing is not reciprocated, sexism bleeds from the stage to the crowd. According to NEON, they try really hard to play with bands and at spaces that they trust, but they don't always have control, especially when they are on tour.

"It's easy to surround yourself with a community of people that is diverse and inclusive," Maggie explains. "On a larger scale I feel like until other bands and promoters start taking it seriously, it is going to stay male dominated."

According to Stranger Than Fact, men need to be open to communication and listen to what these women are demanding: to be treated with respect and be seen as a musician first, not a woman. Tired of being excluded and not taken seriously, these women take matters into their own hands and create their own community that is nothing but inclusive. Bands and bookers need to think about who they are booking.

"It's not because we're not out there. Include us!" Xaina exclaims.

"The more you get to know your scene, especially in San Francisco, you'll get to know that there a tons of bands and tons of people who are really interested in it," reveals Maggie. "It might take a little digging if you are not familiar with it, but there is so much to offer here. No matter what your niche is, you will be able to find it."

It's not that it's not out there, but when all male bands don't have female bands included on the lineup, it forces these women to create their own inclusive scene.

"What it means to be a woman means so much more than just not being a man", Rosie explains. "It means taking into account that women consist of Latino women, indigenous women black women, trans women, fat women, women with disabilities and much more. All these things matter, so why just stop at women?"

To Chelsey, the cis-male dominated punk scene is not what defines punk, "Real punk, or the punk that I think is the realest, comes from those communities." **X**

"It's not because we're not out there. Include us!"

- Xaina

"A lot of these women bands deserve to be in the mainstream... It's hard to break into that world because it's harder to find success—the odds are stacked against you."

-Maggie Grabmeier



WHAT'S LOST IN TRANSLATION

STORY BY ANNIE GIESER
PHOTOS BY NIKO LABARBERA

More than a cluster of words or a set of grammatical rules, a language is a flash of the human spirit, the filter through which the soul of each particular culture reaches into the material world. A language is as divine and mysterious as a living creature. —Wade Davis

An act of decolonization is what Rocio Pacheco calls it. “It’s an act of self love, learning your language,” she suggests. “Even though, what’s the point? There’s no money, you’re not gonna find a job because you speak Nahuatl.”

Rocio’s right: What is the point of learning a dying language? *Dying*. Or, as others would say, endangered. As if these languages are beings themselves, trickling off the edge of our world one by one, with little hope in resuscitation.

Nahuatl is a language that originates in what is today Mexico, but what was once Aztec land. Although its speakers breach a million today, the numbers are dwindling. Fast. Rocio is one of the few applying jump-start cables to a language on its last breath.

“It’s still stigmatized and people don’t see a lot of opportunities coming out of it,” explains Rocio, her voice passionate and quick. She describes her father’s sadness over never learning Nahuatl—learning an indigenous language is “looked down upon” where he’s from in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Currently, there are approximately seven thousand languages spoken worldwide. Of those, “3,660—that is, more than half of now living languages—are currently threatened, endangered, moribund, or nearly extinct,” says linguistics discussion, *Language documentation twenty-five years on* by Frank Seifart, Nicholas Evans, Harald Hammarstrom, and Stephen C. Levinson. Moribund meaning the language is no longer being taught to children. The majority population of Earth only speaks thirty of those languages.

Anthropologist Wade Davis found that a different language goes extinct every two weeks. Two a month. Twenty-six a year. It is estimated that by the year 2100, half of the world’s languages will no longer exist.

On January 19, 2019, the United Nations declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages in order to call attention to this mass extinction.

But when we lose a language, it’s not just the words that disappears from our world. It’s not just symbols typed on a keyboard, written in ink, carved into a tablet.

“We’ve lost so much about what it is to be human,” expresses SF State anthropology lecturer, Niccolo Caldararo. He sits in his small office, walls lined with maps from all over the world, and speaks softly, with intent. “It’s very hard to have an identity, a group identity, without having the language. When our brains start to increase in size, back during *Homo habilis* more than two million years ago, we see that in the impressions of those brains, there’s already Broca’s area, which is the area of language acquisition. It may be that the reason that we got big brains was so we could communicate differently using different language and different concepts. That creation of worlds is something about being human.”

On his desk sits stacks and stacks of papers, and one book: *When Languages Die* by K. David Harrison. Dr. Caldararo describes how in the book, Harrison discusses languages from twenty thousand years ago that have no contemporary links, and so are indecipherable. An entire people’s language—stories, laws, books, letters—indecipherable. We’re

in the midst of this happening to a new language every two weeks. What it is to be human, *gone*.

“Looking around the globe,” writes Harrison in *When Languages Die*. “We see populations of people shifting en masse from speaking the language of their parents to speaking something else. As people exchange an ancestral tongue for the dominant language of their countries, they become culturally assimilated, linguistically homogenized.”

In the center of downtown Berkeley, California, Ayleng Giang sits at a metal table, bare-faced and speaking over the sound of a saxophone playing outside the BART station on a Sunday afternoon. Ayleng is half-Mien, a small, hill-tribe culture from China, but now is mainly throughout Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. She has never learned their language.

“When I was little my parents were trying to teach me,” Ayleng states. But being half-Mien and half-Chinese, her parents attempted to teach her both languages, on top of English. The confusion broke her down: “One time I said something in Mien to my Chinese grandmother and she was like, ‘I don’t understand what you’re saying,’ and I got really embarrassed! So I’m not gonna learn either of them, I’m just gonna speak English.”

That frustration and decision to stick with English is the symptom of a much larger systematic problem here: assimilation. In coming to America—or any major-language speaking country—people are giving up their languages, and by extension their culture, in order to accommodate to our way of life.

“I see as more generations are being born in America, it’s kind of trickling out,” says Ayleng. “Especially if they’re not from a community where there’s a lot of Mien people.”

Without an exact count, it is estimated by the Endangered Languages Project that there are between one thousand and ten thousand Mien speakers left on this planet. Ayleng suspects most of those speakers are still in Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand, not America. Here, it’s cultural assimilation and language homogenization, just as Harrison said.

Dr. Caldararo’s mother was an immigrant to America from Portugal, and yet, she did not teach him Portuguese. That generation wanted their children to integrate into American society without accents, he describes.

“That was my father’s family’s experience too,” he recalls of his parents. “It was okay to have a New York accent or Brooklyn or whatever, but it was not good to have an ethnic accent in America. And I think that that has affected all immigrant groups that come here—that you want to assimilate. That if you have an accent, it identifies you as an outsider.”

Lena Herzog is an artistic warrior at the center of the language battlefield. For the past twenty years, she’s dedicated herself to creating *Last Whispers*, *Oratorio for Vanishing Voices*, *Collapsing Universes*, and *a Falling Tree*—a four-dimensional (being forty-six minutes, it is dimensional in time and space) oratorio centered on language extinction. What began as listening to endangered languages in a photographer’s darkroom turned into a breathtaking project composed of the voices of endangered and extinct languages. From her perspective, the majority

of languages will be silenced much sooner than most think.

"Some people say half a century," she exhales from halfway across the world, as *Last Whispers* just finished its run in Geneva, Switzerland. "It all depends on climate change, of course. Because people abandon their place of origin and they go into other areas just because their crops don't grow anymore, because their place is flooded, and then they get absorbed into dominant culture nearby."

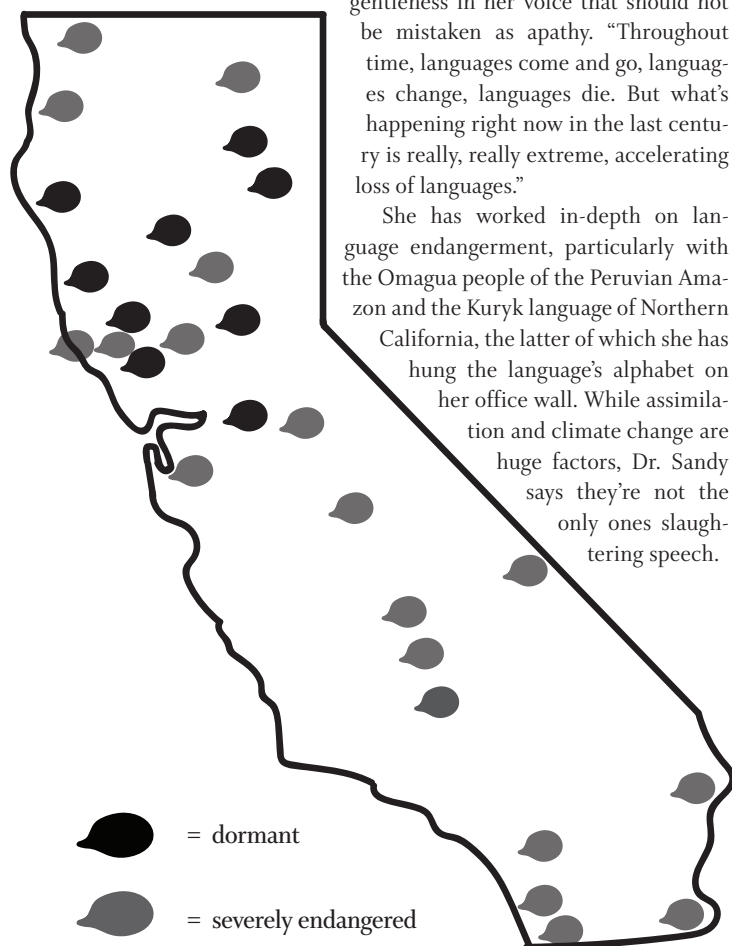
Climate change was such an overwhelming factor for Lena, that she implemented catastrophic climate events as the basis of her map in *Last Whispers*; the map that displays each at risk, endangered, severely endangered, dormant, and awakening language on the planet, fixated as glowing dots above a bleak Earth.

"I have to say that the unsung heroes in this case are the linguists who work in the field," Lena declares through her striking Russian accent. "There are very few of them, probably give or take a few dozen, it's about five hundred people in the world who are actually professional linguists of endangered languages."

In her office at SF State, Clare Sandy sits at her desk in the linguistics department. She's a lecturer here now, but is also one of the linguists Lena just praised.

"I believe that language is a human right," Dr. Sandy asserts, with a gentleness in her voice that should not be mistaken as apathy. "Throughout time, languages come and go, languages change, languages die. But what's happening right now in the last century is really, really extreme, accelerating loss of languages."

She has worked in-depth on language endangerment, particularly with the Omagua people of the Peruvian Amazon and the Kuryk language of Northern California, the latter of which she has hung the language's alphabet on her office wall. While assimilation and climate change are huge factors, Dr. Sandy says they're not the only ones slaughtering speech.



"Another pressure is economic pressure—people want to speak a majority language, which is totally reasonable," she suggests. "There's this idea that you can't speak more than one language or somehow it's a disadvantage to also speak your home language, which doesn't really seem to be worn out."

Rocio grew up learning two languages: English and Spanish. But when she got to college at SF State, she began questioning why Nahuatl was always left out of the narrative.

"I believe that language is a human right,"

-Dr. Sandy

"I feel like a lot was getting lost in translation," she mentions. Rocio decided to become the translator herself and learn a bit of Nahuatl, alongside others at SF State who shared the same sentiment. The idea turned itself into its own club—Nahuatl Tlahtocan, dedicated to learning the Nahuatl language and culture.

"With learning a language comes learning a culture and history," she describes of her time involved. "With the language comes a library of knowledge, and it's a perspective and a lens into another time period and world."

Another member of Nahuatl Tlahtocan, Alexis Manzanilla remembers her first time learning of Nahuatl was when her dad would read her children's books with Nahuatl words in them as a kid.

"My middle name is Xochitl, which means flower in Nahuatl," explains Alexis, smiling beneath her brown curly hair. "So because it's in my name, I feel like it's ingrained in me and part of my duty to learn about the culture, and preserve the language."

In the case for dying languages, cultures are at stake too. In fact, it's difficult to even separate the two.

"The language is the vehicle," explains Dr. Caldararo, fervor in his speech as he leans back in his desk chair. "Once it dies, once it has no speakers, everything's lost."

For those dedicating time to saving Nahuatl, learning the language means learning about their history, about their ancestors way of life.

"Just like when you learn Spanish, French, or some other language, there's certain words that you learn that there's no direct translation of in English," Alexis says, sure to get her words right of what she now describes a sort of non-religious religion for her. "The language totally embodies the culture by how many different meanings they have for different things and specific feelings and grammar."

As a linguist, Dr. Sandy is dedicated to preserving such semantics of dying languages. What's lost in translation is hopefully found through a linguist. Working in a community, linguists document all the internal systems of a language to create a sort of record. But to be clear, it's her job to document a language, not to save it. That responsibility lies in the hands of a language's people, she says.

Although Lena agrees, she believes there must be another factor involved:

"Power has to meet it, and it has to not just pretend to allow it, it has to really give it space, give it funds. And for that, our general value has to be that we welcome the idea that our family, our human family, is various. That there are so many voices in it."

When those two factors collide, saving a language is feasible. Rocio and Alexis are a part of that process now. What it is to be human, hanging on by a thread.

"It's given me such a greater sense of identity and something that I didn't know was missing from me," conveys Alexis. And although she's not fluent quite yet, she believes herself to be a lifetime learner of Nahuatl. "It has established indigeneity as part of my identity."

Identity can be so intertwined with a specific language. When the language dies, does that die too?

In advocacy for variousness in vernacular, Dr. Sandy refutes any theory that our world would have more peace if everyone could just understand each other.

"That doesn't really work because there's plenty of wars that take place between people who speak the same language," points out Dr. Sandy as she brings up one attempt at a universal language: Esperanto. "I heard of it almost like a joke, but people really do speak it. It's a constructed language, so people made it up out of bits and pieces of other languages."

***"If the worlds are vanishing all around you
and you don't know it, does it matter?"***

-Lena Herzog

At the International Cafe on Haight Street in San Francisco, sits men of three different generations: one elder, one middle-aged, one young. In the middle of them, placed high so the whole cafe can see, is the green and white flag of Esperanto—the language's flag, since no, there is not an official land for them.

Each came into learning Esperanto in different ways; one by browsing the internet, another from a brochure in a Tai Chi class, the third from an article in the East Bay Express. It's not surprising that none of

them learned of Esperanto the way people normally do—through family members, international travel, or high school Spanish class. Because this is not a normal language, and its loyal speakers deny any accusations of Esperanto homogenizing our tongues.

"That is absolutely not true," declares Charlie Galvin, the middle-aged man and longest Esperanto speaker of the three. "Esperanto is a window for those languages and cultures to reach out to a wider audience, because people who speak those languages can translate things into Esperanto and preserve their legends and things like that."

Sure, indigenous communities could translate their language into Esperanto. And Charlie argues that Esperanto is the neutral choice for translation, not having the ties of colonization and oppression like English or French. The three men go on to defend their constructed language, speaking of Esperantists desire to preserve dying languages, about indigenous stories that have been translated into Esperanto, of articles in their monthly magazine, *Monato*.

"The title of an opinion piece here is *A Monolingual, Monocultural, Monochrome World? No Thanks*," voices the youngest of the bunch, Kinen Carvala, translating the title from Esperanto to English. "Having a common language doesn't mean there has to be only that language."

Esperanto was invented by a Jewish man in Poland in the late nineteenth century with the idea that if everyone could understand each other, the world would have more peace. The irony of this "universal" language is that was constructed of only European languages. Perhaps that peace is easier found for a Frenchman than an indigenous one.

"Even if you have a universal language, separated people end up have their own differences and dialects," argues Dr. Sandy. "So it's almost like we need to speak differently from other people."

A need that's dying every two weeks.

"If the worlds are vanishing all around you and you don't know it, does it matter?" Lena ponders this, as she compares the question to the age old philosophical anecdote: if a tree falls in a forest and no one's around to hear it, does it make a sound? "I wanted to create something for them to *really* care. To *really* hear it—not just to listen to it but to really hear and to make them *real* for these people."

These people: the ones who wonder if any of this really matters. If entire languages, and by extension entire cultures, matter. *Last Whispers* is Lena's pursuit at discovering how humane humans really are toward one another. In addition to voices, the oratorio features actual sounds of trees falling and of supernovas, which are when stars explode and universes are destroyed.

"I found them hauntingly beautiful, these voices," Lena describes, with a sigh in the hopes that others feel the same. "It was a selfish thing. I wanted to hold on to them."

If Lena's act of selfishness saves even one language, perhaps the world ought to be a bit more selfish. **X**



A VERY EXPENSIVE HAYSTACK

Story By Amelia Williams

Photos By Niko LaBarbera

Bryan Steven Johnson Bradford, 27

In the Convent in San Francisco, morning prayers begin well after noon. The two dozen nuns live on two floors, in rooms that flank a main hallway. The confessional is on the ground floor, tucked into the wall on the right. It has a sticker on the back wall, “this is a good kissing spot.” The chapel is at the end of the hall. It is pewless. Half of it has been blacked out into a photography dark room. Nuns rise from their quarters when they so please, or when work begins. Each one is cluttered with sinful and earthly possessions. The walls have no stained glass apostles, but photographs of naked forms, abstractly painted projections of the mind, signs with the names of heretics. One sister begins her day with yoga in nothing more than shorts and a tank top. Two others, in only their sleeping garments, giggle from behind their open door which reeks of tea tree oil. A bird cage can be deciphered in the background. This is the Convent Arts Collective, tucked on the corner of Fillmore and Oak streets in the Lower Haight district. It is one of San Francisco’s latest experiments in community housing.

Sister Bryan Steven Johnson Bradford is awake at ten, but he was supposed to be up “a lot earlier.” He wears no headdress or robes but a “Silicon Valley” sweatshirt and galaxy-print sweatpants. Up until a year ago, Bryan Steven Johnson Bradford had seemingly carved out a living in a San Jose apartment with his partner and a management position in fast food. But he felt empty. Studying animation and illus-

tration had not borne him any fruit, and once his drag identity Rockm Sakura was born four years ago, he knew his path had to diverge. He left his job, his home, and his relationship to move into a room on the Convent’s main floor.

“All of us here live in old nuns quarters,” he says. “I love living here. We’re basically nuns,” in a tone that implies anything but. There is enough floor space to walk the seven steps from the door, past the bed to the side bathroom, and nothing else. The left wall is engorged with a rack of mostly DIY skyscraper shoes and costumes made of anything from plastic spoons to the pages of a manga. The wigs live on styrofoam heads on shelves looming high above both sides of the room. Costume jewelry and pantyhose spill out of dressers hidden by the overfull racks of gowns and fringes. Bryan has one dresser and the bed. The rest belongs to Rockm Sakura.

“Doing drag is my full-time artistic prowess. My art comes first. The first time I did drag, I knew I would make a career out of it,” he says as he strokes a styrofoam wig head with a teased-up blue hairpiece that defies gravity. “I was in a relationship I wasn’t happy in. Things I wasn’t able to express I took to the stage.” This stage was a single bimonthly show in San Jose. Soon, as Sakura’s star rose, Bradford’s eyes wandered up to the city by the bay.

He found an ad for the Convent on Craigslist, and two months later he had a room in San Francisco and twenty-two roommates. In the

first weeks of his living there, the house threw a medieval party that would put Game of Thrones to shame. There was a bouncy house on the rooftop garden, where “the King of England was jousting Pikachu. This space seemed too good to be true,” he recalls, and replays the video of the event on his Instagram.

It might be. A room, no bigger than a dorm in most cases, goes for between 900 and 1,200 dollars a month. The building is cold, without heavenly insulation, and the pipes hiss steam in the basement. There is a voluntary two hundred dollar food plan to spread the grocery bill around, and most artists are provided a studio space—a cubicle within the basement. While it prides itself on housing “working artists,” many have day jobs like hairdressing, bussing tables, possibly working for NASA. Bradford pays \$1,400 a month for the luxury of a private bathroom.

“SF is becoming so gentrified, people wanna know how you make a living not in tech. We don’t pay for space in our rooms, but space for our artistry. I used to sleep under my garment rack. It’s a completely different space than I’m used to coming from Silicon Valley. This place cultivates my art and success. You learn how to live with people. One view is not always right. There’s more to communal living than being everyone’s best friend, but learning to be lived with. It’s not for everyone.”

The Lower Haight is rife with adult dorm houses like these. Within walking distance from Oak and Fillmore streets are a half dozen other residences that are a part of the Haight Street Commons—a network of “affordable” housing for a myriad of people who are not able to survive the housing market otherwise, have no qualms with personal space, or actively desire the furor of an “intentional community.”

Rent for a two to three bedroom apartment in San Francisco easily exceeds three thousand dollars in the best neighborhoods, and edgy art-makers are not exemplary capitalists. For hundreds in the Bay Area, it is more viable to live with two dozen people in various refurbished homes. But the people living here are no longer dreadlocked activists fighting consumerism while preaching peace and self-sufficiency. Many of these residences were born in the last five years, and

their rent reflects that. Their members are not painters or sound healers, but CEOs and tech entrepreneurs. Some rooms are available to guests on Airbnb.com. Forum platform Slack is referenced constantly to coordinate weekly chores, vote in new members, and organize parties and art events.

Every house in the Haight Street Commons varies in size, demographics, and reputation. Chateau Ubuntu is one of the biggest with about three dozen members, and the biggest party reputation. Others like the Red Victorian on Haight rent out some of their rooms hostel-style, and the two-year-old Archive is almost exclusively filled with tech entrepreneurs and CEOs. A few blocks up the street in Ashbury Heights is the three-year-old Chaortica.

“One of the things that sets us apart is we have no rules,” says founding member Jonathan Schoonhoven, as he brings the groceries in. On the wall next to the doorbell are two finger-drawn hearts labelled “chaos” and “order.”

The house seems innocent enough, with a wood-shingled exterior and a pack of light blue American Spirit rolling tobacco left on a square of fake grass by the door. It is a delivery day, and since Schoonhoven is the only one up and out of his room at four p.m. on a Wednesday, he has to unload them. They are big cardboard boxes of communal living staples: packs of toilet paper, paper towels, packs of rice noodles, coconut milk, and oatmeal fit for Costco. All food is shared, split, and clearly labeled. Luna, the calico house cat, has to wear a cone for the week and bumps into things. In the empty dining room is a female mannequin in nothing but a blonde, curly wig and a cap that says “you look like I need a beer.” On the whiteboard calendar, there is a “monthly orgy” scheduled for Valentine’s Day. Schoonhoven laughs at this, “it probably won’t be an orgy this time, but it happens.”

The living room has tinsel hanging from the ceiling, and cushions strewn about the floor to accommodate a slouchy salon people or an “immersive theatre” performance, where the audience and the actors interact and the performer/participant line is blurred. Schoonhoven

Communal bulletin board hangs in the dining room of the Convent

“This place cultivates my art and success. You learn how to live with people. One view is not always right. There’s more to communal living than being everyone’s best friend, but learning to be lived with. It’s not for everyone.”

—Brian Steven Johnson Bradford



is one such performer. He works part time for a startup that wants to make carless cities. In the bathroom, everyone has their own white bin of toiletries lined up on a shelf. It is unclear if residents are at work or asleep.

"Most people here don't have regular jobs. The way society organizes itself doesn't lead to happiness. It's not that inspiring living alone. A lot of us romanticize the Summer of Love and we are proud of that," he says as he starts organizing where the oatmeal will go on the counter. The Summer of Love was back in 1967, a culmination of thousands and thousands of hippies and anti-capitalists flocking to San Francisco to enjoy the free love, psychedelics, and anti-war demonstrations. Those people might not be able to afford a room in Chaortica today, but the collective sentiment remains.

"Humans didn't evolve to live alone. Many of our basic needs come from being with people in an intimate way. Now that community living is a viable option, they're very popular. People just assume it's more of an alternative/edgy thing than it is. You do have to make tradeoffs. I get frustrated about clutter. You don't have much privacy. You have to put up with other people's decisions all the time."

Chaortica houses only a dozen members across eight rooms, which are often shared and range from \$700 to \$1,400 monthly. There is a Slack network, but chores are not assigned and house meetings occur only once a month.

While Schoonhoven prepares his dinner once all the grocery boxes are broken down and put downstairs in the "recycling" waste pile, housemate Elizabeth Matus starts cooking herself an egg. Matus has lived in communal housing before, when she was an undergrad student at Stanford University in the co-op house Synergy, one of seven the university owns. Stanford uses a quarter system, so all students in their residences pay three housing fees in an academic year. Most residences are \$3,198 per quarter, while Synergy and other co-op houses are \$2,785. This excludes meal plans and house fees.

"It was always my dream as a kid to have a big house and to live with my friends. It's a natural inclination of mine. You have to find what you're looking for and work to be a part of it. People are a part of your life, not next to your life," she says and pops the fried egg in her mouth.

Across the water in Berkeley, college students have been utilizing a communal system to save money on rent since the 1930s with the foundation of the Berkeley Student Cooperative, created to remedy the collapse of housing brought on by the Great Depression. There are twenty residences to choose from; some are apartment complexes and some are houses, each with an identifying theme, like the

Afro House, the Oscar Wilde house, and even their own Convent. A UC Berkeley dorm goes for anywhere from \$1,600 to \$2,000 per month in an academic year. A room in one of the cooperative houses, according to the BSC website, is thirty-six hundred per semester, which is roughly \$900 per month.

The Growlery is a three story house that homes anywhere from three to five artists free of charge. It is privately funded by art collector Jean Chadbourne, who got the idea from a impromptu solo trip to Transylvania. The catch? The stay is three months tops. Artists get a stipend for supplies, but must pay for their own food and their bedroom doubles as their studio. Kija Lucas is the house manager, connecting with Jean in 2016 during her own residency. She is the only long-term resident.

"It's very difficult to sustain as an artist here," says Kija. "We don't want them to stress. Be a good housemate and let them do their thing."

There is no Slack, no food plan, and no chore wheel. A housekeeper comes once a month. The house has high, white ceilings. It is spotless. The kitchen is fit for an episode of Food Network. The living room has been filled with paintings, some on the walls and some suspended. The artists live and work in their rooms on the top floor. The basement is a second gallery space, free of bins and cardboard boxes.

"We're different than a normal community living space. We're not dependent on grants, so there's no worry. I have not witnessed any orgies. As a creative person, we live outside our comfort zones. That's where a new body of work can begin."

The Convent was a nunnery in the nineteenth century rebuilt in the 1930s after the 1906 earthquake destroyed it. The real sisters moved out decades ago, and its neighboring buildings, the main church and the priests' housing are now the Church of Eight Wheels indoor roller skating rink and the Center, a tea house with its own communal housing for holistic healers and teachers. Its founder, Michael Latronica, saw that yogis, acupuncturists, and spiritual teachers were just as excluded from affordable living as the abstract painters and musicians.

Latronica moved to San Francisco twenty-three years ago from Philadelphia to do what many people who move to the city want to do: go to art school and figure out how to live off his inspirations. That didn't work out, but he found a niche for himself helping build out the infrastructure for communal artist workspaces, starting with an old warehouse in the Financial District downtown. Fifteen years later in 2010, the Convent's landlord asked if he wanted to dip his toe into the residential market.

"It was an experiment, a universal mission to collaborate and show

"It was always my dream as a kid to have a big house and to live with my friends. It's a natural inclination of mine. You have to find what you're looking for and work to be a part of it. People are a part of your life, not next to your life."

-Elizabeth Matus

"In my experience, living in community, there's a mirror held up to your face. There's no room for superficiality. You made the choice to be open. There's nowhere to run and hide. That can bring out the best in people."

-Michael Latronica



art in one of the last spaces for artists,” recounts Latronica, who was living with three roommates in an apartment at the time. He moved into the Convent and filled its twenty-four beds with bodies more ready to party than pray, and soon “it took on a life of its own.”

A year later, the Center was started around the block to be a little cleaner, a little quieter, and geared towards holistic entrepreneurs, new yogis, and healers who appreciated the support. As the new community houses bloomed from the Haight sidewalks, Latronica was sought after by these successors to turn their cultish dreams to a long-term, viable reality.

“I’ve been told there’s been a precedent for communal living. There’s been a lull,” he says, since the communes of the sixties. “People came out of the woodwork, now there’s a line of people to get in. We learned a lot from the Convent. Communication is key. You make a lot of mistakes, you learn to create rules and protocol that artists tend to stray away from. It’s not cheaper living, it’s just a more interesting way to live. In my experience, living in community, there’s a mirror held up to your face. There’s no room for superficiality. You made the choice to be open. There’s nowhere to run and hide. That can bring out the best in people.”

Leslie Mueller lived and worked in the Convent for three years after she graduated from grad school for art therapy, from November 2015 to November of 2018.

“I had never lived communally. I wanted to be inspired and develop art practice. And it really did that for me; it helps bring artists together. There were a lot more working artists when I moved in than when I left. I made so many connections.”

Why walk away from such a good gig? In short, money, dirty dishes, and drama. Mueller pays more than a hundred dollars less for her apartment in the Outer Richmond with two roommates than she did the majority of her time at the Convent. Mueller is now a working artist and art therapist, specializing in ceramics classes and school programs.

“I’d grown out of it. I work six jobs. I feel privileged that I can do that, but I don’t have any savings.” She plans to leave the city eventually. Latronica doesn’t like to dwell on the future.

“Communal living is gonna continue being sustainable for those who can afford it, likely not the minority demographics. We try to make it as diverse as possible but you can always get a rich, white techie who can afford to live in a creative space. I think it will evolve and grow, but there won’t be spaces for artists and musicians. It’s a cycle. Landlords have caught on to communal living. We’ve got one of the best spots in San Francisco.”

Housing in San Francisco is like searching for a needle in a very, very expensive haystack. The city would do well to hold on to these needles. **X**



MY OCD BRAIN

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAROLINA DIAZ

A look at the obsessive-compulsive brain, the role of medication, and alternative forms of therapy—from a personal perspective.

Psychiatrist offices don't always have long, bed-like couches, sometimes there are chairs, and sometimes those chairs have armrests and wheels. Sometimes they're upholstered and other times they are not. Sometimes the chairs are soft and swallow you up, others have rigid backs, force you to sit up straight, send a pain up your spine reminding you that you're alive and that your posture is poor. But what always seems to be present, and always within arm's reach, is a fresh box of tissues, ready to sponge up the ooze that's soon to come spilling out of your eyes and your nose.

The doctors don't always have white hair and they don't always write things down. Sometimes they're young—younger than you, even—and they type. They type or they write without breaking eye contact, and utter vague transitory phrases like, “I see” “okay” and “very good.” Other times they stay silent, allowing the sounds of ticking clocks and throat clearings to overtake the room. Some breathe heavy, while others breathe as if they were dead. And yes, they do always say, “we're all out of time.”

My first time at a psychiatrist's office, I was thirteen years old, and I can't for the life of me remember her face. My mother told me her name was Catherine, confirmed the spelling of her name, and reassured me that she was a “very good psychiatrist. Very, very good.” I was referred to Catherine by my therapist, Theresa, after just a few sessions. I remember Theresa's shoes best of all, brown leather sneakers with contrast stitching and grey tube socks. I spent a lot of the time looking down. I wondered if she ever changed socks.

I was a combative preteen, as my mother tells it, and usually worked myself up over minor things. Small bouts of rage were what brought me to Theresa's and then Catherine's offices those days, but there were other reasons why I stayed. It seemed that as early on as the age of nine, I spent

a lot of time engaged in odd routines. My mother described them as *funny*—not humorous—more odd, and was unsure if they were cause for concern. I climbed in and out of bed repeatedly, took excessively long showers, and hid movies and books in between clothes drawers, always making sure the covers faced down. I had trouble sleeping, often waking up from nightmares, and slept in my bed upside down, with my feet where my head should be. The day Cathrine brought up medication I remember hurling lemons at our garage floor when we got home. I remember watching them burst open on impact. I remember hearing my mother cry.

Today I see a set of Susans for treatment, one a psychiatrist, the other a therapist. A panic attack late last summer landed me in the first Susan's office where I was yet again diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). According to the DSM-5 (*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), or the psychopathology manual used by mental health practitioners to diagnose disorders, the annual prevalence of OCD is around two percent worldwide. This amounts to roughly one in fifty people, so chances are you may have met some of us.

The majority of diagnosis however, happen in children between the ages of ten to twelve, according to Dr. Melissa Hagan, assistant professor of psychology at SF State. “If you're thinking across the lifespan, OCD is most likely to express itself earlier,” explained Dr. Hagan, who is also the director of the Stress, Trauma & Resilience Lab at the university. “It might seem more prevalent in childhood because it's the one time when we have people who are focused on us at all times.”

As a clinical psychologist, Dr. Hagan has years of experience working with young children, some of whom she has treated for OCD in the past. But during our visit, she explained that diagnosis is not always simple, especially when it comes to children.

"In young kids, sometimes OCD behaviors might develop for short periods of time so it's difficult to diagnose it from a period of something like a couple of months, because a couple of months could just be a transient problem that resolves itself," Dr. Hagan said. "Like a germ phase that a child goes through where they do certain things to avoid germs, but then they grow out of it.

"What is more problematic, or one way to tell when it might not be transient, is if it sticks around longer than a period of a few months, and if the behaviors are interfering with the child's functioning. And no matter what you do to try and work with your child to not get hung up on those behaviors, they keep doing it because they need it to feel better."

As a child, I often had the urge to run water over my wrists for long periods of time. It had nothing to do with germaphobia. I simply did it because I knew that not doing so would result in a heavy sense of unease. Dr. Hagan describes this as a classic example of repetitive actions that serve no genuine function other than to relieve inner tensions or stress. That's where the compulsive part of OCD comes in. You don't engage in these routines because they make sense; you do it because you're compelled to. What is vital to understanding OCD is realizing the amount of distress it causes and how much it can impair everyday functioning.

You don't engage in these routines because they make sense; you do it because you're compelled to.

But differences in culture, age, and even gender, can affect how parents and medical professionals view mental health disorders like OCD. Men are more likely to show onset symptoms of OCD before ten years old, while women are more likely to be affected as adults, according to the DSM-5. Professionals in the field, like Dr. Hagan, point to social gender norms, perceived characterological traits, and even puberty as possible explanations for these disparities, and warn about the dangers of making blanket statements on averages.

OCD is characterized by, "the presence of obsessions, compulsions or both," according to the DSM-5. The severity of those symptoms depends entirely on the individual in question. But despite the clear requirements listed, the disorder is not particularly easy to define when it comes to adults either. Dr. David Gard, professor of psychology at SF State, explains that most mental health disorders, including OCD, exist on a spectrum and it is notoriously difficult to place individuals along that spectrum.

"The reality is that all of us sometimes are sad, all of us sometimes are anxious, all of us sometimes compulsively do things that are not necessarily helpful, but what makes it a disorder is that those symptoms, which cluster together, impair functioning," Dr. Gard explained. "In other words, the anxiety becomes so debilitating that the person is unable to go to work or go to school or interact in a way that is helpful for them."

During bi-weekly check-ins and therapy sessions, I'm often asked to estimate my level of improvement via percentages of time spent performing compulsions or obsessive thinking. Therapist Susan tells me there is no right or wrong answer; psychiatrist Susan expects an answer—she needs the information to adjust medication dosages, and course correct her method of treatment if necessary. I do my best to help my Susans help me, but symptoms often come and go. External stressors can often

exacerbate OCD symptoms, resulting in what are known as bouts, and individuals already high on neuroticism are more likely to see this occur, according to Dr. Hagan.

"Some people may take an hour to get out of their house and there is no observable impact on their ability to work or go to school or their relationships. Whereas other people, that hour is causing them enough impairment where they're late to work, it gets them written up and so on," explains Dr. Gard. "Or conversely, if the person is getting up an hour early to do these checking routines, but they're getting to work on time and there's no real effect on their relationships, is that harming them? Well, maybe because they're getting an hour less of sleep. It's complicated."

And so this then becomes the major distinction between someone enamoured with Clorox wipes and color coded underwear drawers, and someone who wipes down their desk multiple times in fear that family members will suffer a sudden, catastrophic death.

"People confuse OCD with OCPD or Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder, which is different," Dr. Gard clarified. "That is a rigidity to certain routines and a shallow emotional presentation. They're actually unrelated, and people who say 'I'm so OCD' are really saying, 'I'm rigid about something.'"

Dr. Gard—whose research is focused on schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety—emphasizes the importance of insight, or how individuals perceive reality, when discussing OCD. Categorized from good to fair, and absent to delusional, an OCD patient's ability to rationalize obsessive-compulsive behaviors can be similar to schizophrenia in the sense that there is a disconnect with reality. In fact, some experts have suggested that the two could have some genetic overlap, according to Dr. Gard, although they still remain two very different types of disorders.

"OCPD is a characterological trait so people are much less likely to see it as a problem than when it is a disorder. It's what's known as ego-syntonic, where you can't see it as separate from you and so the behaviors don't seem incongruent with how you see yourself," explained Dr. Hagan. "With the personality disorder, it's more diffused so there is a rigidity in multiple areas of life rather than just a rigidity around certain behaviors."

Disinfecting phones, tablets, door handles, and the underside of my fingernails was never about keeping organized or clean. During the worst of days, bloodied socks could not deter me from dragging the topside of my foot across our dining room floor before heading out for work; that's what band-aids were for and the action kept screaming customers out of my face. Scalding hot hand washes removed the taint of unpleasant customer interactions throughout the day, and multiple seat belt clicks ensured I was safe from fiery car wrecks on my way home.

So as an adult responsible for navigating through life on my own, or at the very least making a sincere attempt to, I was at a loss the day I ran out of work convinced I was having a heart attack. What I had been doing—the compulsions and routines that kept me safe—had been working, so why now? What had I forgotten to do, or not do? As it turned out, I



was not dying or suffering from cardiac arrest at the ripe age of twenty-eight. Instead, my brain decided to call it quits. At the suggestion of family and friends, I made my first doctor's appointment in years. That's how I met Maryam, my primary care physician. Her office did not have a box of tissues at my disposal, so when the waterworks came she used her hands to mop up the tears. I never had a doctor hug me before her. Doctor Maryam sent me to psychiatrist Susan, but not before writing me a prescription: 10mg of Celexa, the brand name for the antidepressant Citalopram.

I often wondered why I was referred to psychiatrists and not psychologists or other professionals licensed to administer therapy, but figured it must somehow be correlated to my condition. But as it turns out, this is a topic of some debate amongst mental health professionals.

"Disorders mean different things in different fields. A medical and mental health disorder are quite different," says Dr. Gard of the differences in both approach and treatment between psychology and its close cousin psychiatry, which he argues sees things from a more empirical, medical based model. "Psychiatry has traditionally been in charge of finding diagnosis and that has been shifting over time to psychologists who do a lot of work in that area more and more."

Others point to larger, more systemic issues.

"The medical model of mental illness is medication, and psychologists do not prescribe medication," says Dr. Hagan, admittedly infuriated with the concept of medication as the first form of treatment. "Psychologists, regardless of their prescription privileges, are trained assessors. Assessment is a huge part of our training and we have created most of the measures that assess for disorder. Psychologists are trained to do just that, we don't go to full medical school for all these other things."

I once again ended up needing the box of tissues during my first session with psychiatrist Susan. She recommended I take time off from work, and come back in two weeks for a follow-up. I was written another prescription; an increase in dose of Citalopram, which brought up my daily dose up to 20mg.

Celexa (Citalopram) is a serotonin-specific reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), an antidepressant that acts on the neurotransmitter serotonin. "While they are most often used as antidepressants, SSRIs can be helpful for a variety of psychiatric illnesses, including generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder, among others," writes Dr. Jonathan Heldt, resident physician at the UCLA Psychiatry Residency Training Program, in his book, *Memorable Psychopharmacology*. "These drugs work by inhibiting the reuptake of serotonin, effectively increasing the amount of serotonin active and available in the synaptic cleft."

In other words, antidepressants are predicated on the notion that deficits in neurotransmitters like serotonin and norepinephrine (which is affected by Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors known as SNRIs) are directly correlated to the disorders they are intended to treat.

"If you were suddenly worried that you forgot to lock the door right before going to bed, you would go check the lock," Dr. Heldt writes. "When you see that it is in fact locked, your brain would use serotonin to help you feel 'satisfied' that you were safe, and your sense of worry would go away. In people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), however, this 'satisfaction' process has broken down, and they would return to

continually check the lock many, many times. The role that serotonin plays in this process is perhaps even better understood than its role in mood, and the effect size of serotonergic medications in treating OCD is higher than it is for depression."

"In people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), however, this 'satisfaction' process has broken down, and they would return to continually check the lock many, many times"

-Dr. Heldt

The day of the lemon incident, my mother allowed me to take the medication psychiatrist Cathrine prescribed me: 10mg of Celexa. The therapeutic dose for that particular medication can vary, but generally it's anywhere from 20mg to 40mg, and patients must work their way up to those targets slowly. But as soon as the first bottle ran empty, my mother made the decision to discontinue the medication, blaming it for making me "slow."

"One thing to counsel patients on before starting an SSRI is how long they can take to work," Dr. Heldt writes. "In multiple studies, it has been shown that full treatment efficacy is often not reached until four to six weeks (although typically some benefit is noticed within the first two weeks). Patients can sometimes feel like stopping the drug early, as the side effects (like diarrhea) are immediate, while the desired effects can take several weeks."

As a diligent reporter, I showed up with a list of questions on antidepressants to my follow-up appointment with psychiatrist Susan. I came to learn that the majority of nausea, fatigue, and gastrointestinal side-effects I was experiencing were normal. The majority of the body's serotonin (ninety percent) ends up in the gastrointestinal tract, according to Dr. Heldt's *Memorable Psychopharmacology*. After making the decision to work myself up to a target dose of 30mg, I saw only minimal improvement, and so it was time to make a choice: taper off Celexa and begin the process with a different antidepressant, which could take up to another six weeks, or add a different medication from a different class.

I chose to add a second medication and began meeting with a psychologist for talk therapy sessions. Today, I consider myself lucky to have a care team of Maryams and Susans to help work through my mental health hurdles. When I decided to start taking Effexor, the brand name for the SNRI Venlafaxine (an antidepressant with a nasty reputation for its harsh discontinuation side-effects) psychiatrist Susan warned me not to treat it as a panacea. There is no such thing as a cure-all pill. And she's right. Composure needn't come from a pill or an increase of chemicals secreted in the brain, it is derived from the determination to hold yourself together. Everything else just helps. **X**

E V E N T S

MUSIC

MAY 15

JONATHAN RICHMAN AT STARLINE SOCIAL CLUB

MAY 18

THE DANDY WARHOLS W/ COSMONAUTS AT THE FILLMORE

MAY 25

NEON INDIAN AT THE MEZZANINE

MAY 29

BILLIE EILISH AT THE BILL GRAHAM CIVIC AUDITORIUM

JUNE 2

CITIZEN AT THE GREAT AMERICAN MUSIC HALL

JUNE 7

STICKY FINGERS AT THE FILLMORE

JUNE 8

FATHER JOHN MISTY AT THE UC BERKELEY GREEK THEATER

JUNE 5

STRANGER THAN FACT AT THE OAKLAND ELBO ROOM

JUNE 13

THE BUTTERTONES AT SLIMS

JUNE 14

THE COMMODORES AT THE SAN MATEO COUNTY FAIR

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FREE

MAY 16

FORAGE KITCHEN'S FREE MONTHLY MOVIE NIGHT IN OAKLAND

MAY 17

TINY GARAGE CONCERT NIGHT IN EMERYVILLE

MAY 19

BAY TO BREAKERS IN SOMA

MAY 25

SF CARNAVAL IN THE MISSION DISTRICT

MAY 27

QUEER BOWLING NIGHT AT THE MISSION BOWLING CLUB

JUNE 1

MISSION ARTS PERFORMANCE PROJECT

JUNE 4

FREE ADMISSION AT CONSERVATORY OF FLOWERS & LEGION OF HONOR

JUNE 6

TRENDYLOIN ART WALK IN LOWER POLK

JUNE 9

INNER SUNSET FLEA MARKET

JUNE 10

CYBERPUNK CINEMA NIGHT IN THE MISSION

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