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ELESPEJOMAG

FALL 2021



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FROM THE EDITORS

We are back with the sixth issue of El Espejo! We are so excited to be able to present this issue on our first semester back on campus as we recover from the pandemic. We wanted this issue to reflect the hope and strength our campus and community have shown this past year throughout all of the challenges it has thrown our way.

We had the honor of teaming up with The Poynter Institute, a non-profit media research and educational organization, based in St. Petersburg, Florida. We produced some great stories about our campus community and student organizations. We wanted to highlight these organizations and their experiences throughout the pandemic as well as their road to recovery. Texas A&M-San Antonio is primarily a commuter campus and a large number of the student demographic are non-traditional students. Student organizations are what bring these people from different backgrounds together.

Our stories this semester are inspired by this project and our personal experiences both on and off campus. This issue is special for many reasons but among those is that a large portion of our staff is graduating. Many of us have worked together for over a year producing content for El Espejo, and in



“ We are so excited to be able to present this issue on our first semester back on campus as we recover from the pandemic.”

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JOSE
CASTILLON
(TOP)
JOCELYN
SANDOVAL
(BELOW)

STAFF*

COVER

The covers of this issue were shot to illustrate a story written by Xander Chavarria, but more than that, they serve to honor our community's fighting spirit. A special thank you to Josh Huskin for allowing us to use his creative space, tools and knowledge to shoot a kick-ass cover.

Photos: Jose Castillon



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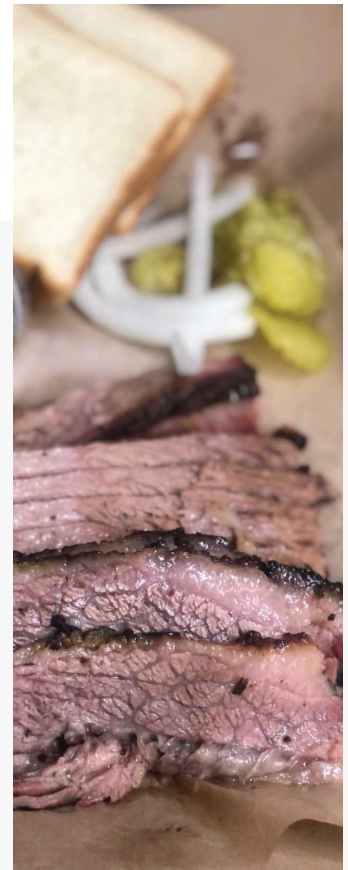
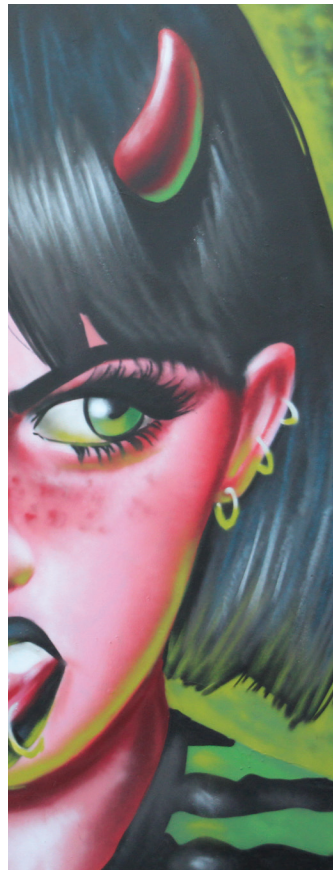
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The views expressed in El Espejo magazine do not necessarily represent the views of Texas A&M-San Antonio nor its employees





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Smells Like School Spirit

THE HUNT IS ON FOR THE NEXT GENERAL THE JAGUAR



by **KARLA MONSIVAIS**

As of right now, the university only counts on two students who currently play General.



“WHOEVER WANTS TO BE GENERAL, they have to realize they embody more than just being a student here. They embody the entire spirit of this school,” said Courtney Bobb-Meilinger, the head dance coach and spirit coordinator at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. “And so they have to have charisma, they have to have the ability to move and interact without saying one word.”

Meilinger flew to San Antonio from North Carolina in 2018, starting over as a military wife. The only connection she had with the university was her spirit-related experience since she was also the Spirit Program coordinator at Johnston Community College in Smithfield.

“School spirit means a lot especially if you’re far from home and you wanna feel like you get connected with the community of a campus,” Meilinger said.

Being General is a paid student position.



Normally students used to apply through a program called Handshake to apply. However, this year they changed it to where if anyone wanted to be General they would have to attend mascot tryouts.

“We actually held mascot tryouts over the summer. And we’ll do it again I think before we get to the spring semester so that we have an even rotation of the number of students that are becoming a General,” Meilinger said. “I run the mascot tryouts.”

As of right now, the university only counts on two students who currently play General. “The goal is to at least have up to four to five students,” Meilinger said.

“The idea is that we want him to be everywhere, we want everybody in the city of San Antonio to know TAMUSA, so General





needs to be literally everywhere,” Meilinger said. “That’s why we’re really pushing to make sure that you know (about General. We could) maybe even do a mascot program underneath the possibility of doing a spirit program where you have dance, cheer and everything General.”

Although General’s role sounds easy, he does have a handler, somebody that tags along and makes sure that he’s safe, and he knows where he’s at.

Many might wonder, what is General the jaguar’s job? Well, the General’s role includes many things. If he’s not doing something pep-rally related, then chances are he’s doing a meet and greet with the president or something out in the community whether it’d be community service or supporting any

clubs or organizations. “It’s really not all university-based events,” Meilinger said.

“He always gets his paws up. If he’s doing one it’s for a quick photo. If it’s double it’s a full Rawr. And that’s like true excitement,” Meilinger said. “I think General’s best quality is when he sees a kiddo. I love the interaction with the kids. Because you know, some kids are terrified, some kids are like ‘Oh giant fluffy!’ But it’s one of those things where you can kind of see you know, he’ll take it slow, and then if he thinks the kids are super excited he’ll come on over and every once in a while pretend like he’s telling them a secret, give them a high five, hug them and then it’s paws up. Or if he’s like trying to dance to get the kids to kind of relax a little bit. I think that’s probably my favorite interaction when General is with children. And especially if it’s a baby because



he’s like trying to tiptoe to the baby and be like ‘Hi not scary, General loves you.’”

“The voice of General is the voice of this college, he doesn’t speak, his mannerism carries everything that he does. It’s basically body language, or as we say in public speaking, non-verbal communication,” Meilinger said.

The requirements to become General would apply only to height and that’s only because of how the suit fits. “The shortest you possibly could be would be around 5’5”.” And normally we need somebody a little bit taller just because of the way the suit carries,” Meilinger said. “But you’ll notice that General could be tall or short one day or another, and that’s the great thing about General is he is everybody. And he’s unique to being himself, and you’re different every single day of the year, why can’t General be that?”

“It’s also interesting to see what type of person or personality each student brings to General because there’s one General that’s super playful, there’s another general that loves to dance, and there’s another general that most definitely just loves to make sure that they’re always like engaging with others,” Meilinger said.

“If you have questions about wanting to become General, it’s more likely gonna go through Recreational Sports and they’ll kind of explain to you like here’s the process, here’s what you need, and then of course, we’ll have to try you out and see how you do,” Meilinger said.

Meilinger has many ideas and has been behind the scenes trying to grow the team and trying to really push forward the idea of a spirit program on this campus. Meilinger is also trying to compensate those who have taken the role of General.

“I am working on getting them graduation stoles. Dance team for the first time got graduation stoles a year and a half ago,” Meilinger said. “And I thought, wouldn’t it be great if we actually got them the mascot graduation stole so people know that they were the person behind General and actually had that last kind of honorary moment for them, so I’m working on that right now.”

“This school is very very young and there’s so much we can do here like the sky’s the limit and I love that,” Meilinger said. “So I’m just trying to figure out like what type of vibe do students, faculty, staff and the community want as far as school spirit and school pride.”

A day in the life of Danny Moczygemba

IT'S 6:30 AM, SEPT. 23 AT THE SALVATION ARMY, AND BREAKFAST IS COOKED. DANNY MOCZYGEMBA TIDIES UP HIS BUNK BED AND TAKES A SHOWER BEFORE HEADING DOWN TO THE BREAKFAST AREA.



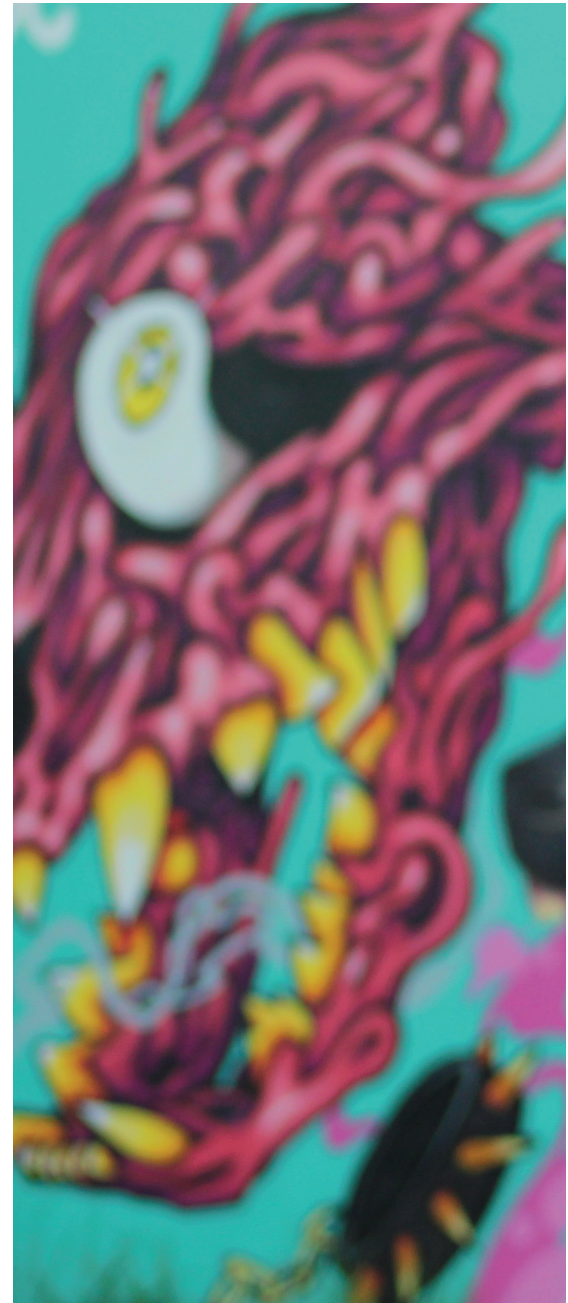
by **RAFAEL GUBSER**



MOCZYGEMBA MENTIONS, “We have to clean up our space because they (Salvation Army)

check if it’s clean or not but I keep it clean myself.” The Salvation Army has served in San Antonio for over 130 years offering food and shelter for people in need. Moczygemba has been homeless for over two years. Moczygemba mentions: “I’ve been in and out of jail for assault and other bad decisions but I am doing better now.” Moczygemba originally lived in Lytle, Texas with his cousin.

Moczygemba used to be part of the Civil Air Patrol at Brooks City Base when he was younger. “I participated because my dad served in the air force,” Moczygemba said. After high school, Moczygemba said he made some bad decisions that led him to become homeless. “I hung out with the wrong people which led to many bad things.” Moczygemba has recently found faith in God and says he is working on becoming a better person. The Church Under the Bridge has helped him stay away from bad decisions. He hopes to make his way back to Lytle, Texas, and work on a farm again which he’s always wanted to do, he said. Moczygemba says he doesn’t like the feeling of being trapped in an enclosed area. One block away from the shelter, there are various art pieces on the wall of a building. “After breakfast, I like to come out here and pray to God because it’s peaceful,” Moczygemba said. Amanda



Hattman, kitchen manager of Communities Under the Bridge, said despite the increase in folks they are feeding, she believes it is worthwhile.

“Despite the increase in people we are feeding, I love helping the community.” Communities Under the Bridge with Church Under the Bridge is a non-profit organization that provides a church using the Word of God for many, but primarily the homeless. They also feed anyone in need





Photo by Rafael Gubser



Photos by Rafael Gubser



“Despite the increase in people we are feeding, I love helping the community.”



**AMANDA
HATMAN**
Communities
Under the
Bridge

every day at 6 p.m. Throughout the years, they have partnered with other local non-profit organizations to provide things such as medical check-ups for the homeless to make sure that they are healthy. Moczygamba is currently on probation and has two months left until the probation period is over. Moczygamba mentions, “After probation, I will move back to Lytle with my cousin and work on his farm again.” Moczygamba knows how to build things with his hands. “When I was at the farm, I built a small shed,” Moczygamba said. Also, he misses life on the farm because he feels free and at peace. Moczygamba mentions, “I belong on a farm where it’s quiet, and I like the countryside.” Moczygamba’s father passed away on August 11 but despite the tragedy, Moczygamba keeps his head up. “As long as I keep my faith in God, I know he will take care of the rest,” Moczygamba said.

TikTok's Mystical Method is a Moneymaker

TIKTOK QUICKLY INTRODUCED ITSELF TO EVERYONE'S ROTATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA SEEMINGLY OVERNIGHT.



by **JOSE CASTILLON**



REBRANDED FROM MUSICALLY, the shift turned from what seemed like an app for kids, into a juggernaut in its own right. Companies and influencers are growing large platforms, but more notably, many artists and small shop owners are growing their business from their homes with the help of TikTok and its algorithm. Shops can turn from small businesses to overnight successes, all with an algorithm and a viral video.

The small business hashtag has over 38 billion views, with many creators trying to get a piece of the pie. TikTok has found that 74% of users say TikTok inspired them to find out more about a product or brand. With millions of people at your fingertips,

people will work relentlessly to gain a new audience.

Yvonne Duong has been a shop owner for over four years but only recently has found success within the anime community on TikTok making stickers, key straps and even license plates.

"I'm an avid TikTok user during my free time, so I was already familiar with how to use the app, and I saw that it's much easier to reach new people on this platform than others. The algorithm was easier to understand, and I spend more time on that app than others."

The sudden success isn't easy to handle for anyone, and a whole new audience can mean a new set of problems for shop owners like Duong.

"I've definitely had many people steal and sell my designs, so it's hard to stay original when everyone starts to replicate you. While TikTok does bring me a lot of business, it's difficult trying to please everyone since I have very limited time due to school and work, and people don't tend to understand that."

TikTok has even enabled tattoo artists to grow their brand and bring in new clients to take on work for them, such as artists like Martin Pacheco from San Antonio, who has been tattooing Texas residents for 11 years. Pacheco has 465,000 followers on TikTok and almost 5 million likes on the platform.

Pacheco isn't a TikTok veteran but has managed to tap into something special in the videos and artwork that he crafts and creates.

"I really started posting in last year of December...after about a year of having my shop, I get about 95% of my clients through TikTok now."

Clients are now swarming artists and shops in droves with artists and shops' newfound success. With the algorithm pushing your videos, people from all over the United States can look into your work. That type of attention can cause a sort of demand by these artists and shops.



photo provided by Yvonne Duong





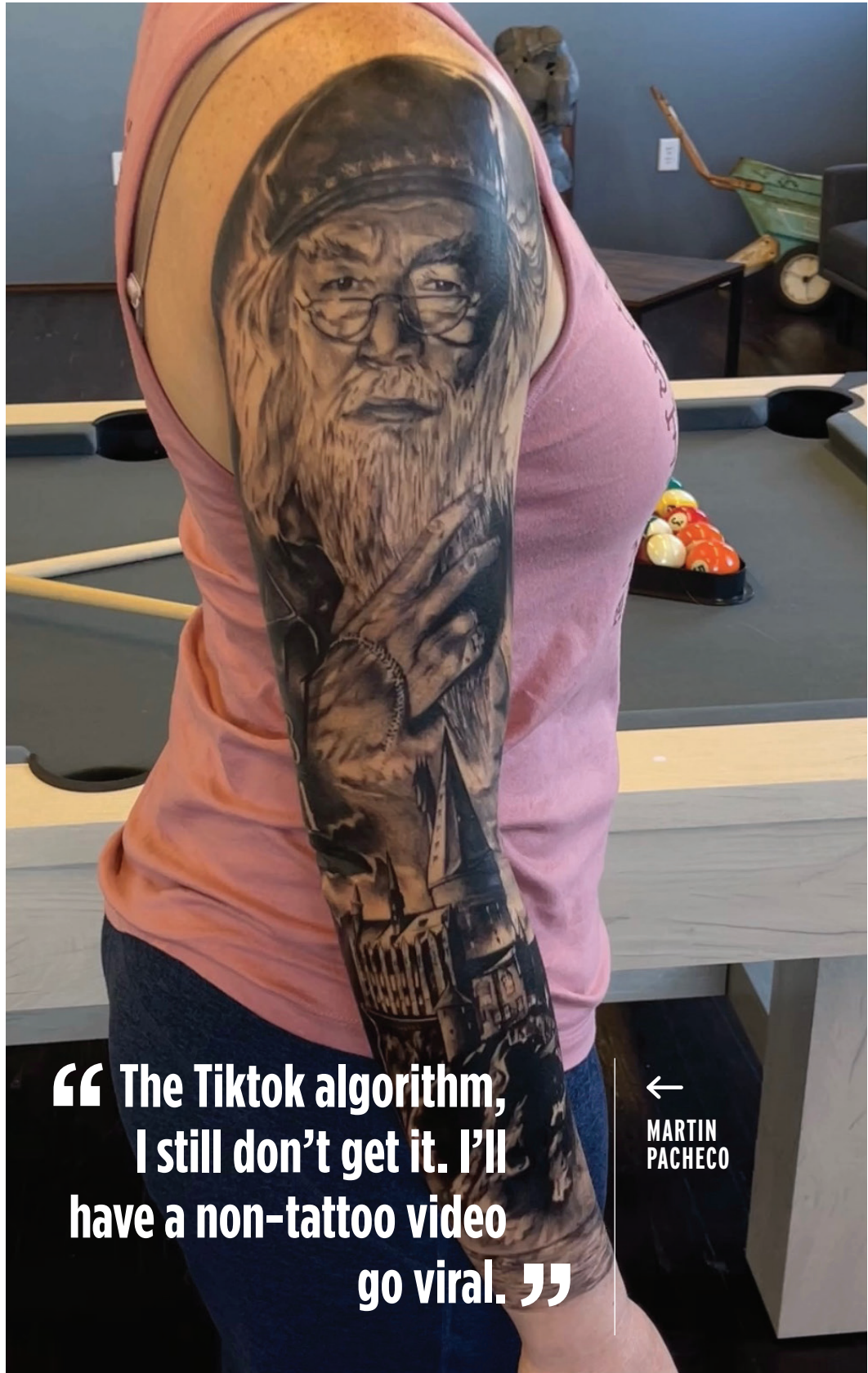
photos via Martin Pacheco

“It definitely helps out business a lot; it’s not really a bad thing; it’s a good problem to have, sometimes it gets a little overwhelming all the emails you get with people trying to book appointments, sometimes you have so many and have nowhere to start. It’s a good problem to have,” says Pacheco.

The exact reasoning behind the Tiktok algorithm is kept under wraps, but the most it can be tied to is the accounts you follow and the types of videos you interact with.

“The Tiktok algorithm, I still don’t get it. I’ll have a non-tattoo video go viral. When I post, I try and keep them a certain length, and the first few seconds, you have to catch their attention right away,” said Pacheco.

Tiktok emphasizes helping small business owners and creatives offer videos and templates to get your account up and running. With highlighting creators and businesses that used their in-app metrics and features to grow. While there may be some struggles on the way, the difference between overnight success can be just one video away.



“ The Tiktok algorithm,
I still don’t get it. I’ll
have a non-tattoo video
go viral. ”



MARTIN
PACHECO

Housing Crunch Leads to Creative Solutions

STUDENTS WHO GOT SHUT OUT OF DORMS SPENT THE FALL SEMESTER AT AREA HOTELS



by **KARLA MONSIVAÏS**



Photo of De La Cruz's hotel dorm room.

→ AFTER ACCEPTING THE BIGGEST FRESHMAN CLASS IN UNIVERSITY HISTORY, Texas A&M-University San Antonio was put under the pressure of finding housing for its students. Esperanza Hall, the school's housing facility, contained only 330 beds, and the university was overflowed by somewhere near 300 people.

"My understanding is that, and I can't place the exact year, but I guess it was back in 2019 or 18, the university was supposed to construct its second housing facility," said Jacob Goldstein, majoring in computer information systems and also the president of the Student Government Association. "And I guess at that time it was a cost-prohibitive decision in which they, unfortunately, passed upon building its second facility. And so, I think that the consequences of that action really caught up to us in 2021 when we accepted our largest freshman class in university history."

The university has a policy where if you live further than 35 miles you're required to live on campus. "So we're having freshmen, who are competing with upper-level classmen to try and get housing that the freshman are required to get, and unfortunately that took away spots through no fault of those upperclassmen who were simply just trying to find a place to live," said Goldstein.

Goldstein is currently working with the university because he believes sending the students to hotels can create an unsafe place of living. Although students do have reliable transportation, Goldstein assures it takes them longer to get to the university.

"This is definitely something that was taken into consideration," said Goldstein.

"My understanding of that is that a lot of students are dissatisfied with the hotels, rightfully so. Ultimately dorms by themselves are not very appealing, being stuck in the same room as one other person and I can only imagine the unfortunate living situation that living with two people in a small hotel room can create," said Goldstein.

Goldstein and the Student Government Association are currently working with the VIDA project individuals who own the land across the street from the university, to construct a student apartment complex.

"I can't tell you exactly what month it will be, but I was told that in 2022 at some point they will offer move-in-ready apartments for the students. And the university is doing its best to exert control over that," said Goldstein. "I can't make any promises as to whether they truly will control it, but they are doing their absolute best to remediate this housing situation which ultimately affects a lot of factors.

"It affects our enrollment, it affects the overall morale of our students, and ultimately it affects our food quality because the biggest thing that I get when I ask about our food situation is that we don't have enough residents in the dorm hall to have brand names like Chick-fil-A. So, I'm working with the university because food and housing are tied hand in hand and those are both my biggest priorities," said Goldstein.

Daniella De La Cruz, a freshman at Texas A&M University-San Antonio thinks otherwise. De La Cruz says the living situation at the hotel is great and also



very convenient. As a first-year student, De La Cruz has not had the opportunity to live on campus before. She assures she would choose the hotel option if she was given the chance to choose where to live again.

Her situation came about after De La Cruz submitted her application to Esperanza Hall. She then received an email from the university letting her know there was an alternative housing option.

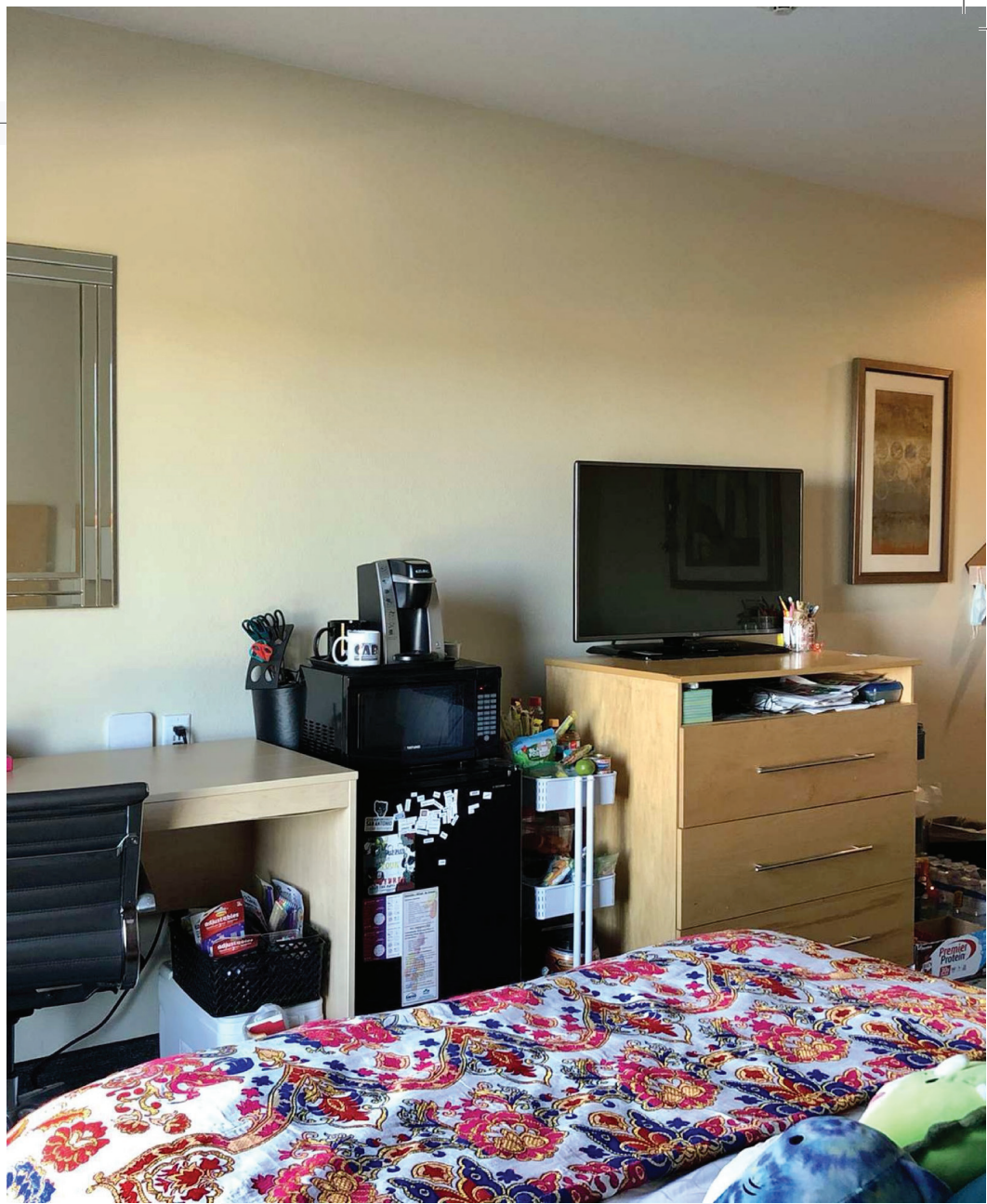
“So I looked into it and honestly sounded way better and it convinced me,” said De La Cruz.

“As far as tuition goes I’m not exactly sure how much of a difference it is. I would have selected the two-bedroom one-bath option if I were to be in Esperanza Hall,” said De La Cruz. “But that’s almost exactly what we have here in the hotel and they also gave us, I believe a \$1,500 grant if we chose this housing option. So I would say it is less tuition for living here and it’s pretty much almost the same thing, so it’s pretty convenient.”

De La Cruz describes her living conditions as minimal but convenient. “There is only one other person living with me so it’s my roommate and me. The living situation here it’s pretty nice, there are two full-size beds. It’s pretty roomy honestly we just split our room in half, we have our shared bathroom, we have a closet, we have cabinets, a TV, microwave, coffee maker, a desk, about two lamps, AC that we can control so it’s not a whole building type of thing, it’s our preference it’s really nice, it’s very spacious you just have to know how to work with your space.”

Although living in a hotel is pretty convenient according to De La Cruz, some difficulties come with it, for example, cooking.

“Eating at the hotel is a bit difficult since we’re limited to only a microwave,” said De La Cruz. “Fortunately they do provide free breakfast so that’s at least one meal covered. For lunch and dinner,



I usually get creative with my meals since we can’t cook. So, recently I made a chicken salad by purchasing a rotisserie chicken, and then just mixing it up with the other ingredients. I’ve also eaten lettuce wraps. Sometimes my roommate and I make tuna salads, we’ve also made sandwiches but we go above and beyond with them. We try our best, it’s all a matter of getting creative and trying new things to be honest.”

Transportation was never an issue for De La Cruz. Before she obtained her own vehicle, De La Cruz used to ride a shuttle that runs every hour to school.

“It’s all about timing how much time it takes to go to and from the campus and

how much time you’re going to need to get to your class,” said De La Cruz. “It’s pretty convenient. Sometimes I use the shuttle still. But honestly, there’s no issue with transportation.”

“I do like living at the hotel, the reason for this is because it’s super close to the city so you look out your window and you have buildings, restaurants, stores, it’s really nice and the best part is all these places to go like the restaurants and all that they’re walking distance from the hotel so let’s say transportation was something you don’t have it’s not that big of a problem because you can actually walk over and you’re right there,” said De La Cruz.

The Unwelcome Thanksgiving Guest Creates a House Divided

IT ALL STARTED WHEN MY DAD GOT A CALL FROM MY COUSIN WHO WAS STAYING WITH US FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

by **ANDREW JIMENEZ**



HE WAS GOING TO HAVE SURGERY THAT DAY and they just so happened to test him for COVID-19 before he went into surgery. It was November 2020, a few months after the pandemic began.

This led to him testing positive and calling my dad, who left his job right when he heard the news to go clean and sanitize our house. While this is going on I am in class getting my phone blown up. It's my mom. She says, "Mike just tested positive for COVID-19, I will call you in a bit. For now, stay where you are."

This led to me automatically testing my taste and smell in class. I most likely looked like an idiot to someone who didn't know what I was doing on-screen in my Zoom. My brothers and I finally got the green light to go home after my dad sanitized and aired out the whole house for five hours. The next day all five of us booked appointments to get tested.

We all thought we were fine because we felt good and I thought I was good because I could still smell the cologne I was wearing. I was wrong. I knew I was positive when my mom said, "Man that food smells so good," talking about the Mexican restaurant nearby.

At that moment I said a couple of cuss words in my head and distanced myself from everyone there. My father, my little

brother and I tested positive three days before Thanksgiving, while my mom and my older brother tested negative three times.

When we got home, we split the house. The negatives stayed downstairs and the positives stayed upstairs.

As the days went by, my mom and my brother are walking around with face shields, double masks and gloves as they dropped food off at our doors or placed food in our rooms.

My older brother, Albert, was not pleased at all. He is used to me and my little brother fetching stuff for him, not the opposite so of course. My little brother, Austin, and I took advantage of the situation.

My little brother kicked Covid in like two days, which we were all worried about and happy because he has a heart condition. So he then joined the negatives while I and my dad remained positive.

Thanksgiving day arrived. I was the only one in the household that did not have his taste and smell back yet. So I was praying extra hard the night before because what's Thanksgiving without being able to taste and smell the wonderful food all around?

I was wrong again. I woke up super early and went downstairs with my mask





on, of course, and saw my mom and my older brother cooking it up, pies and all like we're having 20 guests over.

I asked my dad how we are going to do this. Do I just take my food to my room and we will watch the games and stuff in my room? He then said, "Nah let's have Thanksgiving outside in the backyard this year."

I was all for it so we moved some tables outside, the left side is for the negatives and

the right side for the positives. We also moved our TV outside so we could watch the football games. Mom served me this big ol' plate as if I had my taste and smell back and I'm fake smiling at her as she's just adding stuff to my plate.

As I'm eating I can't directly taste what I'm eating, but I can tell that it was very juicy and flavorful. My older brother made the turkey so he asked me, "Aye, how does my turkey taste? Good, right?"

I wanted to say, "you idiot I can't taste anything," but instead, I put my thumbs up with a big smile with my mouth full.

It was a fun and unique Thanksgiving even though I didn't have my taste or smell back and a couple of days later, my dad and I tested negative with nobody having serious long-term effects. My sense of smell isn't the same as before Covid but you best believe I am going to treat this year's Thanksgiving like no other before!

A photograph of a basketball game in progress. A player in a grey jersey is in the air, shooting the ball. A player in a black jersey is jumping to block the shot. The background shows a gymnasium with bleachers and a basketball hoop.

TEAM

BU

“It’s hot, I’m tired...but if you ain’t tired, then you ain’t trying.”

Photos by Xander Chavarria

A&M-

BASKETBALL CLUB PLAYERS STRIVE TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES

WLDING:



by **XANDER CHAVARRIA**

IT'S OVER 100 DEGREES ON AN AUGUST AFTERNOON and the sun is creeping in under the semi-covered blacktop and yet 15 students and a volunteer coach, who is a student himself, show up Monday through Wednesday to play the game they love on the scorching asphalt. Each player has an unyielding determination to elevate their game and accomplish what they show up every day for, and that is to win.

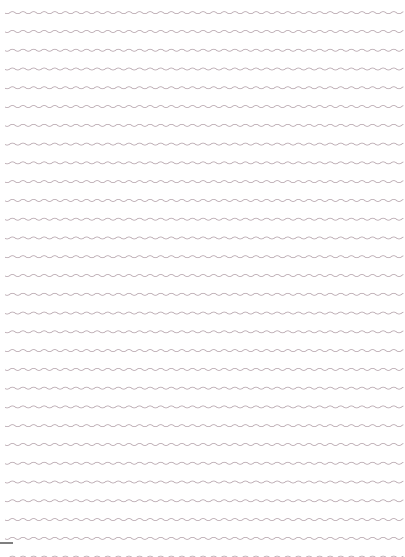
“It’s hot, I’m tired...but if you ain’t tired, then you ain’t trying,” says senior team captain Parabron Hawkins as he sets his water bottle back down on the bench and locks back into practice mode. The intensity these young men possess has been on another level since day one of practice. With the start of a new season, this A&M-San Antonio Men’s Basketball Club looks to perform, as a new era begins.

The Men’s Basketball Club at A&M-San Antonio is considered a student organization. The main difference between traditional clubs and sports club is that sports clubs compete. The University is still a young school,



growing and developing programs and departments.

To date, the athletic department at A&M San Antonio only offers four sports: softball, solf, and men’s and women’s soccer. These field-play sports are offered because the university has the appropriate fields on which to play. Court sports such as basketball and volleyball require a facility to practice and host home games in not to mention funding in general, which the university does not yet have.



Whether they play for a club or university team, these players are out there to make a name for themselves, elevating their game, in hopes of obtaining an opportunity to play for the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, a Division 3 to Division 1 team or perhaps even overseas.

“I want the students to know they can be themselves. I want them to be energetic, I don’t want them to be here if it’s a burden. I want them to be here because they love the game of basketball,” says coach Eric Leung.

Their constant attendance to practice drills and plays proved their dedication and love of the game, but the club hasn’t been together long enough to develop the trust and communication that makes a strong team. This was evident with the loss of their first game.

“Obstacles don’t have to stop you, if you run into a wall don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it” -Michael Jordan

With team captains Parabron Hawkins and Bryson being the only returning players from last season, Leung looks to build more team camaraderie before the season gets on its way. In addition to the weekly practices, the team has participated in a few team-bonding days, inviting Noel Pompa, a ROPES Facilitator at Bridging the Gap, who is known for developing and facilitating team-bonding exercises for local high schools and colleges within our community.

Pompa engaged the club in exercises and challenges that required them to think and effectively communicate like a team throughout each challenge. One challenge consisted of moving the entire team through a cube, made from PVC pipes which were balanced on a beam.

Like basketball, the challenge came with rules. They needed to take three players through all five sides of the cube, without jumping or touching the cube itself. One mistake would cause the whole thing to collapse. The team worked together and decided that all the larger men would step through the lower sides, while members of the team lifted the smaller players and passed them through while they lay horizontally, through the higher sides of the cube. “This challenge may seem unusual,” said Noel. “But the purpose is for the men to come together as a team, to solve these challenges and for each individual to understand that they have a role to play here.”

“Ask not what your teammates can do for you. Ask what you can do for your teammates.”

– Magic Johnson

Through all the practicing, coaching and team building the club has evolved and now it was time to put their skills into action.

Game two is on its way, as the Jaguars take on Strength and Motion, a club team affiliated with the George Gervin Academy, in the Wilshire suburb of San Antonio. It includes a handful of Division 1 prospects. It’s a Friday night, Sept. 10, and the Jaguars are looking to make a statement, even though on paper, they look to be the underdogs in this matchup.

From the start of the warm-ups, team Strength and Motion comes out in force, as they break out with a series of windmill dunks, seamlessly jumping out on the court, leaving patrons in the stands awestricken.

Jaguars sophomore, Jayden Campos stands at 6-feet-6-inches tall and it looks

like the young starter is about to have his hands full, since at least four of the Strength and Motion players are the same height or taller than he.

The game starts off with the Jags opening on a nice run, as they suffocate Strength and Motion with their tight defense, forcing multiple turnovers and turning them into easy points. Taking on defense and moving the ball is key for the Jaguars to win this game, for they are clearly the undersized team.

The game goes back and forth through each quarter and comes down to the wire. With about 30 seconds left in the game, point guard Nick Vann hits a long three-pointer, thanks to a beautiful screen that is set up by childhood friend, Jayden Campos.

The score is now tied, as Strength and Motion brings the ball up to try to ice the game. Just as they start swinging the ball around attempting to find an open look, team captain Hawkins jumps in for a steal and dips down the other end for an easy fast break and two points. The Jaguars are now up by two points with 20 seconds left, and Strength and Motion runs a quick play allowing a player in the corner to set up a free-go-ahead three, as he wishes it, putting them up by one point.

Final possession of regulation, the



Jags have the ball, as Nick Vann has an opportunity to seal the game and give the club their first win of the season. With eight seconds left, another high screen by Campos comes into play. Six seconds left on the clock and Vann attempts to split two defenders, when one defender swipes for the ball, setting it loose.

With four seconds left, Vann picks up the loose ball, takes one more dribble past both defenders, and floats it up. Two seconds left, the ball is in the air floating toward the basket, one second left and the prayer is answered as the ball makes its way through the rim. The crowd and the Jaguars go wild, as the team rushes Vann in celebration. Strength and Motion have a second left to pass the ball down half court to make one last shot. The ball is heaved as Hawkins knocks the ball away, bringing the clock down to zero.

The game is over and the Jaguars win.

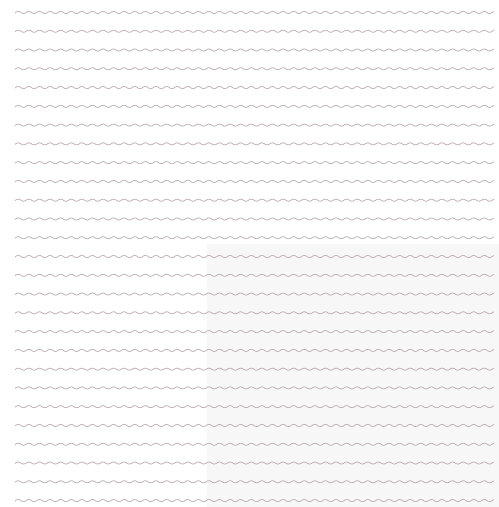
After the game, Hawkins spoke to his team about the win.

“I said this in the beginning, but I’m letting y’all know right now. You got my back; I got your back. Remember that. That’s our motive. That’s our tradition. That’s our culture. That’s our brotherhood,” said Hawkins. “Make this game a foundation of what we are going to do next, because from here it’s only getting better, it’s only going up.”

It is said that there are many life lessons to learn through the game of basketball. This rings true for this young team. Many of its players are first-generation college students and have endured their own hardships.

“What I ultimately want them to take away from this fall season is that the hard work, the dedication, the responsibility and the effort that it takes to put into this, I hope that they apply it for life. Because ultimately to be a great husband, a great father, a great brother, uncle whatever, this is the stuff it takes to be a great man or to just be a great person,” said Leung.

The coach explained that there will be



times when these young men are going to encounter coworkers who may not share the same opinion or life experiences as they, but by staying focused on the common goal, they can work together to succeed. He hopes that they draw from the lessons learned on the court and apply them throughout their life.

During the preseason, the team has already learned how to deal with failures and success, and so it is with life.

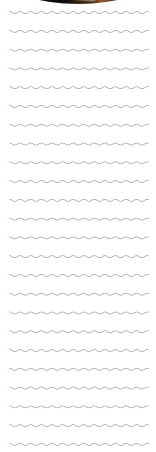
Hawkins is a firm believer in Leung’s words and knows that the journey this club is on is more than a game. “I think it falls down to being a part of a family,” says Hawkins. “We take pride in our new culture and brotherhood. We’ve developed memories that we will never forget. This team has definitely impacted me in a positive way.”

This experience has helped Hawkins outside of basketball.

“Being the captain of this team takes a lot of work and experience. But it has taught me a lot and has helped me in everyday life to teach the kids of the future to accomplish their goals. I’m happy with all the support I’ve had so far and I’m looking forward to the future and what it has to offer me.”

Although the preseason had just begun, it’s safe to say the men’s basketball club has already established a culture of hard work and perseverance that will carry them through the season.

“I guarantee this will be the best Men’s basketball club this school will ever see,” said Leung.





JASON YERRINGTON,
WHOSE GOAL IS TO
ELEVATE THE IDEALS
THAT MARTIAL ARTS
ENCOMPASSES, IS
THE FOUNDER AND
OWNER OF ALL FOUR
**OHANA ACADEMIES IN
SAN ANTONIO.**

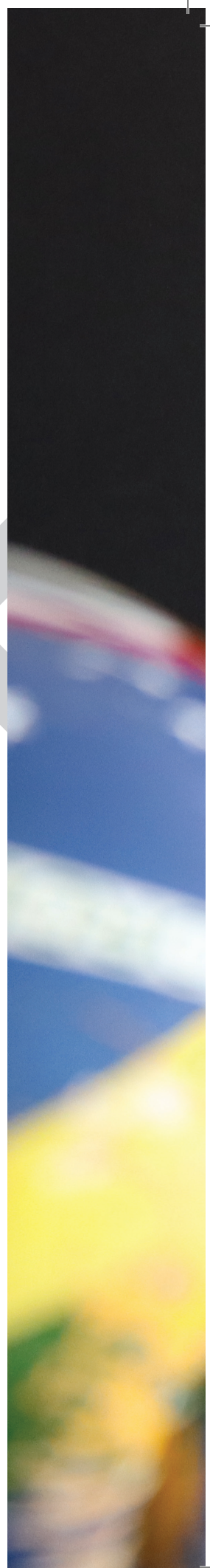


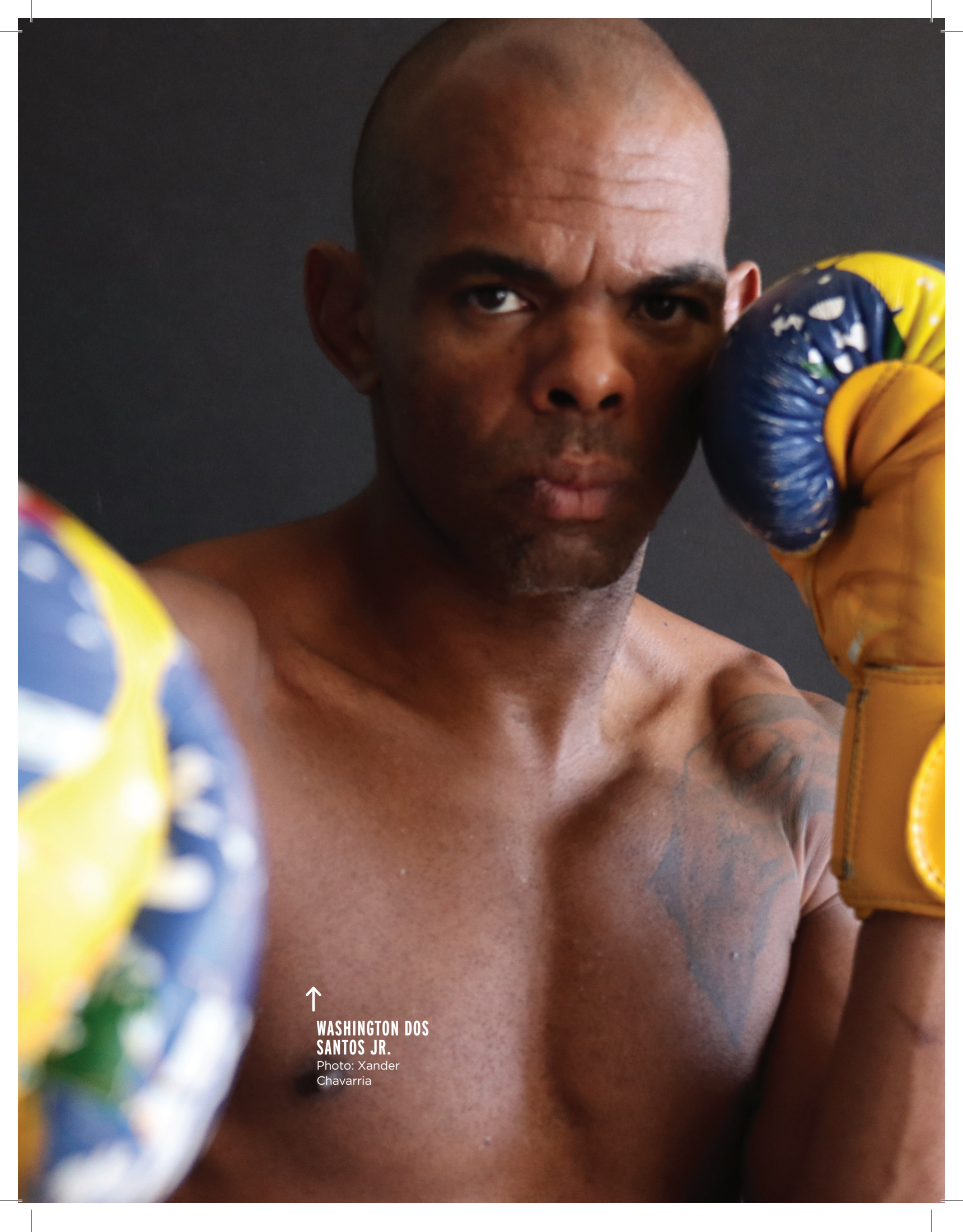
by XANDER CHAVARRIA

THE RISE OF

MMA

IN SAN ANTONIO





**WASHINGTON DOS
SANTOS JR.**

Photo: Xander
Chavarria

Jason Yerrington, whose goal is to elevate the ideals that martial arts encompasses, is the founder and owner of all four Ohana Academies in San Antonio. As a young man, Yerrington was inspired in 2005 during The Ultimate Fighter finale between Forrest Griffin and Stephan Bonnar.

Determined to learn, Yerrington set out to find a gym here in San Antonio where he could develop the skills and be trained in martial arts. Unbeknownst to him, Yerrington signed up for what he thought was a membership to the gym but in fact, it was a license to be a fighter.

This is a sport where you can't rely on any external equipment but instead, you are required to use your fists, elbows, knees, legs, endurance, intelligence and above all your courage. This sport is Mixed Martial Arts.

“I REALLY WANTED TO FOCUS ON THE FAMILY, FOCUS ON MAKING CHANGES WITH THE KIDS AND THE NEXT GENERATION, AND SLOWLY CHANGE THE COURSE OF HOW PEOPLE SEE MIXED MARTIAL ARTS HERE IN SAN ANTONIO.”

Yerrington was called the next day to fill in as the main event in Waco, Texas. With absolutely no skills and only three weeks to train, the fight ended when he was knocked out, but that defeat sparked a burning desire to learn more about the sport.

Like most sports, it takes hard work to compete and to achieve a certain level of success. But in Mixed Martial Arts, training is cutthroat and takes a different level of hard work and sacrifice.

You must maintain a certain weight and cut to a specific one every time you wish to perform. You must be resilient, willing to endure brutal punishment, with every forceful blow that impacts your body. Yes, you risk injury in all sports in training, but what about a sport where injury is the goal? A sport where you must look at another competitor, face-to-face and seek to impose your will over theirs in order to win. Mixed Martial Arts means it's not just one fighting style contributing to the sport, it's a mixture of different professional fighting styles such as boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, judo, wrestling and jiu jitsu. When competing it is best for all fighters to be well rounded in all, if not most of these fighting styles

The growth Yerrington experienced through his accomplishments and failures alike, was something he wanted others to experience. He believed that the skills, discipline and self-confidence that are acquired through martial arts can have a great impact on children and adults of all ages.

“At the time we didn't really have any kids' programs here and I felt that could be one of the things that could be most beneficial because being an athlete if I could've started this stuff when I was 8 years old it would have been totally different,” said Yerrington. “And so, with my business, I really wanted to focus on the family, focus on making changes with the kids and the next generation, and slowly change the course of how people see mixed martial arts here in San Antonio.”

Named after the Hawaiian word that means family, Yerrington founded the Ohana Academy, serving people of all ages. Mixed Martial Arts compliments our hard-working community here in San Antonio, so it's no surprise that this difficult sport has begun to rise in popularity in our city over recent years.

Yerrington attributes the rise of MMA in San Antonio to the promotions of live shows that have been hosted throughout the state of Texas. In the 1990s, MMA was first introduced in Texas by Saul Solis who was both a fighter and a trainer. Over the course of 26 years, Solis trained many fighters including legends Tito Ortiz and Cris Cyborg.

Solis was instrumental in kick-starting the popularity of MMA in Houston where he hosted the first promotion in Texas. Earlier this year, Solis died from COVID-19; however, his legacy lives on thanks to the doors he opened in Texas.

Another catalyst to the popularity of MMA has been social media. Thanks to live event promotions taking place through social media, word has spread about the sport's presence here in San Antonio and awoken the interest of many.

Ohana Academy is known for bringing impressive prospects to train and compete. The most known prospect in the city is UFC lightweight contender Alex Hernandez who worked out with Ohana in his early days of MMA training. Other current prospects with the academy are looking to compete in the near future.

Ohana's professional kickboxer, Washington Luis Dos Santos Jr., is set to fight again on Dec. 3 for the North American Title. The Lions Fight promotion is scheduled to take place in Boston, where he will compete in a Muay Thai bout.

At 40 years old, Dos Santos, a world



↑
**JEFFERSON
 DE SILVA**
 Photo: Xander
 Chavarria

champion, with 73 kickboxing matches under his belt, now oversees the striking training at Ohana Academy. At 16 years of age, Dos Santos took up martial arts as a way to keep him off the streets of Belford Roxo, Brazil, one of the most dangerous cities in the world in the early 1980s.

“Back in the day people didn’t see martial arts as a sport,” says Dos Santos. “It was more of a lifestyle because a lot of bad guys would associate martial arts as ‘just go try and fight in the street’. Now you can really see it as a business. You have a lot more respect because they see you as an athlete.”

Dos Santos studied business marketing in college and opened two gyms in Brazil before coming to the United States and joining the Ohana Academy. He has experience with other aspects of martial arts, but after winning a title in San Antonio, Dos Santos retired from MMA and now focuses on his passion which is stand-up fighting.

The other Professional fighter out of Ohana Academy is Jefferson De Silva who is predominantly a Muay Thai fighter and holds the North American title for the Lionsfight promotion at welterweight

(147-weight class).

Growing up in poverty in São Paulo, Brazil, De Silva considered himself a “bad kid.” He was sent to a reformatory and while there, took up martial arts.

De Silva, 27, compares the art of Muay Thai to being a warrior that has given him purpose. “It (Muay Thai) means a lot. It’s my life. It saved my life.”

This up-and-coming champion has a professional record of 23 wins, two losses, one draw and one no contest.

De Silva dedicates all his time to training and perfecting his skills. “People say it’s so violent,” said De Silva. “But for me, it’s work. It’s my work. It’s what I do.”

Watching the fights on TV is exciting but nothing compares to standing 10 feet away from the fighters as they spar in what is known as a shark tank. A shark tank is where the fighters in training camp stand in a circle as they take on one amateur fighter one at a time for one whole minute. Kicks snapping against the beaten torso, fast punches attacking the head and body as Dos Santos and De Silva withstand the punishment through the conditioning deliver the punishment right back one fighter at a time. The idea behind this training is to get the fighter’s endurance to another level ready for war as they approach their fight date.

De Silva recently defended his title in a draw and looks to have a rematch either on the same card as Dos Santos in Boston or in early 2022. “My goal is to be the best. I want to be remembered as the best.”

It appears evident that the sport of MMA has gained popularity in the United States in recent years. Ohana Academy has been instrumental in giving MMA a local platform from which to grow upon. As De Silva and Dos Santos continue to earn titles, insiders say, the accomplishments of these two fighters could very well put Ohana Academy San Antonio on the map of the MMA world.

CHATTING WITH THE

WORLD'S

A

Q

SEXIEST
BOYBAND!



MICKEY
DARLING



by JOSE CASTILLON

SAN ANTONIO-BASED INDIE-POP DUO **MICKEY DARLING** IS COMPOSED OF SKYLER MOLINA AND AUSTIN MEDRANO. MOLINA IS THE VOICE OF MICKEY BRINGING IDEAS AND LYRICS TO THE FOREFRONT OF THE BAND, AND MEDRANO IS THE PRODUCER RESPONSIBLE FOR A MAJORITY OF THE MUSIC IN EACH MICKEY DARLING TRACK.

The amount of success they've received is unheard of from a local band with no label and no ties to big record labels. Dubbing themselves the world's sexiest boy band, their take on growing up, adult themes and carefree attitude is what makes them so appealing to their audience.

The following is a transcribed interview with Medrano and Molina.

When was Mickey Darling formed, and what were the circumstances leading up to it?

MOLINA: It was the summer of 2018, and I just wanted to work on music, and I wasn't good at music at all; I still am pretty mediocre, if I'm being transparent. Aus (Medrano) was the only one I knew who was good at music, and he was doing it for as long as I knew him. I reached out to him, and it was supposed to be a solo project. He sent over the instrumental for what would be the track, "Shane Dawson..."

MEDRANO: It was kind of going to be put off forever. I kept saying, this winter break, I'm going to sit down finally, and he (Molina) told me he was going to move to California in two weeks, and I was like, we do it now or never. We worked every day and put out the track "Shia Lebouf."

MOLINA: I was very lost and got rejected from Texas State. I didn't even want to go to Texas State. I have the rejection letter on my wall; it was the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. Because of that, I moved to California, and Mickey Darling was born, started and never stopped.

So your success was born out of your failures?

MOLINA: Exactly, dude! That's what I try to explain to people, and you have to fail a million times and fall to get back up—born out of the fire!

Your biggest hit and what launched you was the single "Reverse Cowgirl" with over

4 million streams on Spotify.

MOLINA: It's so surreal. It feels too good to be true because all we've ever known is failing. I don't understand why the song blew up... I remember I hated it, it was so weird and fast and it never stops. It then became the thing people know us by now.

MEDRANO: You really did feel like that. He was like very insecure about how fast it was.

MOLINA: It hit a million in a year, and almost had another 3 million in a year.

You have themes of conflicting sexuality, alcoholism and themes you see in young adults. Where

do you draw inspiration from?

MOLINA: When it comes to deep subjects and stuff, I've always been a vulnerable person and an open book, so I never had a problem talking about deep or taboo stuff. Now it's paying off because people are feeling stuff to the lyrics and songs, and that's all we can ask for.

As we know, the music scene in San Antonio can be...

MEDRANO: Yeah, you don't even have to finish that.

How are you setting yourself apart from the other bands in San Antonio?

MOLINA: I remember saying



Q

A



Photos courtesy of Mickey Darling

something like if we want to do this for a career, we have to be different. He (Medrano) is such a good producer that he can make anything. On top of that, I bring my lyrics and melodies to the table. We perfectly complement each other and bring something unique to the table. If we can sit there and be self-aware to make something different than other bands and sound like our own. We can right now move to Los Angeles and see so many good bands and artists, trying to be famous in the land of dreams. We would be a small fish in a big pond, but in San Antonio, we are a big fish in a small pond, so it's easier to stick out in the city. There are not many indie-pop bands that sound like us in San Antonio.

MEDRANO: I think what makes us different is being self-aware in a way with the attention span of listeners. We try to keep it upbeat and interesting (for the listeners)

Any upcoming news you can share from the World's Sexiest Boyband?

MOLINA: New singles coming out, new merch. It's just been an honor to talk to you, and the idea of getting interviewed is still bonkers. Hopefully, an EP in January, well no uh, February, maybe.

Spring 2022?

MOLINA: Yes, spring! That'll be fun and exciting! Thank you so much for having us, baby.

↑
SKYLER
MOLINA (LEFT)
AUSTIN
MEDRANO
(RIGHT)

Cheering to the Void

AS WE KNOW THE PANDEMIC PUT A FEW THINGS TO A HALT FOR CLUBS AT TEXAS A&M-SAN ANTONIO.



by XANDER CHAVARRIA



BUT HOW DID AN INTERACTIVE CLUB, where members are to bring cheer and joy through the art of dance, stay alive?

It wasn't easy as the university dance club had its share of adversity as well. Before the pandemic, the university's dance club was set to make its first competition in Denton, Texas. This was where a traditional pom-pom routine was to put the club on notice. It turned into a rainy day as the competition was canceled two weeks before the event.

The cancellation was just one detour that was in this new club's way during these times; another was how were the Jagualettes going to practice and keep up with routines.

"The thing about dance is normally you need to be in a space, you need to be face to face," said team coach Courtney Bobb-Meilinger. "We did a lot of Zoom practices, some Zoom practices lasted between two to three hours.

"Normally face-to-face choreography doesn't take that long whereas in Zoom you have to be wary of the internet connection. There were times where I froze on screen, and we would have to cancel and reschedule."

As we know Zoom being the new normal at the time and being isolated was stressful, as for the Jagualettes these times took a toll on them but found ways to do what they were meant to do which is keep the spirit



Photos by Joshua Villagomez
Top: Skyler Ramirez
Bottom: Jagualettes

alive.

The team bonded together virtually with each other daily and encouraged one another to open up and or seek talks with university counselors if needed. As for the routines and practices, the club did what they had to do to keep active and ready for the future.

"We made it work. We did have other things where we started encouraging our dance members to do workouts on their own and in turn, they would individually send videos that they did their workouts, and made their miles, turns and leaps," said Bobb-Meilinger.

The club kept this routine until they got the OK from the university that they were allowed to finally meet on campus.

Another way the club stayed active was by getting involved through social media where they challenged other A&M-San Antonio clubs in friendly virtual dance-offs. The club is now able to practice on campus but is required to get tested twice a week for they practice every day in preparation for what is now their actual first competition.

This will be the Jagualettes' inaugural competition where they will do routines such as pom, jazz, gameday and mascot where General the Jaguar will travel with the club and help compete. The Jagualettes will travel to Orlando Florida April 9-10 for the college classic.



Let Us In

CONCERT-GOERS MUST PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF VACCINATION OR A NEGATIVE COVID-19 TEST IF THEY WANT TO SEE SHOWS



by JOSE CASTILLON



AFTER THE INITIAL SHUTDOWN, concerts were canceled everywhere, and in what seemed overnight, the entire industry went dormant. There were no chanting crowds or loud music, only empty venues trying to survive without any fans. With vaccinations rolling out nationwide, concerts are back in full swing, and venues and bands await fans with open arms. With hurdles such as vaccine requirements, venues and fans try their best to make sure each show is one to remember.

The Paper Tiger here in San Antonio partnered with Resound productions for their shows and adopted a new COVID-19 policy. They bring bands to San Antonio, such as IDLES, Japanese Breakfast, The Drums and more. Under Resounds' COVID-19 policy, vaccination cards or a negative PCR test are required to attend shows.

“(It’s) Just sort of a ‘no-win’-situation for venues right now,” said Chad Carey, who works under the Paper Tiger.

With the outcry of mandatory vaccination passports, most places have adopted a “negative COVID-19 test” to offer a different alternative for people who may not want to receive the vaccine.

LiveNation is one of the country’s biggest concert entertainment companies, and they announced their initiative “Vax Up For Music,” which requires all venues to require vaccination or negative PCR tests. These requirements are put in place to make concert experiences safer and continue without the threat of being



Japanese Breakfast performs at the Paper Tiger on November 1st., 2021
Photo: Jose Castillon

canceled.

People who have been waiting patiently for concerts to come back and are excited to see live music return with some safety in place. Isabel Alonzo recently attended Japanese Breakfast at the Paper Tiger under these restrictions to get in.

“I’ve been cautious throughout the entirety of the pandemic since I work with vulnerable populations, and this has been one of the first in-person events I’ve attended. I felt anxious at

first, but seeing how they ask for proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test made me feel at ease.”

These requirements for vaccinations are in place all over in every single industry. With the vast amount of people needed for concerts to run, it’s going to be hard to avoid them if you want to see your favorite band within the next few years.

A Place for Parents

JAGFAM IS A GROUP FOR PARENTS AND THEIR KIDS TO FEEL WELCOME ON CAMPUS.



by **JOSHUA VILLAGOMEZ**

→ **STUDENT PARENTS AREN'T BARRED** from joining other on-campus clubs, but this group is especially for those students who are parents. It is important to the president, Whitney Brown, and social media coordinator, Iris Castillo, “to have a group that is specifically for parents,” said Castillo.

JagFam is also a place for kids. “Any events that JagFam has, your kid or grandkid are going to be welcome. To set up to tear down to attend the event. It doesn’t matter from start to finish. Your kid is welcome,” said Brown.

They do not mind if a kid pops in during a Zoom meeting because they have kids on their own and they know the struggle of being a parent while being in college.

One of the members, Kirstan Garcia, said she first discovered JagFam on Jagsync, the university’s online club and

events hub.

“The fact that an organization like JagFam even exists, lets me know that Texas A&M really does believe in inclusivity and doesn’t leave the fact that there are many student parents on campus out of the picture,” said Garcia.

Garcia likes showing her young child what it is like to be in school. When the kids say “I don’t want to go to school. I don’t want to do my homework,” Garcia can be a good example for her children. “We both gotta go to school, we both gotta do homework,” she tells her kids. Therefore, being a student helps the kids feel less dreadful about going to school because they see their mom going to school.

When parents join, they will come to find that JagFam has more than campus resources to offer. “Not campus resources, but life resources. I know that we have some people reach out ‘Hey I’m giving out these nice clothes. Does anybody need them’ or ‘here’s my favorite recipe, maybe you guys can try that tonight,’” said Brown.

When Covid first happened in March 2020, Brown and Castillo were in school at the time. “I had to figure out my own school stuff and then my kid’s school stuff,” said Brown.

Castillo said she was in the same boat as Brown. “It was adjusting. I actually withdrew from school. I was very active in student government at the time and I withdrew from school to focus on my kiddos,” said Castillo.

In spring of 2021 is when Brown brought it back up.

“Last semester we got the organization revamped. We re-branded ourselves and became a sponsored organization. This semester we’ve grown even more and have been letting people on campus know ‘hey were here,’” said Brown. This semester they are trying to be more involved and have more members.

Since they have re-branded themselves, they are trying to be active in every way. That includes being active on social media. “We try to be active and if it’s not our



members it's our e-board," said Brown. When Castillo found out JagFam was active again she reached out to Brenda Reyes, the vice-president of JagFam, and became the social media coordinator.

The organization was not always called JagFam, it used to be called Jaguar Parents Students Organization. "The spring semester of '21 I transferred and asked questions. 'Hey, is there something here for me because I'm a mom? What do yall have to offer me?' They told me nothing. (So I asked, 'What do I need to do to make it happen?') They told me what I needed to do to and I made it happen, so the spring of 21 is when the organization came back to life," said Brown.

The goals and purposes are the same, but they now operate under a different name. "I think the overall goal of our organization is to grow and host more events where we can help our Jaguar student-parents and our community," said Castillo.

"Being able to grow the organization and being able to do big events like that where we can support, yes our community, but mainly the focus is Jaguar students who are parents. That's the big focus of the organization," said Castillo.

JagFam is not for babysitters. To make it plain and simple: "You can't join the organization if you're not a parent," said Brown. "(If) you're clothing that child, feeding the child, you're supporting the child at school and their academics. You're actively involved with that child. That yeah you can get in," said Brown. "It doesn't necessarily have to be your kid but if you're parenting that child," says Castillo.

It was important for the e-board members to establish this foundation because parents have struggles that the regular student does not understand. "The fact that we have the foundation that we are parents, is in itself a huge resource. Especially coming back to school you want to know that you're not alone," said Castillo. "We're not your typical student. We're non-traditional students and we want to make sure our niche is covered," said Castillo.



Photos courtesy of JagFam

JagFam does not have an age limit for the children of the parents they are caring for. "I don't think we can put an age limit on it because as a parent you never stop taking care of your kids," said Castillo. "Who are we to say, you may have older children over 20 but if you're still supporting them I mean why not be in this program," said Castillo.

JagFam wants parents to have a place to connect with other student-parents.

"I found my tribe. I found a group of moms that I can connect with and I think at the end of the day that's really our goal is for all parents to feel like they found that group. It's not that we didn't feel welcome before because I think A&M has a really good culture about accepting everybody," said Castillo.

Brown and Castillo believe this organization is necessary on campus and want to keep it around after they graduate. "We know that this organization is a need on campus. It is very black and white. Us student-parents are not gonna just gonna stop going to college like that's not gonna happen," said Brown. They do not want future Jaguar parents to be without this resource. "We take time from our studies. We take time from other organizations. We take time from our families. We've committed to this group because we believe in it. So we want to make sure whoever comes in after us to continue this group has that same passion. We don't want future Jaguar parents to be once again without that specific group," said Castillo.

In the end, JagFam wants its members to feel they have a safe place on campus. "I feel that I can be more at home because I have someone to connect with on a better level," said Brown. "I don't care if you have one, or if you have five, or 10. Bring your kids. That's what we are. That's what we are here for. We're here for you and your kids," said Brown.

Lastly, they want their members to know they understand what they are going through because JagFam is for parents only. "It's okay to cry over your books at 10 at night because you can't put your kids to bed. You still have assignments due. It's finding people that understand that," said Castillo.

Chopping It Up with Chapa

BEING INVOLVED IN MANY STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IS NOTHING NEW TO YANELIE CHAPA.



by **JOSHUA VILLAGOMEZ**



SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN INVOLVED in groups since she was in high school. At Texas A&M University-San Antonio, Chapa is involved in a seemingly never-ending list of clubs.

She is a game day veteran for the Jaguarettes, completed the requirements for the National Society of Leadership and Success and is a part of the president leadership class cohort five, is social media coordinator for the Women's Volleyball Club, vice-president for the First-Generation Jaguars and is a member of a new group on campus called Female Advocacy Empowerment Group. She does all of this and is still enrolled in 15 credit hours and works on campus.

Chapa is a junior majoring in political science with a minor in English. After she graduates, she plans on going to law school and becoming a lawyer one day. "I would like to be a lawyer focusing on family law," said Chapa. She graduates in spring 2023.

Her first semester at Texas A&M University-San Antonio was fall 2020. She started right in the middle of the pandemic when groups were still somewhat virtual and classes were in person, but you were required to wear masks. She chose to get involved despite everything being somewhat virtual at the time.

"The majority of classes were still online but they did have options to be in person. But you had to wear a face mask. It was very interesting," said Chapa. "Even though I was in-person it was still hard to interact with people, they were scared to talk to people being that they didn't know if they had Covid or not," said Chapa. She was very hesitant to talk to people.

The two clubs that Chapa is mainly involved in are the Jaguarettes and the Alcohol and Drug Prevention Committee at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Chapa starts her days early at around 7 a.m. after she pushes the snooze button a couple of times. She heads to work at 8:30 a.m. and goes about her busy day. When she has an event for the Jaguarettes it can take her over an hour to get ready and sometimes when she has to be at the event at 8 a.m., her days start even earlier.

On some mornings she may skip breakfast because she is so consumed with her groups and on-campus job. She is always on the go, but you may catch her picking up a sub or an apple from the cafeteria throughout the day.

She is a second-year veteran for the Jaguarettes, our on-campus dance team. At first, she was rejected. "I didn't make the team," said Chapa. But coach Courtney Bobb-Meilinger still wanted her to be a part of the team. In late October of 2020, Chapa received an email saying they had divided the group into two separate groups. Game day and competitive and the difference would be determined by who can do more advanced tricks. She was going to be a part of the game day team.

When she is not dancing for the Jaguarettes she is working closely with the president because she is a part of the President Leadership Class (Cohort five). "She's like guiding us to become future leaders," said Chapa.

Another group she is involved in is called the new Female Advocacy Empowerment Group.

"It's basically a group to allow females



to gather together and talk amongst each other regarding women's rights. Empower women. Talk about the gender gap. Things like that," said Chapa. Since they are a new group on campus Chapa would like to become an officer before she graduates.

When she is not caught up in other club activities, she works for the Alcohol and Drug Prevention Committee at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Every first Friday of the month they provide an event for students to do as an alternative to alcohol and drugs. "It's an alternative form of fun basically," said Chapa.

You might be wondering how she manages to be in all these groups and work on campus at the same time. She makes time to have fun with her friends who go to college in different cities. Chapa plans her day off, months in advance so she can be with her friends. Spending time with friends is important to her because it helps her destress.

In her free time, she likes to watch anime and do her make-up. "I really like to do my make-up," said Chapa. She is able to express her creativity through her make-up. She said it de-stresses her. At first, Chapa was hesitant to watch anime but now she really

likes this show called one piece. "Their jokes are dumb," said Chapa, "One piece is SpongeBob funny."

When she is older she wants to have a llama farm. Chapa loves llamas. She has six stuffed llamas. She got her first llama for her 18th birthday. Her mom got her a llama and that is what started her love for llamas. You cannot tell her they are not cute.

She recommends students get involved with groups on campus because it looks good on their resumes. "Another reason I would recommend being involved in the clubs is you're gonna be able to network with other people," said Chapa.

Chapa happened to meet her best friend Alexia Murtagh in one of these groups. They met on the Jaguarettes dance team back in fall 2020 and are still friends to this day. In fall 2020 they were just acquaintances. Then during the summer, they did not get to see each other that much because Chapa went to Laredo and Murtagh back home to Houston. "I knew we were besties because we talked every day. We never stopped talking," said Murtagh.

When describing her best friend's work ethic Murtagh said Chapa is determined and motivated. They have been friends for less

than a year but they communicate every day. "Every day we talk and if we don't FaceTime, we text," said Murtagh. This friendship started back at one of the Jaguarettes dance team practices. They may have never met if they were not interested in staying active on campus.

Murtagh is not currently living in San Antonio because of family reasons, but that does not stop them from communicating daily. "She will be my best friend no matter what," said Chapa.

Chapa chose Texas A&M University-San Antonio because "...it offered a variety of degrees and programs that I felt it was really affordable compared to other schools," said Chapa. Being close to home was important because she is not from San Antonio. She is two hours away in Laredo. The groups on campus helped her feel welcome. "I feel like I have a sense of belonging here, being that I am given responsibility and I'm putting my time and effort into something," said Chapa. Affordability and being close to home were two key factors in choosing to become a Jaguar.

Chapa has learned how to manage her time more effectively. "In order to succeed within all these groups you need to have great time management," said Chapa. She also learned that it is OK to say no. Students do not have to go to all of the events," said Chapa. "I know that I've had instances where I feel that I don't have time and I'm overwhelmed but if you give yourself time with each group, then you're completely fine," said Chapa.

One of the most important things to Chapa is leaving a legacy and she is doing that through her student involvement. "I am making history I guess you could say putting my effort into something that will eventually grow. Being that the school is so young. Obviously, the groups are young as well and so when the school grows bigger so will the club, and knowing that I was one of the founders and like one of the early on members is the reason why I want to," said Chapa.



Yanellie Chapa
Photo: Joshua Villagomez

A Single Dad's Dilemma

MY SON KENDALL JAMES ROBINSON BECAME A FRESHMAN AT JUDSON HIGH SCHOOL THIS YEAR AND AS HE WALKED OUT OF THE DOOR, I WONDERED WHERE TIME HAS GONE WITH HIM.

by **SASHA ROBINSON**



I HAVE BEEN THE ONE RAISING HIM SINCE HIS MOTHER and I separated when he was a year old. It was a trying time learning how to be a parent and a provider for a little life when you do not have a nurturing bone in your body but somehow, I made it work.

Kendall was born six months premature on Oct. 23, 2006, at Brackenridge Hospital in Austin, Texas. Through this time, he had problems digesting food which had him stay in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) for the first six months of his life. To help him eat, they operated on him to have a “Mic-key button” or a device where was surgically for a child to low key receive the nutrition, fluids and medicine directly to the stomach.

When the doctors felt it was time for him to come home the nurses and doctors gave us a crash course on how to feed him, Many family members felt he was Godsent because of the nature of how everything transpired but little did I know he was a strength and did not know I had to be a great father.

Whenever I felt like I was lost or did not know what I was doing, I would look at my son and I would remember if I fail then I would not be able to provide for him. I used this strength to get back into school and do more things in life outside of work.

The proudest day I had was when my son graduated from Pre-K. I got off work and watched them perform for all the parents. His mother, her boyfriend and grandmother came as well. As I watched Kendall walk to the bus stop, my mind went back to when I walked Kendall to school for his first day of kindergarten. When he went to Mrs. Miller’s classroom and walked him to his assigned seat, all I kept thinking was my son is starting

to be a big boy and I am proud of him. Though Kendall’s mother and I are not together, I refuse to let how we feel about each other be a reason why he is not involved in his mother’s life which I stress to him every time those two have a conversation.

Since Kendall and I have been by ourselves, finding things for him to get into has been interesting. Since he was 8 months old, I remember his mother having him bundled in front of the TV when I was watching game five of the Spurs vs. Nuggets series. Since that night, I knew my son was going to get into sports like myself. When Kendall was 2 years old, he started to watch my San Francisco 49er videos and so happened to have them on repeat. With him watching them, it taught me about my fandom and realizing when I started to like them and not to be a “fanboy.” To this day, Kendall is a 49er fan and it was my influence but now that he is a teenager and can make his own decisions, he has decided to stay a ‘9er fan.

He started playing football for the Texas Spartans and being active in sports was a new world because now he had made many friends and I had to learn how to make sure he made it to practice and games. There were times when we would go to the field and practice on footwork and on his position, which was a big bond between us. I would stress to him that he is way better than how I was when I was playing because I did not have anyone to show me the fundamentals of the game. Lately, we would go to sports bars and watch sports together and I would talk to him about many of my misgivings and how I did stupid things so he can have an understanding as to my reactions when he gets into trouble. I normally use this time as a bonding time as well as just having fun.

Being a parent isn’t just feeding, clothing



and other things but realizing what the child likes and does not like. When he was younger, he started to like “Five Nights at Freddy’s “ and “Roblox,” but now he loves watching Youtubers. I make it a point to know who they are, even though I may not like them but it shows I have an interest in his life. When he got a Nintendo Wii, he would play it religiously, and just like me when I was his age, it would compromise his schoolwork. He started to get into the “Call of Duty” franchise which is something else we would bond over and play together.

Though I am a single parent, I do want to find someone to be with and I talked to Kendall about this when we went to visit my brothers in Dallas in June 2019.

My brother Enrique was getting married,

so I felt I should surprise him because I was not going to be able to go to the wedding. My other brothers Ladarious and Adomus and stepmother Valerie were also excited to see us and finally meet Kendall because the last time we saw him was at my father’s funeral in August 2000.

One thing I stressed to him is whoever I end up with, will have to realize my son is not just someone who will be discarded. If you (whoever I date) want to be with me, you have to be in his world as well. There is no negotiation with this. The other thing I told him is she will be a mother figure to him. I told him he already has a mother and no one will ever take her place but she will come in and make your life better and show you what a woman is and how

one is to treat you. I have gingerly dated every now and even one I thought was the one but no matter what, Kendall will always be a part of decisions.

One day Kendall asked me if I loved his mother. I looked at him, gritted my teeth and told him, I loved what his mother and I created, and he was the best thing that came from our relationship. Though she is not around, he is satisfied with how things are. I have asked him how he feels, and he says, “I do not feel anything dad.”

I use this to show him about being a man is my thing and what he needs to do but because I do not have the sensitive or nurturing side, which is something his mother has, and he needs to have. I have told her she needs to be around him but for her own reasons, she chooses not to be a part of his life which bothers me.

Illustration by Augustine Caldera



SA Women's March



photo story by MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ

Top: Several women dressed as handmaids at the Women's March San Antonio.

Right: Neelam Khan (left) and Tiffany Aguilar (right) show off their sidewalk chalk art at the Bans Of Our Body Women's March.

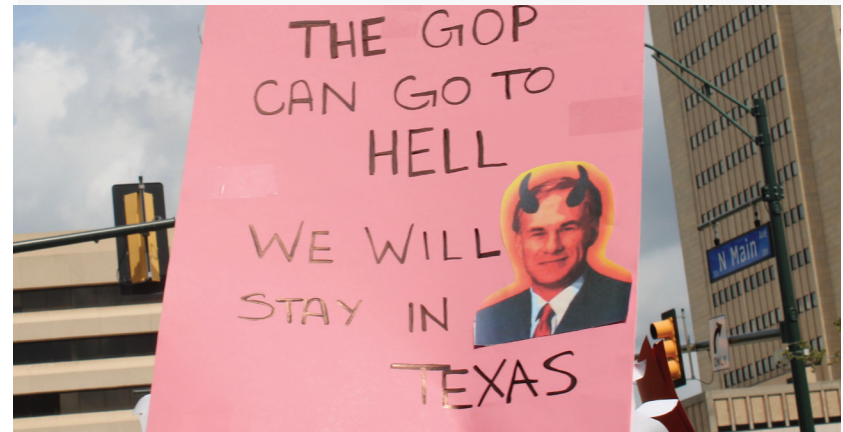




Left: Man proudly holding up his make old white men illegal sign at Bans Off Our Body march.

Right: "El Diabolito" by San Antonio Artist, Rafael Gonzales Jr.

Bottom: Pro-choice supporters overshadowing pro-lifers at the Bans Of Our Body Women's March. Bans Off Our Body-San Antonio took place on Saturday Oct. 3 at Milam Park.



COVID Can't Tear Us Apart

IT WAS A NORMAL WEDNESDAY EVENING IN MARCH WHEN MY BOYFRIEND CAME HOME FROM A LATE-NIGHT OF WORK THAT I KNEW THINGS WEREN'T RIGHT.

by MCKENZIE BALERO



HE CAME HOME AND WAS QUIET, no hello, no kiss, no hug. No nothing. I knew something was wrong, instantly.

"I'm going to go take a shower," is what he said after sitting on the couch for five minutes while I was cooking dinner.

I was shocked because he usually takes showers in the morning and not typically at night. This was when I knew something was off. After being in the shower for over 30 minutes, he didn't want dinner, which was completely not like him because he never turns down dinner.

"What is wrong," I said. "Something is not right, is something bothering you?"

"I'm fine, nothing is wrong."

Of course, I knew something was already wrong before I even asked but now, he wouldn't tell which made me even more worried. After asking multiple times and getting the same answer over and over, I was a little annoyed. I didn't let that stop me from asking and ensuring he was OK. We finally went to bed later that night, no kiss which again was completely not normal for us to go to sleep without a goodnight kiss. Shortly after falling asleep wondering what was wrong with Jaden, I woke up to the noise of the shower going off around 6 a.m. I then heard the cabinet door open in the bathroom which holds all the medicine. Right then I knew what was wrong; he didn't feel well. As I pulled the covers off me and jumped out of bed to run into the bathroom where I see Jaden with a bottle of Advil in his hands. I asked, "What is wrong?"

Then, what are you feeling?" He said he didn't feel good.

"My head is pounding, and I just feel like crap."

A beat.

"I'm going to get a COVID test now."

Instantly, I just had a feeling he was going to test positive. Frantically, I rushed back into the bedroom, got dressed, and started to get things prepared. Shortly after, he left.

I then grabbed my overnight bag in the closet and started throwing in clothes. Holding the bag in my hands I went from drawer to drawer tossing in items: underwear, shorts, socks, bra, T-shirt, chargers and medicine. At this time the bag was full because I was just grabbing as much as I could, as fast as I could. Before I knew it, I get a call from Jaden.

"It's positive."

I heard the sadness in his voice.

"Well, what does that mean? What do we have to do?"

Full of frustration he said, "I don't know." We then hung up and I began rushing trying to get everything else ready for him to arrive.

Once he had gotten home he walked into the master bedroom, where he would be in quarantine for the next 14 days, tears just rolled down his face as he seemed to feel guilty that he had gotten sick. The both of us with masks on, and me telling him things will be all right, I shut the door not knowing what the next 14 days would hold.

Two days passed and he was fine but was this his birthday, and he must spend it alone, in quarantine. I try my best to do everything I could to make it somewhat enjoyable, but he was just not having it.

On the 10th day around eight o'clock at night is when he relapsed. While we thought he was on the road to recovery, it hit him even harder. He had every symptom of COVID-19 except the loss of taste and smell.

The next four days were the most terrifying and heartbreaking moments of our two-year relationship.

I was all alone in the house taking care of him, for the past 10 days but my family dropped off groceries and supplies



to me that I needed. He had numerous doctor's appointments: some were to get tested again, some for medication, some for blood work and we even had someone come to our home and give us an IV full of vitamins. The last appointment was the scariest.

"He has fluid developing in his right lung," the doctor said.

Instantly I knew this was not good; if he did not get up to walk and start being active it would develop into pneumonia. He gave me the hardest time walking and checking all his vitals every four hours, but I was so worried. That same night he couldn't keep anything down and his O2 levels were at 90. I called his parents for help.

As his dad answered and said "hello," I lost my composure and started crying. I began to tell him what the doctor had told me and what condition Jaden was in. Not long after that, his parents showed up at our home and we then took him to the hospital.

It was the hardest thing watching him walk through those hospital doors alone and scared. He looked so weak he could barely stand up and was so pale that he looked like a ghost.

After having to experience many lonely nights wondering if he was going to be OK and if he was even going to make it through all of it.

Who knew that in six short months he would be doing great?

That he would have absolutely no long-term effects, that he would become vaccinated and would be thriving. I could not be more thankful to have my best friend by my side.

It makes you realize: how do you want to live your life? Who do you want to spend your life with? Is going out worth catching this deadly virus? And how much does someone mean to you?

This experience made me realize the love of your life could be gone in such a short second, don't regret anything, and live life to the fullest. Tomorrow is never promised and in the world that we live in today we must always remain safe and remember what is most important to us.



Illustration by Augustine Caldera

True Pit: Barbecue Master's Fire for Life Helps His Cancer Battle

by MICHELE STOCKTON



“WE MUST HAVE HOPE.

Because hope starts the fire of faith. And without faith, I sure would not be here nine years later,” Bennie Miller Jr. said firmly, and his audience wasn't quite sure what he always meant but they were quick to get back to work.

Miller, a 67-year-old well-respected Black man in Cibolo, has been fighting bone cancer since 2013 and is a full-time employee at Harmon's Barbecue as pitmaster.

The pitmaster is responsible for cutting meat for orders, prepping and smoking meat, cleaning and maintenance of the smoker and block area in all weather

conditions. Miller still does just that.

Harmon's Barbecue is Bennie's second home. The smokehouse has been creating authentic Texas barbecue since 2001. Ray Harmon started his restaurant with a truck and the side of the FM-35/1103 road.

Miller became a part of Harmon's family back in 2011 and was diagnosed while on a regular health examination.

Resilience is the definition that Miller is described as around Cibolo, a town of just over 32,000, northeast of San Antonio.

“He always makes me feel like I could be working harder. And I already go home exhausted because working at a barbecue joint is a lot harder than you think. Especially at Harmon's, we are well-known,” said D.J. Hartley, 19, a recent Samuel Clemens High School alumnus.

A language of elaborate indirection fills the room as Miller clocks in. As cooks are cutting pounds of brisket, checking the warmer to consistently fill customers' orders, the assistant to the cutter is serving sides to complete the orders, as Miller walks in with his cane and pushing along a greasy meat tub filled with sizzling sausage, smoked brisket and glossy ribs.

Photo courtesy of Harmon's BBQ



“Meats here!” Miller shouts.

The kitchen is restocked and Miller heads back out to sip his 32-ounce Styrofoam cup filled with ice-cold water. The catchall phrase for the totality is “lived experience,” the term having migrated here to mean, simply, “I’ve done time.” Either people have lived experience, or they don’t.

“He had no idea who I was,” Miller said, noting that the encounter had been a couple of years ago, before he would introduce himself as his top customer and how he would love to learn from a young soul. Then, somehow, he capped his story with an observation that was both sophisticated and gracious.

“That’s a gift that the customers give you,” Harmon said. “A dimension of yourself that you never had before.” They both had no idea they were building a life-long friendship.

“You’re a strong Black man in a world that conflicts with that strength, that really doesn’t want you to be great,” Miller continued. “So what makes you the one who’s going to stand tall? Cancer will not stop me. It may slow me down but I will stop when the good Lord calls me home.”

Miller was born and raised in the deep south hub of Oxford, Mississippi, the youngest of seven boys. His mother, Mary, had a job as a nurse and the unflappable temperament to match. “If I had to put anyone on the free-throw line, it’s her.” His father, Timothy, worked for an agricultural conglomerate and had a side business as an upholsterer. “I saw him work a lot of third shifts, a lot of night shifts,” Miller said. “Whenever I work a particularly hard week, I think of him.”

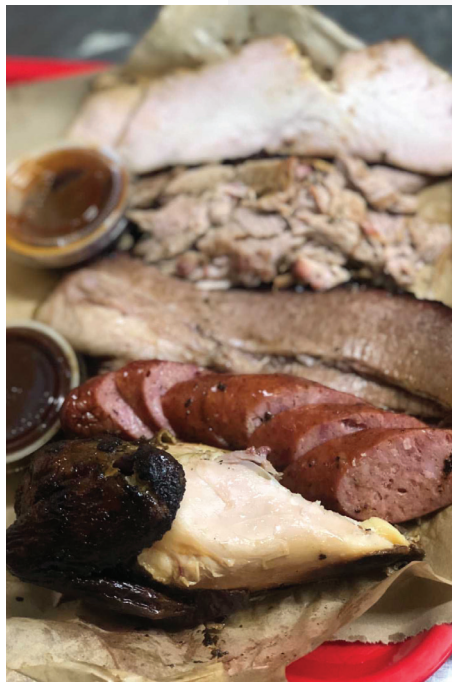
His closest role models were his two brothers. Ronald, the eldest, now a preacher in Tennessee; and S.N. (that is his legal name) in the middle, a doctor in education who has performed many good works throughout his time serving.

Both brothers, each five years apart from the next, were allies and rivals.

“I always wanted to dress better than my



Top: Bennie Miller Jr.
Photo by Michele Stockton
Bottom: Courtesy of Harmon’s BBQ



middle brother, and I wanted to beat the older one in sports,” but it was Ronald who foreshadowed Bennie’s life.

In high school, he was a serious basketball player but made a final turn toward storytelling after a friend and teammate was shot and killed. Miller processed his thoughts and emotions by cooking. What he eventually realized was that it was his calling he needed to answer. When it was time to consider colleges, he chose a culinary arts program at Howard University, with a dream of becoming a personal chef.

“Settling for Harmon’s Barbecue feels like a chef position to me. An honor to serve others,” Miller said.

“There’s no way in the world I would have thought, ‘O.K. let me apply to a university at all in my life if it wasn’t for him,’” Miller said, of his brother Ronald. “Ultimately, I’m here because of what he did.”

After applying but not being able to afford college, Miller moved to the north in a neighborhood of Brooklyn, where he ran out most of his 20s. He spent his days in coffee shops — playing chess and cooking in a diner, most days of which were influenced by hip-hop and African theology.

“He’s very keen to put human experiences in historical context,” Harmon said. “Even with a world that was make-believe, he wanted to connect it to the world that we know and could try to understand. That’s how he makes you feel when he walks through these doors. Everyone here feels his spirit.”

One wonders if, as a result of his travels throughout this life, Miller has evolved an occupational shorthand — a secret posture, gaze or pattern of a being — that can invest any hole-in-the-wall with ineffable dignity and work ethic.

Asked the question at the restaurant, he seemed to turn it over in his mind, as if he wanted to give it a fair shake.

“I wouldn’t say I’m an interesting person. I just have always had an interest in serving God’s people,” Miller said.



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