

A young girl with brown hair, wearing a dark jacket and a purple shirt with a white raised fist symbol, holds up a large white sign. The sign has the Spanish text 'Así Pelean Las Niñas' written in pink and orange paint. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with yellow flowers.

EL SOL

Issue XIII - 2023

# Mexico's Women Fight Back

A frightening femicide is killing thousands of women and girls throughout Mexico, and many more are sexually assaulted. Legions of survivors demand change.



# EL SOL

*Forward*

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COMPILED BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA AND LILIANA ANGUIANO



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## Editor's Message

**C**oronavirus hung on stubbornly in our borderlands home, keeping us in the red zone long after other parts of the U.S. declared all clear. It seemed ironic, too, because our progressive-leaning population was mostly vaccinated and taking COVID seriously. Pandemics are mysterious as well as capricious.

This January students returned to our Southwestern College newsroom for the first time in nearly three years. None of us were here in March 2020 when the campus cleared out, so we all had to start from scratch.

It was a little frustrating, but mostly exhilarating. Stamp-sized photonic faces from the Zoom squares came to life in flesh-and-blood. We made friends and became colleagues. We evolved into a team.

Best of all, we got to do journalism in person. We were able to move forward and seek out the stories of our recovering community. Some are heartbreaking, many are inspiring.

Seven miles from Mexico and six from the Pacific Ocean, Southwestern College is situated at a crossroads of the world. Our mission is to tell the stories of the remarkable people who live in and transit Southern San Diego County. Too often these people from different countries and divergent cultures who speak a polyglot of languages are overlooked by the major news media. We, in a small but meaningful way, work to give them voice.

We must not forget what happened during the pandemic and those we lost. We must embrace the experiences we endured and learn from them. We need to adapt.

Our futures call to us. We must go forward.



**Nicolette Monique Luna**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



# SEEKING CONGRESS STAMP OF APPROVAL

By JUAN HERRERA

**S**alvador Barajas is an artistic legend who made his name by thinking big — really big — including several towering murals in Chicano Park.

Now the 79-year-old master of murals is thinking small.

Really small.

Postage stamp small.

Barajas has designed a set of U.S. postal stamps that celebrate migrant laborers. “Los Indispensables” was inspired by the indispensable contributions of unsung workers to American society. He said he is thinking smaller so others will think bigger.

“These stamps are meaningful,” he said. “People who work at Walmart or Burger King, places like that, someone has to, but it should not be forever. Perhaps to earn money to buy

a car or a computer, yes, but one’s aspirations should be bigger and grander than Burger King.”

Barajas has portrayed honorable migrant laborers including a field worker, a nanny, an agricultural worker, a construction worker, a hotel domestic and a busboy.

“I worked as a dishwasher and a busboy before I entered the Air Force,” he said. “I told myself being a busboy was not going to get me anywhere.”

Getting his stamps on the envelopes of America will take an act of Congress in the most literal way.

“I would like to present a sample of Los Indispensables to Juan Vargas, our Congressional representative for the South Bay,” he said. “I am hopeful he can help get the prototypes to the right people at the U.S. Postal Service.” ▶

# IONAL



## POSTAGE DUE

Salvador Barajas drew on his wife's experience as a nanny and his own teenage jobs as a field laborer and busboy to develop six designs for U.S. postage stamps that honor the work of migrant labor.







Barajas is stuck on the idea of publishing Los Indispensables as a set of Forever Stamps which typically depict images of the American flag, national parks, celebrities or iconic animals.

“No one has ever designed stamps that honor the migrant laborer,” Barajas said. “I figured I could do it. I had to do it because no one else will. These are our friends and our family. They are forgotten members of our society.”


Barajas is no stranger to hard work. He has labored in fruit orchards and vegetable fields. His wife was once a nanny. Gardeners and hotel maids are essential to our society and economy, he said.

“I really appreciate what migrant workers have done for decades,” he said. “They are the backbone of our economy.”

For five decades Barajas has been a leading voice of Chicano artists and Chicano issues, which he never saw coming as a kid.

Originally from Nio, Sinaloa, Barajas grew up in Tijuana in the venerable barrio of La Colonia Libertad. For many migrants Colonia Libertad is often the last stop before attempting to cross the border into United States.

## SAVIOR OF THE MURALS



Barajas used his Air Force materials training and artistic experiences to develop the “Chicano Park Mural Restoration Technical Manual” used by Caltrans to protect and clean the iconic collection threatened by a seismic retrofit of Coronado Bridge pillars

At 17 Barajas and his family moved to San Diego where he attended night classes to learn English. Motivated by his pursuit of an education and the promise of the G.I. Bill, he joined the Air Force in 1964. He rose quickly through the ranks and held a secret security clearance as a technical illustrator, becoming a U.S. citizen along the way. He was also a talented boxer.

After completing his military service, Barajas entered Los Angeles Trade Technical College, whereupon he started his career as a commercial illustrator for an advertising agency.

Barajas was an early contributor to the world famous mural collection of Chicano Park. In fact, he collaborated on the first one, known today as the Founders Mural. He has now painted more of the murals in



Chicano Park's iconic collection than any other artist. Legendary faces of heroes like Cesar Chavez, Frida Kahlo, Dolores Huerta, Herman Baca, Benito Juarez and Ramon "Chunky" Sanchez stare down from the park's "Historical Mural" like Aztlán's Mt. Rushmore.

"In 1973 we just got whatever paint we could get our hands on and started painting what is now called the Historical Mural," he said. "We invited artists who were university professors from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno and all over the (state) to come and paint the pillars. We prepared the pillars for them, spending money out of our own pockets. Our scaffolding was primitive...but we found a way."

Many Chicano leaders insist the vastly talented but famously humble arts legend should himself be a face on the park's preeminent gateway mural.

"He is our Diego Rivera," said Gente Unida founder Enrique Morones. "Salvador Barajas is one of the greatest San Diegans, Chicano or otherwise."

Baca, the chairman of the Committee on Chicano Rights, agreed.

"Sal deserves to be up here (on the Founders Mural)," Baca said. "He is a great artist and an important figure in Chicano history. The Historical Mural is the most important mural in the park because it is like a giant textbook. It is a portal into the history and heritage of our people."

In 2021 Barajas joined UFW legend Dolores Huerta, Morones and Baca as recipients of a Southwestern College honorary degree, the institution's highest honor.

"(Barajas) has made a profound and permanent impact on our community, is an inspiration to members of our college community and is a hero to countless Chicanos/Latinos as well as people who

value multiculturalism in our region," read his nomination. "He is also a kind, generous and decent man who is a role model and inspirational figure."

Morones said Barajas played a critical role in saving the entire collection in the 2000s when Caltrans planned to destroy the murals for a seismic retrofit of the pillars supporting the Coronado Bridge. The City of San Diego was also drawing up plans to pave over Chicano Park to create off-site parking for the Petco Park downtown baseball stadium.

Barajas and members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee fought ferociously for three years against the Caltrans plan, arguing that the bridge could be reinforced for safety without harming the murals. Eventually a team of seismologists from UCSD hired by Caltrans reported that the pillars needed strengthening at ground level and at the very top, but that the faces of the pillars did not need new concrete.

Chicano Park's murals dodged destruction, but still faced damage by the dirty retrofit work. Caltrans hired Barajas to create a manual to guide the retrofit and a subsequent restoration of the 1970s-era murals. His "Chicano Park Mural Restoration Technical Manual," a detailed study of each mural and a precise plan to restore it, was the first of its kind ever developed in the United States.

Several local schools host murals by Barajas, including an ambitious two-part tour de force at King-Chavez Elementary, which he admitted is his favorite. His motivational posters with a rich Chicano aesthetic resonate from walls of classrooms and offices across the Southwest.

"Education is the great equalizer," he said. "For Latino kids, and all kids of color, a good education is essential."

Barajas is optimistic that his stamp designs will get the Congressional stamp of approval, but he will keep busy in the meantime.



FORWARD

# Civil rights activists call for an end to scapegoating of migrants

Scores of American politicians are generating fear of refugees for their own selfish reasons.

PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF



NOOLHEADS









PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

# MESSENGERS OF HEAVEN

*Gente Unida volunteers walk along the U.S.-Mexico border in a solemn remembrance of refugees around the globe.*

By NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

**I**t was actually pretty quiet at the border on a sunny but brisk winter morning. Not a riot or humanitarian crisis in sight. There were foxes, but no FOX, open fields but no open border. Indeed, a hulking metal wall was a rusty slice of nationalism vivisectioning a binational hillside festooned with blocky concrete houses on the developed south and fragrant chaparral mixed with a touch of salty sea breeze on the still natural north.

There were no teeming swarms of immigrants, just a swarm of gnats and a team of human rights activists in running shoes and hiking boots trudging along a sandy path threading a riparian oasis between Tijuana's 2.3 million



## PRAYERS FOR LOST SOULS



A Gente Unida activist reads a passage from scripture that urges people to be kind and helpful to the less fortunate. United Nations human rights monitors estimate as many as 1.3 million migrants may be on the move every day around the world.

PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF  
BUTTERFLY IMAGE / ADOBE



## ANGELS OF HOPEFULNESS

Gente Unida marchers were each given a butterfly to release into Border Field State Park in memory of a migrant who died somewhere in the world. Butterflies were allowed to warm in the palms of the volunteers before they flew away into the riparian meadows of the borderlands between Imperial Beach and Tijuana.



PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

people and San Diego County's 3.3 million souls. ▶

"Beautiful, *verdad?*" offered Enrique Morones, the Gente Unida founder who organized Walk for Migrants. "We are so blessed to be able to enjoy a morning like this when so many other people can't."

Morones picked a perfect December morning in Border Field State Park — warm in the sun, cool in the shade, capped by an azure dome spotted by an occasional tumbling cloud. He and his fellow walkers were there to remember the suffering and tragedy of migrants around the world, including near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Padre Dermot Rodgers, in his traditional brown Franciscan friar's robe and sandals, reminded the line of the reason for the season. It was two weeks before Christmas on *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, but Father Rodgers stopped and gathered the pack every few minutes like an Easter Station of the Cross procession.

Instead of the suffering of Christ, Father Rodgers shared stories of suffering by immigrants from Haiti, Syria, Somalia, Ukraine, Venezuela, China and other corners of the world beset by poverty and violence.

"We ask for basic and simple justice," he said in his light Irish brogue, a vestige of his native Belfast,

Northern Ireland. Rosary beads dangling from his weathered fingers and a serious countenance crossed his otherwise welcoming face.

Justice, however, is rarely basic or simple, he said. Inequity, war and corruption have pushed tens of millions out of their native countries and on to the migrant trail, an invisible highway of desperation crisscrossing the planet. Like the earnest walkers in the bottom left corner of America, as many as 1.3 million migrants are on the move this very day, said Rodgers.

Many of them never reach their destination, he said, struck down by heat, cold, robbers, rapists, accidents and hunger. More than 1,000 migrants died along the southern border in 2022 alone, according to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Rodgers gathered marchers to pray a portion of the rosary for Joselyn Quinteras of El Salvador, a migrant who died of dehydration and heat exhaustion in the desiccated southern Arizona desert near Tukumcari.

"She was abandoned in the wilderness by the *coyotes* she had paid to guide her across the border," he said. "They found her body three weeks later."

Quinteras, like the other migrants remembered along the way, was honored with a tangerine butterfly





PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF



## MONARCH MESSENGERS

Franciscan Padre Dermot Rogers said butterflies are a symbol of hope in many cultures and have a special place in the hearts of Latinos. “They are revered in Latino cultures as messengers to heaven,” he said. “Butterflies remind us that we are never alone and always connected to the spiritual world.” Monarch butterflies, which undertake long migrations between Oregon and Mexico, are symbols of immigrants and DREAMERS. Gente Unida activist Frank Modic, a hospice chaplain, raises butterflies to be released at ceremonies and funerals. The sleeping butterflies awaken and become active in the warm sunlit hands of participants. After a few moments, they test their wings and take flight.

released into the cyan sky.

“Butterflies are symbols of hope in many cultures,” said Rodgers. “They are revered in Latino cultures as messengers to heaven. Butterflies remind us that we are never alone and always connected to the spiritual world.”

*Transfronterizo* human rights activist Hugo Castro is a man known for his remarkable courage while helping Central American migrants traverse the perilous journey through Mexico where they are preyed upon by cartels and petty criminals alike. Castro was severely beaten and left for dead in a rural roadside ditch a few years ago while accompanying migrants. Morones said it is a miracle he survived.

Castro is a diminutive and soft spoken man, which betrays his reputation as a fierce defender of the weak and vulnerable. He said it was fitting that a Franciscan monk and a team of activists clutching rosaries gathered on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe to fight for the rights of migrants.

“It helps us to recognize the necessity of fighting for human rights, which is really a spiritual quest,” he said. “Some of us do it for spiritual reasons to light a flame of hope and love.”

Marching along the border to honor migrants “*es muy importante*,” Castro said, but the event is even more important for the activists walking together in the comforting sun. Caring for others requires people of good will to also care for themselves, he said, and to be periodically recharged with inspiration.

“*Hay un gran crisis humanitarian en todo el mundo*,” he said. “We need to remember that God is on their side and our side. Walking today with *el padre y las mariposas* helps me to remember that and gives me encouragement to do more work.”

Cecelia di Mino was a teenager adrift when she landed at Southwestern College and found herself, she said. Today she is a Harvard graduate who remembers her humble South County roots. She traveled from Las Vegas to participate in the walk, which she felt called to.

“I was blessed with opportunity so many other people do not have,” she said. “Sometimes as people find success and run toward their goals they forget their past, they forget about those they left behind. Migrants are so often the people left behind. They are criminalized and victimized.”

Looking down the path, Di Mino said she saw reasons for optimism.





## WINGED PRAYER

Hospice Chaplain Frank Modic began to raise butterflies to release at weddings, funerals and spiritual gatherings. He also accompanies Gente Unida to the notorious graveyard in Holtville that holds the remains of almost 1,000 unidentified migrants.



PHOTOS BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF





PHOTOS BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

“The people (here) have great intention and energy,” she said. “Releasing the butterflies...was really beautiful. There is a lot of love. (We need) people to pay attention (to migrants) and treat them with dignity and respect.”

Retiree Dr. Christauria Welland is far from retired. The former educator now helps run the Oaxaca Education Fund that provides schooling and food to indigenous people in Mexico’s southern states. One



**“I was blessed with opportunity so many other people do not have. Sometimes as people find success and run toward their goals they forget**

**their past, they forget about those they left behind. Migrants are so often the people left behind. They are criminalized and victimized.”**

**CECELIA DI MINO**

*SC alumnae, Harvard graduate*

part of her organization’s mission is to help people thrive where they are so they do not become displaced refugees.

“A little support can go a long way,” she said, “but the need is great. Mexico is a wonderful but complicated society. Doing humanitarian work there can be difficult because there are so many barriers and challenges.”

Hope gives her the power to push on, she said.

“Education is a force multiplier,” she said. “One transformed person can transform others. That is how it has always been since the beginning of time.”

Morones and company had planned to march all the way to the beach at the international border, but recent downpours had flooded the path. Padre Rodgers said the God-sent rain was a blessing for the plants and animals of the park, including the squadron of butterflies launched by the marchers that morning.

“The butterflies were born in the desert southwest of Southern California and will later migrate to the Columbia River Gorge around Portland, Oregon,” he said. “Our butterflies represent our migrants who are also undertaking a great trek. May God protect them as they make their journeys.” ■

PHOTOS BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF





**CAUTION  
HARD HEAD  
AREA**

**NO LATINO  
CULTURE ON  
CAMPUS**



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

# LATINO VIBE FADES

*Administrative churn has obliterated institutional memory and has left no one to advocate for the Latino architecture and culture of Southwestern College. A great whitewash continues unchecked.*

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

**F**rederick Buechner never took classes at Southwestern College, but he has stared right into our soul. “You have to suffer in order to be beautiful,” he wrote. Our once-beautiful campus looks like a war zone, especially in the center which is ... gulp, gone. The college is now a 156-acre donut—tasty on the perimeter, empty in the middle.

College leaders are justifiably boastful about what is coming. Taxpayers in the district have been very generous with SC and have invested in the future of the community by passing three bonds in two decades. Between the college and the Sweetwater high school district, local voters have taxed themselves almost \$2 billion. ▶



## **MAYAN EXTERMINATION**

Crews demolished the ASO building that featured an epic two-story Mayan ball marker glass etching. Other buildings designed to evoke Mayan and Aztec pyramids and designs have been replaced with generic, unattractive new buildings with no central design aesthetic.

Proposition Z alone will fund a modernized student center, bookstore, SWC Cares Hub, culinary arts, learning communities, veteran's center and personal wellness. Thank you voters.

Now to the suffering.

This generation of students is paying the price for attending a college in transition. We attend classes in the middle of a major construction zone. Sure there is the dirt, dust, mud, noise, ugly fencing, rude construction workers, competition with heavy equipment and almost-daily alterations to the pathways around campus. That is to be expected.

What was unexpected is the disregard for our Latino culture and history of Southwestern College. Our DNA is being rewritten before our eyes. Construction is whitewashing our Latino/Mesoamerican architecture and our SoCal vibe.

This was entirely avoidable, but inevitable due to the dizzying revolving door of college leaders we have suffered the past 25 years. Through no fault of their own there is no institutional memory in our senior college administration. None know our history and culture. Even our "homeboy" president is a La Jolla High School kid who attended Point Loma Nazarene College before leaving SoCal for decades. No disrespect intended, but it is fair to say we have no homegrown George Bailey or Chunky Sanchez. We have no homegrown leaders, and no one we can count on to stay here and grow with us. Churn has left its mark on our campus.

So our Mayan architecture is dismantled piece by piece, new building by new building. Ego trumped our culture. Proud architects who wanted to "make their mark" selfishly whipped up their own little monuments rather than working cooperatively to maintain a cohesive theme that represents our unique borderlands community. Our previous administrators allowed them to do it. From the flat-out ugly science building to the Soviet-era cafes and IT building, our college has become a drive-through collection of random, generic designs that could be plugged into Iowa, Wisconsin or Kentucky.

Even Dr. Mark Van Stone's elegant and striking Mayan glyphs on the gym and theater are aesthetic afterthoughts, attempts by architects to cover up the fact that the buildings are not Mayan at all. His lovely art deserved a better canvas and our community



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SC LNT



## NATURE OFFERS HOPE

Southwestern's best hope to salvage the college from complete sterilization is to greatly expand the South Bay Botanical Garden in the heart of campus, and to commit to native plants and wildlife.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SC





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**Our Mayan architecture is dismantled piece by piece, new building by new building. Ego trumped our culture. Proud architects who wanted to “make their mark” selfishly whipped up their own little monuments rather than working cooperatively to maintain a cohesive theme that represents our unique borderlands community.**

deserved a better corner at Chula Vista’s busiest intersection.

Our campus mascot, the jaguar, once represented our Mesoamerican Latino heritage. Johnny Jaguar will soon be an irrelevant and untethered big cat with no connection to the emerging whitewashed college culture.

### **BOTANICAL GARDEN**

Where there’s life, there’s hope, so here’s hoping we can preserve at least a few of the elements from the 1964-2014 Mayan pyramid era of SC.

Our South Bay Botanical Garden was once the aesthetic pride of the campus. It was an oasis of loveliness and spirituality in a sea of concrete. It was the fingerprint of God where students and faculty could escape to distress and re-center.

College planners have said it will be built back, but they have not said it will be built back better. We have an opportunity to double or triple the size of the garden and we should. We should also think big and dream up a way to create a “natural” pathway from the center of campus to the garden, perhaps even an elevated footbridge that takes pedestrians safely over the busy perimeter road.

Mental health benefits alone would justify expansion of the Botanical Garden, but there are many other reasons. It could become a living laboratory for environmental science students, a meditation center,

and a gathering place for respectful celebrations and memorials.

### **RARE PLANTS SANCTUARY**

SC is home to a few specimens of the world’s rarest tree, the Torrey Pine. We should plant more. We should also plant other endangered San Diego County species on our grounds and give them protected status. Our breezy mesa-top topography lends itself to many threatened plants found in the transition zone between coastal and inland climates.

Besides serving as a sanctuary for the plants, our college should be a sanctuary for visionary students. Being among endangered plants will expose students and the community to species they may not know about. To care for something, you must first know it and love it.

### **CAMPUS WILDLIFE**

Prior to construction SC had a charming and healthy array of nocturnal wildlife. We shared the college with the same animals that lived here long before we studied here.

As the night students and faculty headed out around 10 p.m., the animals reclaimed their turf. Raccoons, skunks, opossums, coyotes and even bob cats crossed the lawns where just hours earlier lounging students strummed guitars and read Shakespeare and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Owls perched high above it all, giving constant notice that the coast was clear and the nighttime court of the Animal Kingdom was once again in session.

Let’s hope our facilities team and the building crews will respect and guard the streambeds that border the northwestern quadrant of the campus. They are the daytime homes of most of the animals we share our campus with. We also need to be mindful of their pathways to the campus center.

### **IT IS NOT TOO LATE**

Much is already lost, but there is still time to build a beautiful Southwestern College. The angels are in the details. Our urban forest needs to be re-established. Our spiritual center needs to be expanded and improved. Our thin but inspiring connection to nature must be fiercely defended.

We are going to suffer construction for many more years. Let’s hope it is all worth it someday. ■



FORWARD

# Brigham Young University — ‘South County’s Mormon U’ stigmatizes its LGBTQ students

A new generation of activists demand that the historically conservative institution modernize its anti-gay ‘honor code’

PHOTO COURTESY OF SALT LAKE TRIBUNE





M...  
your  
ts backs!

W.W.J.  
Bring Honor back  
the Honor code at

Save one  
Another.

PUT  
THE Honor of GOD  
Back in the Office

BYU  
1875







PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK BOWMER / AP

# UNSAINTLY PERSECUTION

## STUDENTS CALL OUT BYU'S ANTI-LGBTQ PRACTICES

By DIEGO HIGUERA

**B**righam Young University seems so far from Chula Vista. It is 713 miles away, an 11-hour drive through four states.

Culturally, it is a light year from diverse, progressive South San Diego County. BYU is in the heart of red state Utah, a bastion of conservative politics since the late 1840s.

BYU seems like the last place a kid from the South Bay would want to attend, but there is a quiet pipeline from our multiracial blue coastal strip to the

“Mormon Harvard.” There may be as many as 14,000 Mormons in the South County who have high regard for BYU’s deserved reputation as an excellent academic university with an affordable price tag.

Often, though, culture shock consumes BYU’s overwhelmed LGBTQ students. Ugliness ensues.

Last semester when campus clubs and student organizations were invited to insert brochures and handouts in a Welcome to BYU bag for incoming freshmen, campus officials removed all materials from LGBTQ organizations.

One of the purged clubs was the BYU Rainbow Collective, an organization whose stated mission is “to create and identify safe spaces for BYU’s LGBTQIA+ students.” Rainbow Collective organizes back-to-school Pride events, DEI training and a popular art show.

Rainbow Collective PR Manager Haley Malesich said the move was hurtful. ▶



### UNITED IN UTAH

BYU attracts Mormon students from across America with its affordable tuition and generally good academics. Students from the South County are among the leaders of a growing movement to push BYU toward full acceptance of marginalized LGBTQ students.

“(BYU administrators) make statements about inclusivity and loving your neighbor,” she said, “but fail to show up for the LGBTQ+ community and give full love only on the condition that you change who you are to fit their mold.”

Malesich said LGBTQ students are starting to push back.

“We want LGBTQ+ students to know that they have a community of people here to encourage them and support them,” she said. “No one deserves to feel excluded or stranded with no life vest. Our goal is to listen, lift and love.”

Raynbow Collective works alongside 14 organizations that support the greater queer community of Utah. Malevich said faculty and students are becoming more vocal in their allyship.

“Alongside our friends at the Cougar Pride Center, USGA, Equality Utah, the Out Foundation, Black Menaces, and so many others, I have seen a surge of support and love within the community and from allies to the community,” she said. “I feel like our organizations bring out the best in people. We’ve been able to create powerful, deep friendships while advocating for a better, more inclusive Utah. I’ve also seen more people stand up for the rights of those being discriminated against. It’s a beautiful thing to see so many people united in purpose.”

Grace (a pseudonym) is a freshman at BYU. She identifies as an LGBTQ

Mormon, which they said is often a dichotomy difficult to reconcile.

“I want to talk openly about LGBTQ topics, but I’m scared to,” they said. “None of the organizations made for queer BYU students are school affiliated and none can meet on campus. Within these groups, the LGBTQ community at BYU is very vibrant and supportive. We meet and give each other advice, comfort and resources. We warn each other which professors to avoid and also tell each other which ones are allies.”

Grace said their time at BYU has not been all bad, but they feel LGBTQ students are marginalized.

“(BYU has an) Office of Belonging, but that is the only official (institution encouraging diversity) I know of,” they said.

Grace said the conundrum of LGBTQ students’ attraction to BYU seems illogical, but is driven by pragmatism.

“Why do queer students go to BYU?” they asked. “Why don’t they just go somewhere else? We think it’s going to be different. It’s the best choice financially. Some (students) don’t know they are queer until they’re already at BYU. Financial control by parents. Social pressure to attend.”

Grace is attending BYU for spiritual reasons, they said. Many queer students are still faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but chafe under an “honor code” hostile to LGBTQ students.



## SPEARHEADING A CALL FOR CHANGE

BYU administrators and Mormon Church leaders have for years quietly hemmed in its LGBTQ students and prevented them from organizing clubs and activities, according to the BYU students and alumni. The community is pushing back and demanding that BYU join other U.S. universities in respecting the rights of LGBTQ Americans. Kaitlynn Wright (l) is one of the emerging voices in the movement to empower LGBTQ Mormon students. Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*





PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LANEY NORMAN / STAFF



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“Change is likely to be slow at BYU,” they said. “The honor code stuff is controlled by people very high up (in the church hierarchy), so even if all the staff and students wanted change (to campus culture) it would be unlikely.”

Sydney Mortenson is a freshman at BYU and an LGBTQ ally.

“Most of the people I have talked with seem to be very kind and accepting of everyone,” she said. “I will say, though, that there have been a few times I’ve heard some very homophobic things said by students and people on campus.”

Mortenson said LGBTQ students are subject to the old Christian canard “love the sinner, hate the sin.”

BYU’s surrounding Provo, Utah community can be rough on LGBTQ students, she said. Once, while riding a city bus, she mentioned to a woman that she was majoring in animation. The woman blurted out her disapproval of a same sex kiss in the Disney film “Lightyear.”

“She said she thought it was terrible how early kids are being exposed to LGBTQ relationships and how Disney should not pretend those relationships are normal,” Mortenson said. “Even though many of the people I’ve met on campus are amazing and accepting of everyone, I absolutely understand how (members) of the LGBTQ community can feel unwelcome and unsafe at BYU. The university needs to encourage its students and faculty to be more inclusive.”

Students are modeling the way forward, she said.

“BYU teaches students to love everyone, but I feel like there are definitely times at school where that value is not kept,” she said. “I absolutely love groups like the Rainbow Collective and the Black Menaces and everything they’ve done for the school, but I think more should be

done by BYU itself.”

Mortenson cited the BYU honor code, strictly held behavioral mores that ban “homosexual behavior.” Under the honor code, LGBTQ couples are not to hold hands, hug, kiss or date in public.

Mortenson said the honor code encourages straight students to rat out LGBTQ classmates.

“I think the biggest issue with the honor code is that most people don’t even bother reading it, so they are just reporting whatever they deem inappropriate,” she said. “The honor code is very outdated.”

BYU alumnus Jillian Orr went viral with more than 1.6 million views when they sowed a rainbow flag into their graduation gown and flashed it on BYU’s Marriot Center Jumbo Tron after receiving their diploma. It was a violation of the honor code and could have cost Orr their degree.

“I knew there could be consequences for what I did and I was ready to face whatever it was,” they said. “When I was making this decision I remembered something that had happened this year. On Rainbow Day there were students that went up to the Y for BYU on the mountain and they took lights and made the Y a rainbow. To be recognized! BYU made very, very clear rules against this. (The students) did that knowing they could be arrested and knowing they could be charged.”

Despite the prejudicial treatment, South County LGBTQ students still go to BYU. Pat (a pseudonym), who identifies as queer, said pragmatism weighs in.

“BYU has the program I wanted and every year it ranks Top 10 in the country for \$3,000 a semester,” they said. “Look me in the eyes and tell me that’s not an option you might take. I was a teenager when I decided to go to BYU. I was deeply entrenched in my religion and I knew I would be in a community of likeminded people at BYU.”



**“Most of the people I have talked with seem to be very kind and accepting of everyone. I will say, though, that **there have been** a few times I’ve heard some very homophobic things said by students and people on campus.”**

**SYDNEY MORTENSON**

*BYU Freshman, LGBTQ ally*

Pat rejects the “you knew what you were getting into” rhetoric they often hear.

“I did not know (about the anti-LGBTQ culture),” they said. “Nobody knows what BYU is like until you’re actually on campus and seeing what’s going on.”

Pat said he made a sound fiscal decision.

“If I had chosen my major at a different university or a different state, I would be paying student loans akin to medical school,” they said.

Mortenson said BYU is a great academic university, but it needs to evolve. There should be room for Mormon LGBTQ students fighting for a better BYU. The university’s motto, “Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve,” remains aspirational, she said.

“The university needs to learn from its minority populations,” she said. “LGBTQ students deserve a chance to pursue a better education and feel comfortable while doing so. They deserve the chance to go forth and serve their community.” ■



**THE HEM OF HER GARMENT**

Jillian Orr flashed attendees at her BYU graduation with the colorful lining she had sewn into her gown. She waited until after she was handed her diploma to show her Pride or she might not have received it.



ILLUSTRATION BY EDMUNDO GODINEZ / STAFF



# MOREH ROSE SCHINDLER BENT DARKNESS TO LIGHT

By NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

**F**rom the last time she saw her father at Auschwitz until the day she died, Rose Schindler's mission in life was to tell the world what happened during the Holocaust. Her father's last words to the 14-year-old dwelled within her until she died this month at 93.

"Whatever you do, stay alive so that you can tell the world what they are doing to us."

Mrs. Schindler fulfilled her mission and became one of America's greatest Holocaust educators and one of our nation's greatest citizens. The last 45 years of her life were dedicated to keeping the sacred promise she made to her father. There are no exact figures to tabulate how many people she reached, but it would be safe to say it was in the hundreds of thousands. She became one of our nation's

leading *Moreh*, the Hebrew word for teacher. In Judaism they is no more honored title.

Moreh Schindler required superhuman stamina and enormous inner strength to travel the land and share her family's horrific experiences of fear, suffering and death at the hands of one of history's most barbarous regimes. Her parents and most of her immediate family were among the 6 million Jews exterminated by German Nazis during World War II. Her family members were killed in the notorious Auschwitz gas chamber. A tattoo etched on her forearm by the Nazis was a daily reminder.

Miraculously teenage Rose and her sister survived, once by sneaking out of the line of teens and children heading for the same gas chambers her parents perished in. She later dodged death by lying about her age and going to a labor camp with able bodied adults. Her courage, cunning and desire to live propelled her through unspeakable

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*She spoke of her happy childhood that turned horrific after her entire family was arrested and sent to Auschwitz where she was tortured and enslaved. Tears flowed when she told the teenagers in the high school gym that she and her sister were the only two of the nine members of her family to survive the concentration camp. They were also teens.*

depravation and epic cruelty. ►

Then, on one surprising morning, the Germans fled and she realized she could keep her promise to her father. She met fellow Holocaust survivor Max Schindler in England, immigrated to San Diego County and raised a family.

In her late 40s she launched into her life's third act. She was a charismatic presence, a gifted storyteller and a brilliant witness to history. When the world's collective memory of the Holocaust began to fade, she was the right woman at the right moment. Her message to "pick up the torch and carry it forward" resonated with youth. She visited hundreds of schools, sat for countless interviews and wrote a book, "Two Who Survived: Keeping Hope Alive While Surviving the Holocaust."

Among the campuses she visited recently was Bonita Vista High School, our neighbor across the street. Moreh Schindler was compelled to go to BVH in late April of 2022 following darkly ugly acts of anti-Semitic



vandalism there and at BV Middle School.

It was a seminal event for the high school. Her electrifying presentation transformed the BVH student body. When she began to speak it was if the whole world froze to listen. Students were shocked, outraged and pained to hear what the Schindler girls were put through. She spoke of her happy childhood that turned horrific after her entire family was arrested and sent to Auschwitz where she was tortured and enslaved. Tears flowed when she told the teenagers in the high school gym that she and her sister were the only two of the nine members of her family to survive the concentration camp. They were also teens.

Somehow the terrible things Moreh Schindler faced could not ruin her radiant spirit. She was a Holocaust survivor who inexplicably remained upate and optimistic. She was one of the liveliest and most loving people anyone could hope to meet.

Faith made her that way, she said. It was her faith in young people that fueled her optimism and her mission.

Rose Schindler was a warrior for peace right to the end. She spoke to enthralled audiences just a fortnight before she died.

Now the torch has passed to us. We honor her and other great Holocaust *Moreh* like Ben Midler, Gerhard Maschkowski and the late SC honorary degree recipient Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax by continuing their work to reject evil and promote peace. It is now our turn to say “never again” and keep alive the spirits of Holocaust victims and survivors.

History has a disconcerting habit of repeating itself, but people of good will and intention can prevent humanity from replicating its darkest mistakes. In the spirit of Rose Schindler, we accept the challenge. ■

*Moreh Schindler  
was compelled to go  
to BVH in late April  
of 2022 following  
darkly ugly acts  
of anti-Semitic  
vandalism there  
and at BV Middle  
School.*



*It was her faith in  
young people that  
fueled her optimism  
and her mission.*





PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRA SCHELLER

# ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS ON THE RISE

*Local schools, Holocaust educator and SC student magazines are attacked*

By **BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA**

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**S**andra Scheller feels something dark and unnerving bubbling up in America.

Her Jewish family has felt it before.

Scheller, a human rights activist and the daughter of Holocaust survivors, said it feels to her like anti-Semitism is roaring back in the United States. Even the usually placid vibe of diverse and disproportionately Jewish Chula Vista has taken a nasty turn, she said.



## **HATE IN THE 'HOOD**

A swastika on the fence of a preschool less than a mile from Southwestern College was just one of many hateful acts of vandalism in the area this year. San Diego County Anti-Defamation League officials called it a record-breaking year for anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitic episodes in the Chula Vista area preceded the latest rants of Kanye West and his ilk, Scheller said. Some examples:

- Swastikas spray painted on Bonita Vista High School and BV Middle School.
- A swastika painted on the fence of First United Methodist Preschool near Southwestern College.
- Hundreds of copies of Southwestern College El Sol Magazine featuring Holocaust survivors vandalized or stolen at SC and nearby circulation points.
- Swastikas scrawled in the dust of car windows of a Jewish teenager near L Street.
- Photos of Adolph Hitler left at a Chula Vista trolley stop.

San Diego County's Jewish community suffered 38 recorded incidents of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish hate in 2021, according to the Anti-Defamation League. It is a dubious new record that may be broken in ►



## \$100,000 Sony sponsorship

By Cesar Hirsch  
Arts Editor

Negotiations between the Southwestern College Art Gallery and Sony Corporation for a sponsorship of \$100,000 in exchange for three years of naming rights have come to a standstill nearly a year and half after the offer was first made.

Gallery Director Vallo Riberto said he had courted Sony in the hopes of

establishing a long-term collaboration. Along with the donation, Riberto said Sony would have provided scholarships, internships, workshops and benefits for the college.

Dr. Donna Arnold, the former dean of the School of Arts and Communication, said at the time that she supported the deal, but wanted faculty support. It did not come.

In fall 2014, after a handful of faculty expressed concerns about

commercialization of the gallery, Riberto said the deal stalled.

"Initially (Sony) was going to give us a very generous gift for naming rights, which the administration was fine with," Riberto said. "I introduced the idea to the faculty. We had a meeting here at the gallery and the faculty voted against it. The offer was so generous it was a shame to pass up because we could've probably lived off the interest for a long time."



# New face





**MINORITIES TARGETED**

Thousands of copies of the Southwestern College Sun newspaper and El Sol Magazine featuring Muslim, Jewish and Black Americans on the covers have been stolen or destroyed since 2016 when Donald Trump first ran for president.

PHOTO BY  
EL SOL STAFF

# rejected

For nearly 20 years the acclaimed gallery has operated on a budget of \$1,000 or less. In December the college Faculty Hiring Prioritization Committee rejected a request to hire a full-time gallery director.

Professor of Photography Micajah Truitt said he attended the faculty meetings where the Sony proposal was discussed.

"The general consensus was that

*please see Sony pg. A3*

# Records request delayed

**By Andrew Dyer**  
*Assistant News Editor*

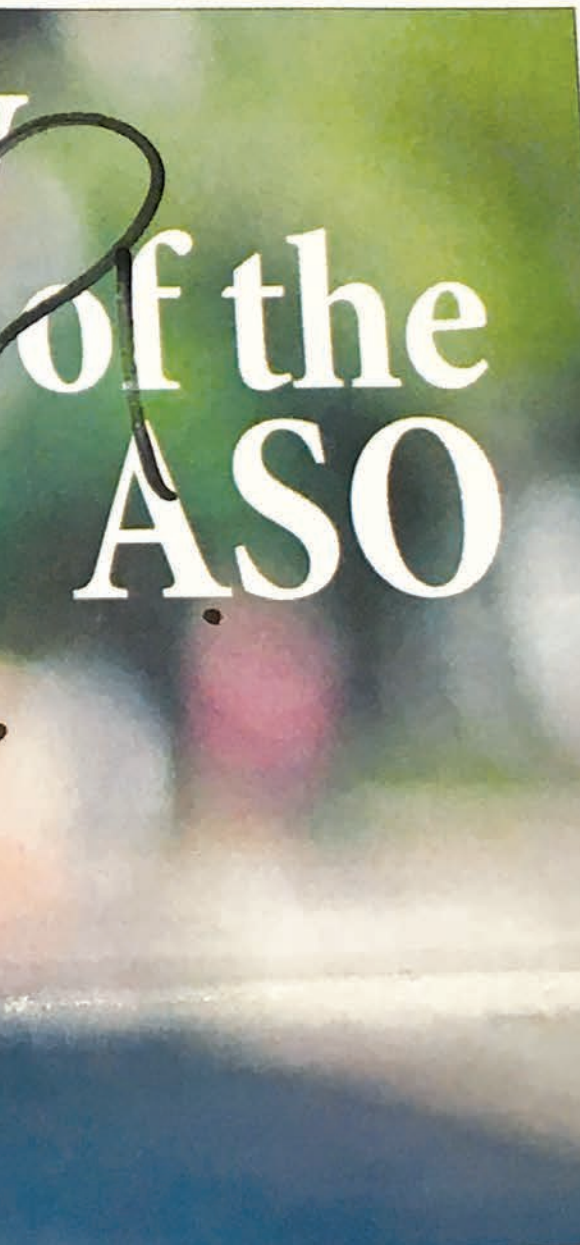
During the 2015-16 academic year, Southwestern College has been in violation of the California Public Records Act (CPRA) twice in response to requests by The Sun. On another occasion, the college placed student journalists' records requests on the "slow-track" to fulfillment, according to lawyers at the Student Press Law Center (SPLC), a Washington, D.C. First Amendment rights organization.

Every spring, during Sunshine Week, journalists across the United States are encouraged to test local public institutions for transparency and compliance with public records laws passed after the Watergate scandals of the 1970s.

On April 4, 2016, The Sun requested several public records from the college, including staff emails and travel expense reports. While the expense reports were produced in 10 days, the district asked for more time to produce the emails, citing exceptions in the law that allow for the redaction of certain information if "the public interest served by not disclosing the record clearly outweighs the public interest served by disclosure of the record."

"The District will produce all non-exempt and non-privileged documents

*please see CPRA pg. A4*



# Blackboard erased by the Senate

ion 2016

ls

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## **Anti-semitism:** Recent increases in hateful activities in South Bay and across America has Jewish community, rights activists alarmed.

2022, said ADL's Regional former Director Tammy Gillies. The figures represent "just the tip of the iceberg," she said. ADL officials said they expect 2022 to be far worse.

It has been for Scheller.

On a warm August afternoon she and a friend had an ugly encounter at the Chula Vista Public Library near City Hall.

Scheller and historian Harry Orgovan were at the library packing up Scheller's critically-acclaimed exhibit "RUTH: Remember Us, The Holocaust" when they were approached by a middle aged man with dark hair and eyes. Scheller recounted the episode.

"What are you doing?" he snarled. "What is this?"

"We're taking down (our) Holocaust exhibit," she recalled telling the man. "There is a new exhibit coming in."

Scheller said the man seemed unhappy to hear that, but not for the reason she expected.

"You need to keep this up," she recalled the man saying. "Everybody needs to see this wall. Everybody needs to see Auschwitz. Everybody needs to know that Jews lie, Jews steal, Jews kill animals. Jews have their own language no one understands. They cry like babies and ask 'Where is God?' Don't they realize that God created Auschwitz so every Jew could get killed? You need to keep that wall up."

Scheller said she stood before the man silently and in shock when she realized that he considered the exhibit to be a celebration of Auschwitz and the Holocaust rather than a condemnation.

"It was a real wake up call," she said.



### **MARKS OF INTOLERANCE**

(r) Vandals destroyed nearly a third of the entire print run of an issue of El Sol Magazine featuring SC's Muslim ASO president. (below) A special edition of The Sun exploring sexual assault against college students was also targeted. (below, r) A swastika on the rear window of a car belonging to a Jewish teenager in Chula Vista.



PHOTO BY EL SOL STAFF





PHOTO BY EL SOL STAFF



PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRA SCHELLER

## CALL FOR PERMANENT MUSEUM

The diatribe sparked a realization, Scheller said. There is a great need for a permanent Holocaust museum in the South Bay.

“We need to continue to work hard to teach younger generations about what happened to Jews and other marginalized people in the 1930s and ‘40s,” she said. “We have so much more work to do.”

Holocaust survivors are rapidly disappearing due to old age, Scheller said. The work of her mother, Holocaust educator Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax who died in 2018, must be handed off to younger Americans.

A museum would be the center of Holocaust education for schools and the community, she said, and a repository of artifacts from the *pogrom*, *Kristallnacht*, the Holocaust and other attacks on Judaism. Scheller envisions a museum that also educates about genocides committed against Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and peoples in Africa, North America and South America.

Bob Lehman, Executive Director of the San Diego Museum Council, supports Scheller’s vision.

“Museums are really about the community telling its story,” he said. “It’s about remembering what happened and being able to tell that story.”

Orgovan, president of the South Bay Historical Society and the Chula Vista Heritage Museum, partnered with Scheller on the Holocaust exhibit in the library.

“It really expanded my view of what the Holocaust was and why it is so important that we not judge people by race, religion, country of origin, or anything that we think defines them,” he said.

Now Orgovan hopes to help Scheller continue educating others.

Scheller said “it’s all about baby steps” as she presses for a Holocaust and human rights museum. She said she would love to build the museum at Southwestern College.

## San Diego County's Jewish community suffered 38 recorded incidents of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish hate in 2021, according to the Anti-Defamation League. The figures represent "just the tip of the iceberg."

### TAMMY GILLIES

former Anti-Defamation League director



"Southwestern is our community's center of learning and personal growth," she said. "Chula Vista has a rich heritage of community-minded Jewish people who served others with selflessness and a spirit of generosity. What a perfect place for a museum that reminds us that we must love and respect each other."

### MAGAZINES DESTROYED

Scheller's encounter was a prelude to other anti-Semitic episodes in the community.

In late October SC journalism students and faculty were shocked to find that someone had vandalized or stolen thousands of copies of the Southwestern College Sun and El Sol Magazine at campus news stands as well as distribution points in Chula Vista, Bonita and Sunnyside. Nearly 200 copies of El Sol Magazine featuring three Holocaust survivors had their covers torn off. Some had been stomped or torn up.

Perpetrators had combed the campus and attacked at least a dozen circulation sites. Publications advisor Dr. Max Branscomb reported the vandalism to the Chula Vista Police Department as well as the campus

police. He also briefed college president Dr. Mark Sanchez. He estimated the value of the stolen and damaged publications to be \$2,000 - \$2,500.

"This was a calculated act," Branscomb said. "It took someone a long time to crisscross our campus, find all the newsstands and destroy so many newspapers and magazines."

Campus Police Chief Marco Barena said SCPD officers would review video from blue pole security cameras to see if the perpetrators could be identified. Branscomb said he would prosecute any suspects identified by the police. Collegiate publications have special federal legislation designed to protect the speech rights of students and the work of young journalists. Theft, destruction and damage of college newspapers to prevent others from reading them is a federal offense



### SURVIVORS TARGETED

Hundreds of copies of The Sun newspaper and El Sol Magazine featuring photos and articles about Holocaust survivors were stolen or destroyed on campus and circulation points across the street. Campus police said they were unable to identify the perpetrators.





PHOTO BY EL SOL STAFF

and a felony, Branscomb said.

“Stealing and vandalizing student publications are despicable acts and efforts to thwart the First Amendment rights of college journalists,” he said. “I won’t have it on my watch. The perpetrators better pray we never catch them because if we do there will be severe consequences for them.”

The vandalism could also generate hate crime charges, Bareno said, if the college could show that the motive was anti-Semitism. Bareno said he and the campus police support Southwestern’s journalism students and would step up patrols around circulation points.

Camila Gonzalez, Editor in Chief of The Sun, had several of her articles published in the 2022 edition of El Sol Magazine. She said the attacks on student publications featuring courageous Holocaust survivors were “profoundly disappointing.”

“I was in shock because the intention of this magazine was to create empowering and profound stories that were meant to impact the community in a positive way,” she said. “These stories are more than just assignments to me. They give individuals a chance to speak their truths, which has always moved me.”

Recent anti-Semitic activity and Holocaust deniers underscore the need for more reporting by young journalists on these topics, Gonzalez said.

“The Holocaust destroyed the lives of mothers, fathers, children and many other people,” she said. “I cannot fathom why they continue to be met with anti-Semitism.”

Gonzalez said SC journalism students are not intimidated by “hometown haters” and will continue to tell the stories of marginalized and underrepresented members of the San Diego County-Tijuana community.

## **STUDENT PUBLICATIONS TARGETED BEFORE**

Branscomb said The Sun and El Sol







Magazine have been targets of hate crimes before, including:

2003. Islamophobic vandals destroyed hundreds of copies of *The Sun* and left singed piles near the journalism building protesting an article about an Iraqi refugee attending Southwestern College.

2005. A militant anarchist group burned copies of *The Sun*, vandalized the journalism building, and threatened to kill the advisor and a student journalist. Campus police had to guard the faculty member and student until the end of the school year after the group bused members of extremist organizations to campus. Their actions attracted white supremacists from the Ku Klux Klan, Minuteman Project and American Nazi Party to campus to protest *The Sun*'s coverage of immigration and students of color.

2010. Supporters of former college president Raj Chopra stole thousands of copies of *The Sun* with articles critical of Chopra and his vice president Nicholas Alioto. Chopra later ordered *The Sun* to cease publication, a directive the faculty advisor refused to follow. Students, staff and faculty countered by raising money to print the edition that broke open the South Bay Corruption Scandal of 2010-12. Dozens of volunteers met the delivery truck and delivered a September 2010 issue by hand classroom-to-classroom so that students and staff would have the opportunity to read it. Chopra resigned shortly thereafter. Alioto was terminated.



### **X MARKS THE PRISONER**

A cutout of Chula Vista Holocaust survivor Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax at the RUTH: Remember Us The Holocaust exhibit at the Chula Vista Public Library. Her mother was forced to wear the black dress – taken from a dead Jewish prisoner – in Auschwitz. Nazi guards ran out of prison striped garments, so Jewish prisoners had a large white X painted on their backs.

Spring 2016. Islamophobics and supporters of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump vandalized and destroyed hundreds of copies of *The Sun* with a front page photo of newly-elected ASO President Mona Dibas, a hijabi Muslim woman. Vandals use felt pens to write “Trump 2016” across Dibas’ face.

Summer 2016. Nearly a third of the entire print run of *El Sol Magazine VIII* was destroyed by Trump supporters who objected to the cover photo of SC’s Muslim ASO President Mona Dibas. They scrawled “Trump 2016” across Dibas’ face or tore off the covers. About \$8,000 worth of the magazines were destroyed. The issue was later named National College Magazine of the Year and received the collegiate Pulitzer Prize.

Fall 2016. Issues of *The Sun* with a front page photo of African-American students protesting the shooting death of an unarmed Black man by police in El Cajon were destroyed by Trump supporters and racists who wrote “Trump 2016” or “Fuck Blacks” across the images of the Black student protesters.

“None of those attempts to silence Southwestern College journalism students were successful, and none ever will be,” Branscomb said.

### **THE WORK CONTINUES**

Holocaust educators like Scheller and Rose Schindler, Benjamin Midler and Gerhard Maschkowski — the trio of elderly survivors featured on the cover of *El Sol XII* — have much the same attitude. Their work continues.

“Silence is complicity,” Scheller said. “As long as there are people speaking up and sharing the truth there is hope. There are a lot of crummy things going on in the world, but there are even more wonderful things. That and our young people should give all of us hope.” ■

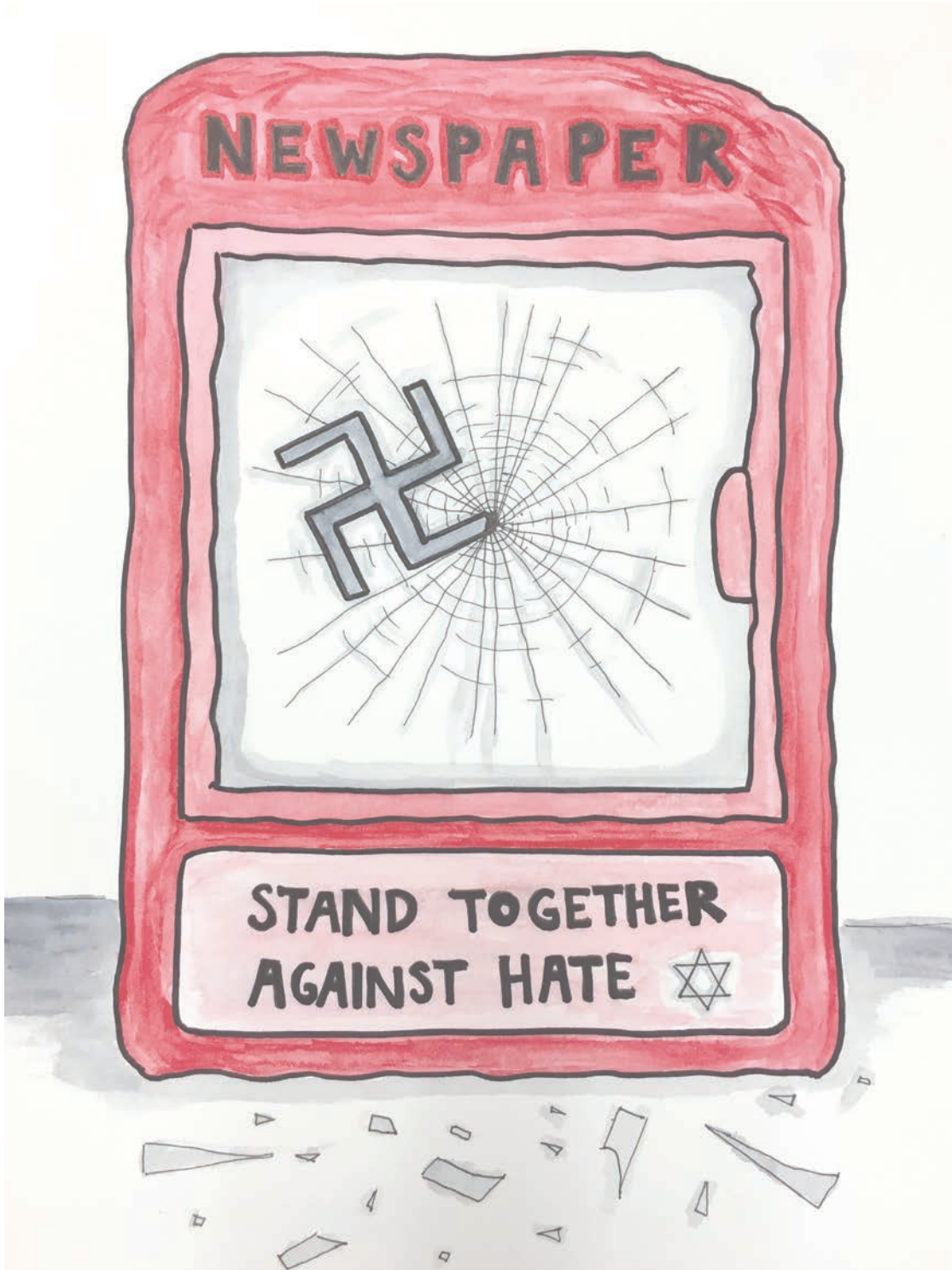


ILLUSTRATION BY ALICIA RIVERO / STAFF



# INCREASE IN ANTI-SEMITISM CRIMES A DIRE WARNING TO THE SOUTH COUNTY

By NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

It is, once again, time to speak out about anti-Semitism.

Slowly and steadily, like rust on the undercarriage or mold in the wall, the corrosive malignancy of anti-Semitic language and anti-Jewish behavior is slithering free of Pandora's Box.

Even here, in mostly-progressive, multicultural Southern San Diego County, anti-Semitism is clawing its way out of the dustbin of history. Chula Vista — a city largely built and shaped by its altruistic Jewish citizens — is inexplicably ground zero. Recent anti-Semitic activity in Chula Vista includes:

- A verbal attack on a Jewish activist at her Holocaust exhibit at the Chula Vista Library.
- Swastikas spray painted on Bonita Vista High School and BV Middle School.

- A swastika painted on a preschool near Southwestern College.

- Swastikas scrawled on the car of a Jewish teenager.

- Photos of Hitler scattered about a Chula Vista trolley stop.

Now anti-Semitism has come to our campus. Late last month hundreds of copies of The Sun and El Sol Magazine were vandalized and destroyed at a dozen distribution sites on the Chula Vista campus. Monetary value of the destruction was estimated at \$2,000 - \$2,500.

That is a lot for our journalism program, but the true cost is much higher. Vandals/anti-Semites targeted El Sol Magazine, whose current edition features a striking cover photo of trio of Holocaust survivors in their late 80s and 90s showing tattoos ▶

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**“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.**

**Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.**

**Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”**

*—Martin Niemöller*

they received from their Nazi captors at extermination camps in Auschwitz and Birkenau. Covers were torn off, torn up and stomped on, ground into the soil of our multiracial, multi-faith campus.

Unfortunately, this swelling tumor of intolerance is expanding across the United States. Hate is becoming normalized. In 2021, the Anti-Defamation League’s annual audit found the highest rates of Anti-Semitism in the U. S. since it started tracking it in 1979. For a generation that prides itself on being accepting and doing better, that data is alarming. An NPR report found that one in four Jews were subject to antisemitism in the U.S. last year. Both organizations expect the 2022 data to be worse.

Traditional hate has a new home on social media, including entire sites

dedicated to anti-Jewish conspiracies, plots and pockets of paranoia. Their foul potions are dripping on America. Anti-Semitic vandalism soared 14 percent in 2021 with 853 documented cases.

Vandalism is a crime and should be treated as such. There is no taking back the fear and disgust brought on by tearing down someone’s feeling of safety or home. Images can stay with someone forever. Swastikas have been spray painted on at least three schools within a mile of Southwestern College — including a preschool. Let that sink in.

We appreciate the immediate support from our Dean Dr. Cynthia McGregor and Campus Police Chief Marco Bareno. We are a little disappointed in the yawning response we got from other college administrators and the Chula Vista Police. Too much else going on, we suppose.

Hate is ultimately not solved by government or law enforcement, it is solved by people like us. We all need to call out hateful rhetoric and hateful behavior. We need to let the perpetrators know is not something we will accept or tolerate. We need to push back.

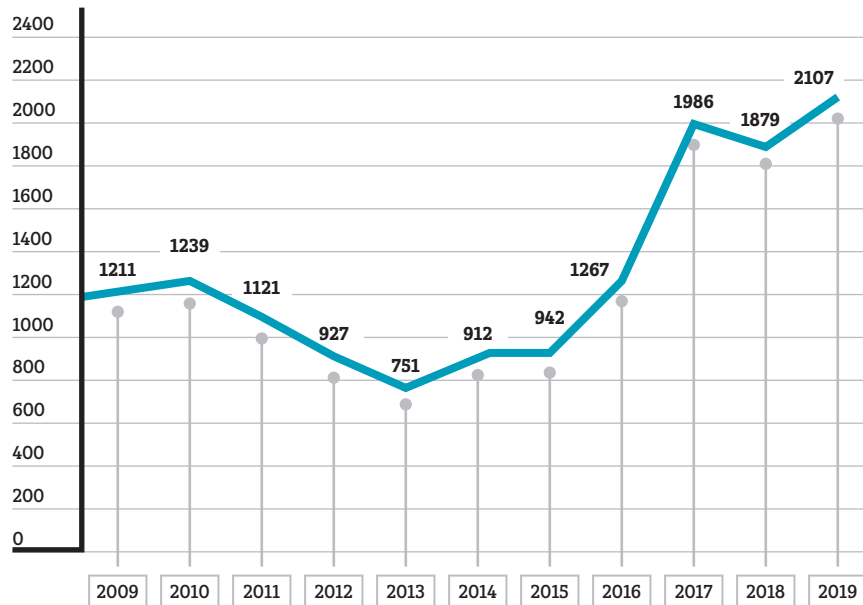
We are at a tipping point where hate will get markedly worse if we keep turning a blind eye. Check in on and speak up for your Jewish friends and neighbors. Let them know you support them. Same goes for our AAPI, Indigenous, LGBTQ and Middle Eastern brothers and sisters who have been targets of hate in recent years.

Too often people of good will look the other way, allowing hatred to grow unchecked. Keeping out of it is complicity. Silence is complicity. Looking the other way is complicity.

Being a bystander is no longer an option. ■



# ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS: U.S. OVER THE LAST DECADE | 2009-2019



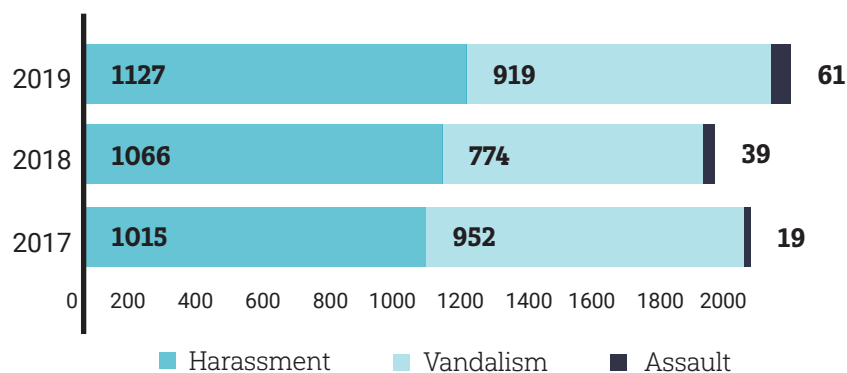
Source: Anti-Defamation League

GRAPHIC BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

# ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS: U.S. 2017-2019 INCIDENT COMPARISONS

2019 total: 2,107

An increase of 12% from 1,879 incidents in 2018



Source: Anti-Defamation League

GRAPHIC BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF

# SUPER BLOOM PAINTS DESERTS

*Record rains unleash a generational bloom in mountains and deserts*



By CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

PHOTOS BY CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

“A flower blooming in the desert proves to the world that adversity, no matter how great, can be overcome.” — Matshona Dhliwayo

## **ANZA BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK —**

Super blooms — the improbable blanketing of vibrant, brittle flowers over the unforgiving expanse of harsh desert — seem more rumor than real.

This month they are real.

From the sky scratching Grapevine mountain pass at Fort Tejon, to the high deserts of Lancaster, to the alluvial lowlands of Borrego Springs, flowers have shown themselves in planes of peach, valleys of vermilion and washes of wisteria.

Southern California’s record rains painted rainbows in the sky and the desert floor of Anza





Borrego Desert State Park. Nature lovers, Instagram models, locals and flower tourists often wait years between super blooms, but the wait is over. This year's bloom may be one of the greatest ever seen.

Anza Borrego is only about 90 miles from Chula Vista, but it is a long and winding road. Bloomers should be prepared for heat and cold as Anza Borrego is fickle as a sleepy toddler. Local merchants get rich selling interlopers sun screen, hats, water, sports drinks, jackets and snacks in addition to scorpion pops, chocolate rocks and local delicacies.

Galleta Meadows on County Highway S 22, with its towering sculptures of rusty dragons, eagles, elephants, scorpions and other animal figures, is a beauty and the beasts visage straight out of "Lord of the Rings." It is a triple digit Land of Oz with plenty of safe places to park that requires very little walking.

Sturdy hikers ought to enjoy the Cactus Loop Trail on Yaqui Pass Road, home to barrel cactus and devil chollas bursting forth with blooms the color of frozen Gatorade.

Southern California's magnificent flowers can hide away for decades at a time, so procrastination is unwise. Mother Nature's festival of flowers must close soon. ■

## **BORREGO BOUQUET**

Normally dry and generally barren of color, the Anza-Borrego Desert is carpeted with flowers and cactus blooms that spread for miles in every direction.








PHOTO BY LILIANA ANGUIANO / STAFF





# Homelessness takes many forms, including ambitious students

A pair of Southwestern College scholars share their struggles as unsheltered people





PHOTO BY LILIANA ANGUIANO / STAFF



Ian Ramirez



Julisa Chavez



# Homeless — BUT CLINGING TO A STUBBORN — hopefulness

By LILIANA ANGUIANO

**H**appy students often say they found a home at Southwestern College.

Ian Ramirez literally calls Southwestern College his home.



## MOTOR HOME

Ian Ramirez prepares for another day of classes and studying from his car parked on campus.

Ramirez, 19, lives in his car that he sometimes parks in the darkened SC parking lots. It is temporary, he said, but for now it is his address.

His life has had a temporary feeling since he suffered his first bout of homelessness at age 13. A dysfunctional and sometimes violent family has caused him to flee for his own safety. He enjoys surfing, but often found himself couch surfing the homes of friends and acquaintances.

“I’ve been homeless for probably 12 different stretches,” he said. “A lot of the time I just viewed it as ‘I’m just going to (a friend’s place) for a few days.’”

Hunger was a constant companion in his household. When his family did feed him, the quality of the food was often lacking.

“Excessive famine,” he said. “It was really difficult as someone who cares about my health to have to eat instant ramen. So that was really hard, having to choose between nothing and one of the unhealthiest foods I can ever think of eating.” ▶

HOPEFULNESS CONT ON PAGE 56

## SWC CARES HELPS WITH TECHNOLOGY, CHILD CARE, NUTRITION AND HOUSING

It has never been a secret that a majority of Southwestern College students come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, but recent data borders on bleak. More than 8 out of 10 SC students are from families that qualify for free or reduced lunch programs in the K-12 system. Almost 40 percent self-reported food insecurity and a third reported housing insecurity.

Other rampant student stressors are inability to purchase technology such as laptops, inconsistent access to internet and Wi-Fi connectivity, expensive transportation and lack of childcare.

Since 2020 SC has made an intentional pivot toward providing additional help to students under stress in an effort to keep them in college.

One arm of that multi-pronged effort is SWC CARES, a state-funded program that emerged from the pandemic that creates a miniature social services agency on the Chula Vista campus. Trina Eros, who comes from a social services background, was brought onboard to lead the \$490,000 program.

Homelessness and housing insecurity among students has been her top priority, she said, but relieving these problems will require more resources than the college has.

“We don’t have the capacity to resolve someone’s homelessness,” she said.

That does not mean the college is incapable of helping homeless students, she said. Eros coordinates care for those facing homelessness or eviction, and works to connect students with social service agencies with the means to find solutions. Her efforts have helped to place scores of students into safe, affordable housing, at least temporarily.

“I definitely consider SWC CARES, like our community partners, an extension of (the federal) CARES because we have to rely on them so much,” she said. “It takes a village.”

Eros and her team have been overwhelmed by thousands of requests for assistance. There is more she would like to do, she said, particularly in terms of outreach to people in the community who may need help, but that may have to wait.

Students who have received support expressed appreciation, even if their problems were not completely solved. Homeless student Ian Ramirez said he was not expecting magic right away.

“I am not used to any help at all, so I feel it would be unappreciative of me to say that there could be anything better,” he said. “I never thought I would get a gas card, money for food, have my programs for school paid for and a calculator paid for.”

— Liliana Anguiano | Staff



### HELP FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS

The SWC CARES/Basic Needs office is located in Bldg. 16-105E on the Chula Vista campus. Virtual and in-person office hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. – 5p.m. Tuesday hours are 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Friday hours are 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Needs Coordinator Trina Eros may be reached at (619) 216-6687 or [teros@swccd.edu](mailto:teros@swccd.edu).





PHOTOS BY LILIANA ANGUIANO / STAFF

## Student depends on college as a source of hope and connection

By LILIANA ANGUIANO

**J**ulisa Chaves had decided it was time to end her troubled life.

She planned to commit suicide in Denver, but fate intervened.

She'd gotten on the wrong bus and was headed for San Diego.

A longer trip gave her the time she needed to reconsider and take another stab at life. ▶

CONNECTION CONT ON PAGE 57



### **ANOTHER CHANCE AT LIFE**

Julisa Chaves was preparing to commit suicide but instead boarded a bus from Denver to San Diego. She said she found hope and a path forward at Southwestern College.



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## “Homeless is not hopeless.” IAN RAMIREZ, *SC student*

### HOPEFULNESS FROM PG 53

Hunger is the biggest challenge of living in his car, Ramirez said. He would like to follow a healthy vegan lifestyle, but sometimes it comes down to survival.

A football player at Hilltop High School and Olympian H.S., Ramirez managed to be a student-athlete who graduated with decent grades despite long periods of homelessness that started in middle school. He enjoyed football, he said, but also acknowledged that it was also possible that he needed the distraction.

“I realized that I had something that channeled me toward football,” he said. “I needed to redirect (my) energy. I guess football helped me to do that.”

He was not a typical football player, he said, in terms of his values. Ramirez describes himself as very liberal, an environmentalist and an LGBTQ ally. He enjoyed the game, but not the toxic atmosphere created in the locker room by some of the other players. It caused him to think about where he channeled his efforts and why.

Today he is putting his mental and physical energy into transferring to UCSD to study computer science, he said.

Sometimes the road is smooth, other times it just seems to end without warning. Often a cliff awaits. Last semester Ramirez was registered as a full-time student until he lost his place to stay. He was homeless again and dropped all his classes.

“(Maintaining) the discipline to go to classes and do the work when you are in a dark place is really hard,” he said.

Withdrawing from the classes caused other kinds of downstream suffering, Ramirez said. He is now battling academic probation, which feels like being punished twice.

“(Withdrawing) is still affecting me,” he said.

Most community college students who resolve to focus more on school do not actually move to the school and live in its parking lot, he acknowledged.

“I am ambitious about the things I care about and that will allow me to persevere through the circumstances I’m in,” he said. “Homeless is not hopeless.” ■

### CONNECTION FROM PG 55

Her new chapter started very badly. She arrived in San Diego broke and homeless, then was sexually assaulted her first night in her new city.

“I didn’t know what to do in the moment,” she said. “I was very scared, but I had to kind of toughen up and not be scared. If you are scared and you show fear you are in trouble. Life is like a dog. If you show fear, it will attack.”

Chaves was homeless for eight months, she said. During that time, most people she encountered were unkind. People she met in shelters confused her because some were trying to dig out of their situation while others were not. Authorities were not always helpful.

“Unfortunately, they mix shelters with people who want help and people who don’t want help,” she said. “In one of the shelters I was touched inappropriately by a 70-year-old man. Security told me I had to stop being so loose.”

Chaves became one of the people trying to dig out of homelessness and poverty, so she applied for assistance from social service programs. Waitlists were the killer of hope. Most were many months — even years — long. She said she bounced from shelter to shelter.

Some nights there was no room at any shelters. That’s when the predators crawled out of the darkness.

A man 18 years her senior groomed her with promises of help and support. When she went to his apartment, he sexually abused her.

“It was the hardest thing to have to deal with the abuse in exchange for a place to stay,” she said. “I would go to my ex and take it because I was in survival mode.”

She survived the abuse, barely.

Today Chaves has housing through South Bay Community Services. She lives in Chula Vista with a roommate who is also part of the program. She said she is very grateful for the housing, but is not sure how long she will be able to stay there.

“I really, really love it,” she said. “I get sad because when my time is up here, I don’t want to





PHOTO BY LILIANA ANGUIANO / STAFF

leave this area because it's so safe. Usually people stay here for a year, but they can extend the time frame. Unfortunately, they are not able to let us know how long we can stay here because they don't want people to get too comfortable."

Chaves said she suffers from Neuromyelitis Optica or NMO, which prevents her from standing for long durations. She is currently looking for work, she said, but has not been able to land a job because of her disability.

"(NMO) affects my nerves, my eyes and my spinal cord," she said. "Due to that, a lot of places

won't hire me."

As her stamina has improved, so have her options. Chaves enrolled for classes at SC this semester, but like many first-year students she is struggling to learn the ins and outs of college life.

"I'm having a hard time in school because nobody prepares you for college and (no one checks in on you)," she said. "(No one) reminds you what to do next, you have to remember (yourself)."

Still, she said, she is motivated to press on despite the challenges. Like others in her situation, Chaves said she realizes education is her way out of poverty and homelessness. She is a cheerful and enthusiastic student who attends regularly and contributes to class discussions. She is not shy about sharing her experiences in hopes that she might help others to avoid what she has endured.

"Whatever you are going through, all you can do is just take it day by day and wake up and look at life as a blessing, even through the hardships," she said. "We struggle in order to learn the lessons from our struggles." ■



## FEEDING BODY, MIND, SOUL

Julisa Chaves credits SWC CARES and kind faculty members for giving her the determination to push past abuse, poverty and homelessness to create a happy life for herself.







PHOTO BY ESTEBAN PRECIADO / STAFF

# HOMELESS AMONG US

*A complex blend of economic and mental health maladies fuel an explosion in the South Bay's homeless population.*

By ESTEBAN PRECIADO

**F**ranks gazed at the ground as he spoke. He was used to people not listening. “There’s a lot of homeless people that are desolate and lost,” he said. “There are a lot of people like me that have stood on the edge of cliffs and thought about taking the big plunge and letting it all go.”

Yet most push on.

Dusted across bustling roads, trolley stations, alleys and crevices of the South Bay, the homeless persist.

There are more every day, some visible, some not.

From *la frontera* in San Ysidro to Division Street, from the bay to the 125 tollway, the homeless population of the South Bay is swelling. Lands within the Southwestern Community College District have had homeless since Frank Kimball and Col. W. G. Dickerson established National City and Chula Vista 140 years ago, but never like this. Not even close. Double digit homeless counts of the 1970s are now in the thousands, though no accurate tabulation exists.

It changes too quickly. ▶



## **ON BROADWAY**

Chula Vista’s busy Broadway commercial district becomes a miles-long array of homeless people every evening. Linda (l) said she is frequently assaulted by “mean young people.”

### UNLUCKY, ADDICTED, LONERS

Homeless people in the South Bay seem to sort into three categories: hard luck, loners and addicts. They have noticed this themselves.

“Hard luck” homeless like Keke Gonzalez, a 50-year-old who camps near the Palm Avenue trolley station in Imperial Beach, said he was laid off from his job and has a bad hip. Gonzalez recounted a litany of “bad luck” as he sprawled on the grass eating his first meal in days. His belongings consisted of a black backpack and an old speaker.

Gonzalez said the meager Chinese food represented a full day of panhandling. He had nothing else to discuss. He was hungry.

Self-described “loners” say they choose to exist on the fringes of society because they chafe under rules and do not like to be told what to do. They are harder to find, but there is a growing population along the banks of the Sweetwater River near the Highway 54 in National City steps from the riding/hiking trails. A Hooverville-style encampment is sizable, but U.S. Census teams and social workers consider it dangerous and have had trouble surveying it.

Folks living there made it clear they want to be left alone, including the man wielding a makeshift hammer to set up his tent.

Addicts are arguably the most visible type of homeless people. They can be erratic, like the woman camped in the Sweetwater River channel west of the Plaza Bonita mall in National City. She and two companions had a makeshift camp. She obliged to a conversation and some photos. She willingly led a visitor deeper inside the camp until she had a sudden shift in mood and screamed at him to leave. Now!

Across town, Gilbert Alan was considerably more pleasant. He camped near the Chula Vista Tacos El Gordo adjacent to the H Street trolley station.

“I’m broke because of the drugs and alcohol in my system,” he said matter-of-factly.

As he spoke, laughter and chatter echoed from people enjoying their authentic Mexican cuisine. Gilbert Alan could smell the fragrant food, but had none of his own.

### THIRD AVENUE FREEZE OUT

In Chula Vista’s manicured Memorial Park, a trio of homeless men held court just a short stroll from the



### A REGIONAL REALITY

Homelessness used to be largely confined to downtown San Diego, but has spread throughout the South County clear to the border. (top) A man on Broadway in Chula Vista who asked not to be named. (above) Military veteran Frank in Chula Vista on Broadway. (next page, clockwise from top) Dodging traffic in Imperial Beach. Keke eats Chinese food he purchased by panhandling in Imperial Beach. Deep in the brush near the often-violent encampment along the Sweetwater River in National City.





IMPERIAL BEACH



NATIONAL CITY



IMPERIAL BEACH



**CHULA VISTA**







trendy row of revitalized restaurants and bars dotting Third Avenue. Marco, Ted and Dougie spoke from the sidewalk where they had set up for the night. A tattered beach umbrella shielded their food, blankets, knick-knacks and a small TV.

Ted said his life “fell apart” after a bad divorce.

“(Homelessness) can happen to anyone in a blink of an eye,” he said.

Marco and Dougie nodded in agreement.

“Half of Chula Vista is homeless,” Dougie said, “just living with someone else.”

Ted butted in by describing how when he was first on the street, he was given a homeless evaluation called the VI-SPDAT by the Chula Vista Homeless Outreach Team (HOT).

“If you ain’t on a lease, you’re homeless,” he said. “Here the HOT team ain’t so hot. They pretend they want to help people, but (for us) it’s obstacles and deterrents.”

Dougie agreed.

“The first thing they do is take your name and then they run your name (to see) if you have any warrants,” he said. “Then they categorize you as a resident vagrant. Which is a transient. Once you’re on that list...”

Ted interrupted.

“They take your stuff, your belongings,” he said. “They took (Marcos’) stuff and called it trash. If that’s help, they need to stop helping.”

Dougie concurred.

“Homeless help is a fraud,” he said. “It is just their way to have a job.”

Ted said permanent housing was a myth.

“This (sidewalk) is what I think permanent housing is,” he said. “It’s gonna kill you getting there or you’re gonna drive yourself crazy. It’s never permanent housing, it’s always rapid re-housing. Basically you go somewhere for six months and then you got to move again.”

COVID was savage to the homeless population, said



## WEALTH AND POVERTY

A homeless woman who would not give her name camps on the sidewalk on Broadway and gazes across the street at the multi-million dollar Chula Vista Shopping Center full of restaurants, high-end department stores, jewelry counters and formal clothing outlets.





**CHULA VISTA**

Ted. Coronavirus was often a death sentence for people on the streets or in encampments. Shelter-in-place policies hammered the homeless by cutting off access to their already-tenuous urban lifelines.

“Homeless people can’t charge their phones,” he said. “(We) can’t even go to the bathroom during this whole (COVID) thing.”

**YOUNG FACES OF VIOLENCE**

Night had fallen and Linda was on the sidewalk near the Lil Caesar’s on Broadway close to Pep Boys. She is an elderly woman who said she has been on the streets of Chula Vista for nearly seven years. She is also no fan of HOT.

“They will roll up and take all your stuff, every last thread of it,” she said. “You won’t have any clothes left to wear. You’ll have no food.”

Random violence by young hoodlums was an even scarier problem, she said. Raising her hands revealed cuts, bruises, bandages and scars. Her leathery face



**THIRD AVENUE  
FREEZE OUT**

Marco, Dougie and Ted share some dinner on the sidewalk near Memorial Park on Chula Vista’s trendy Third Avenue redevelopment district lined with popular restaurants and busy brew pubs.

was weather beaten and creased by the sun. Her bare feet look like those of a pilgrim who had walked to hell and back.

“Look at me!” she said. Her voice cracked. “Unfortunately it’s a lot of young kids. (We) are just frustrated and don’t wanna get caught (by the hoodlums).”

Linda was interrupted by a homeless man inexplicably hanging like a chimpanzee in a tree beside her.

“I’ve been attacked by the police,” he said. “So yeah, the police arrested and tased me and it was caused by the locals (who started the scuffle).”



**CHULA VISTA**

Linda nodded in agreement.

"I have had that trouble also," she said. "A lot of the older people (who are) drunks. They wanna start trouble with ya, get ya attacked."

**HEAVEN HELP US**

Frank said he is a 56-year-old Signal Corps veteran who served in Korea. He said he is "on a never-ending merry-go-round" to retrieve his birth certificate, which he needs to get a state ID. With proper identification, he said, he can receive his military pension.

Challenges come daily, he said.

"Probably number one would be waking up in the morning and needing a restroom in the vicinity of where you're at," he said.

Most are locked in the evening, he said, because people worry about homeless people sleeping in them. Frank acknowledged that the homeless can make other people feel uncomfortable.

"It's up to the homeless to regulate ourselves," he said.

Random violence is an ongoing threat, he said.

"There's a lot of (violence), a lot of judgement on homeless," he said. "There is a group of young people who think it's funny to go around and pick on homeless people."

For the most part homeless people do not bother others, Frank said, and just want to be left alone.

Frank gazed at the sky as he spoke.

"We're in despair, man. We look at the sky (for help). We don't really see God. We're asking the stars, we're asking the moon and the sun or anything that's out there that has the power to show us the light. Show us the way out of this." ■

**LOOKING TO THE SKY FOR HELP**

A man wrapped up for the night on Broadway just steps away from a restaurant serving food and drinks to a weekend crowd.







PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

# **‘We are not disposable!’ A *machismo* genocide against Mexican women**

More than 100,000 women, teens and girls are dead and missing, victims of a frightening femicide ignored by the government and law enforcement.





♀ ASÍ ♀  
Pelean  
Las  
Niñas





PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

# MEXICO'S WOMEN BATTLE FEMICIDE

*Women gather in Tijuana to protest Mexico's unchecked femicide crisis that is killing about 4,000 women, teens and little girls every year.*

By AILYN DUMAS AND NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

**M**exico's women are fighting mad and fighting back.

There is so much to fight against.

International human rights organizations and law enforcement estimate that between 80,000 and 100,000 Mexican women and girls are missing. Amnesty International investigators say at least 10 women and girls are killed every day in Mexico, about 3,650 every year. The Mexican

government, after years of denial, says the number may be as high as 4,000 a year.

Mexico's war on its own women has gone unabated for nearly a quarter of a century since mass graves were discovered on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez. Tijuana is also an epicenter of femicide, according to Amnesty International. Victims include grandmothers, pregnant women, teenagers and even young children.

More than 1,000 vocal women and teens marched on the mayor's residence in Tijuana on International Women's Day to demand an end to Mexico's cancerous femicide epidemic. Men were not allowed. Male party crashers were chased away. ►



## 'THIS IS HOW GIRLS FIGHT'

Women's March protesters have gotten younger every year, including elementary-aged girls.



## ANGER OVER RELENTLESS ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

Some elected officials have criticized Women's March participants for defacing monuments – complaints most protesters have called pitiful and irrelevant in the face of mass murder. (above) "When my sisters return, I'll come clean your wall." (l) "It is not normal to have a history of abuse." (r) "I am not your hot momma, if I were I would abort you, fucking coward."



## Protesters blamed Mexico's hyper-machismo culture for the chronic abuse of its female population.

Women warriors gathered at a Tijuana monument called “*Las Tijeras*” (the scissors) to share their personal stories of violence. Nearly 70 percent of Mexican women 15 and older report they have been victims of violence by men.

Speakers streamed to the microphone to recount horrifying episodes of violence suffered by themselves or members of their families.

“*Yo te creo! No estas sola!*” (I believe you! You are not alone!) was the response from the crowd after each testimonial.

Emotion was palpable. The throng

was absolutely silent as the speakers shared their stories of abuse and pain.

“We are not your playthings! We are not disposable!” declared one of the speakers.

Protesters blamed Mexico's hyper-machismo culture for the chronic abuse of its female population. It begins at birth, said a marcher, when many baby boys are treated like entitled princes and little girls are treated as lesser-thans whose purpose in life is the please the males, even if that includes abuse, rape and murder. Stir in the hyper-violence of drug cartels, corrupt police and





## MONUMENTAL PROTEST STRATEGY

Women attach posters to the iconic Cuauhtémoc monument in Tijuana. Protesters target statues and monuments to draw attention to a crisis they argue has been overlooked for decades.









dishonest elected officials, and Mexico is a recipe for disaster for its women and girls.

“The irony is that our own mothers are often part of the problem, teaching boys to devalue women,” said Maestra (a pseudonym). “Fathers, sons and uncles often treat women like servants and sex objects, even their own daughters and sisters. We need to break this cycle of dysfunction and violence. It’s only getting worse.”

A speaker underscored these words as she told the sordid tale of an uncle that forced her to have sex with him for years, starting when she was a little girl.

“The rest of my own family didn’t believe me,” she said. “They believed him and took his side every time.”

Tijuana’s protesters said they were the lucky ones — they are still alive. “*Las Tijeras*” was soon festooned with Day of the Dead-style altars to commemorate the dead and the missing. Posters with photographs of dead and missing women covered the area and a clothesline became a string of photographs, handmade art and posters that proclaimed “*No Olvidades!*” (You are not forgotten.)

At 4 p.m. the rally became a march as the women took to the crumbling streets of Tijuana. Then a surprise—police who in previous years had stood



## MORE IMPORTANT THAN MONUMENTS

(top) “Abandon your Eve and liberate your Lilith” and “I will not grow up in fear.” (l) “Just like your fucking monuments.” (far r) “For my mom, who worked for me and a policeman took her away from me. I was only eight months old.”







PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

aside and watched the marchers took a more aggressive approach. They began to cordon off streets and roadways in an attempt to box in the crowd. One police officer even backed his car recklessly right into the crowd in an attempt to turn the women around.

It did not work.

Marchers refused to retreat and instead marched upon the Tijuana mayor's residence for a spirited series of chants and some spray painted demands. Police behaved aggressively toward the

women, but none backed down. The crowd sealed off the "Palacio Municipal" for about two hours before returning to "Las Tijeras" for a final call to action.

"Ni una mas! Ni una mas matanza!" ("Not one more! Not one more murder!") shouted the marchers as the throng snaked its way through the houses and buildings caked in primary colors on the bloody streets of Tijuana.

Mexico's women are tired of being pushed around. Now they are pushing back. ■

**GET**

**OVER**

**IT!**

Wasn't she  
**dating**  
that guy?



**WHATEVER** YOU DO, DON'T  
TALK ABOUT IT!

THAT GIRL IS NOT EXACTLY LITTLE MISS INNOCENT.



she was **asking** for it.

**SHE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN OUT SO LATE.**

I HOPE  
YOU LEARNED  
YOUR LESSON.

**She  
should  
have known**  
*better...*

**Well,**  
look what she  
was wearing!

*She*  
must  
have  
led  
them  
on.

HMM... **DOESN'T** SOUND LIKE RAPE.

**Boys**

*will be* **boys.**

*What did you expect?*

**i** thought  
*she liked*  
**him.**

**she'll get OVER it.**

**THAT WOULD  
NEVER  
HAPPEN TO  
ME.**

**WE TRIED TO WARN HER, BUT SHE WOULDN'T LISTEN.**

“Imagine what it’s like to be in front of millions of people (watching on television) and (a packed) stadium. You’re having an Olympic medal hung around your neck and they hand you a bouquet of flowers. It’s awesome.”

**TONIE CAMPBELL**  
*Olympic Medalist*





# KEEPING TRACK OF WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

*Tonie Campbell made three Olympic teams, then spent decades helping other athletes reach their goals. He took special pleasure coaching Paralympians and disabled athletes.*

By EMILY INGCO

**S**eptember 26, 1988  
XXIV Olympiad. Seoul,  
South Korea.  
Heart pounding, Anthony  
“Tonie” Campbell wiggled  
his feet tightly into the  
blocks for the 110-meter hurdle race in  
front of 70,000 cheering people.  
“On your Mark!”



## BACK ON (A) TRACK

Campbell leaves the Southwestern College track and field program much better than he found it, but never received the support he was promised — including a new track.

Campbell tensed and stretched in his red, white and blue tights.

“Set!”

Dropping his head low, Campbell raised his hips and stared ahead.

Inhale. Exhale.

BANG!

Smoke drifted from the starter’s pistol and Campbell was already meters down the vermilion polyurethane. Just 13.38 seconds later, Campbell blazed across the finish line, bullets of sweat streaking across his taunt face.

13.38. Bronze. Made the podium!

Three-time Olympian Campbell, the kid from Banning High School in Wilmington, California, had a medal. His life would never be the same. ▶

PHOTO COURTESY OF TONIE CAMPBELL

Track was not even teenage Tonie's favorite sport.

"I was always a baseball and football player growing up," he said. "When I got to high school I wanted to take one year off from baseball and football."

Campbell's father said okay as long as he played another sport to stay active during the spring.

"My friends were all going out for track and field," he said. "I didn't even know what that was."

He was drawn to the hurdling group, specifically the low hurdles. Banning's hurdles captain had other plans for the springy Campbell.

"He shoved me really really hard," Campbell said. "A hurdle was right in my way. I was going to crash into it, but instead I jumped over it. Lo and behold it was a high hurdle."

It was love at first flight for Campbell who was a high hurdler from that day forward. He became a state champion and earned a scholarship to USC where he became a national champion. He broke the collegiate record for the shuttle hurdle relay race in 1981.

He qualified for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, but the American team did not compete due to a multinational boycott following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

Four years later Campbell competed in the 1984 games in Los Angeles. He finished second to eventual gold medalist Roger Kingdom in the semifinals, but fifth in the final. Kingdom also won gold in 1988, the year Campbell captured bronze. He said he still relives his glorious moments on the podium as if it were yesterday.

"Imagine what it's like to be in front of millions of people (watching on



## PODIUM IS 'AWESOME'

Campbell finished second in the semifinals of the 110-meter hurdles at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics before finishing fifth in the finals. In 1988 he grabbed bronze, clocking 13.38. USA teammate Roger Kingdom won both races.

He said it was a thrill to be on the podium while the national anthem played.

"Imagine what it's like to be in front of millions of people (watching on television) and (a packed) stadium. Having an Olympic medal hung around your neck and they hand you a bouquet of flowers. It's awesome. It was an amazing moment in my life and I'll never forget it. When I'm nearing my last breath and somebody asks me my most favorite memories in life, it'll be the day I met my wife and the day I got my Olympic medal."

television) and (a packed) stadium," he said. "You're having an Olympic medal hung around your neck and they hand you a bouquet of flowers. It's awesome. It was an amazing moment in my life and I'll never forget it. When I'm nearing my last breath and somebody asks me my most favorite memories in life, it'll be the day I met my wife and the day I got my Olympic medal."



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After working as a marketing executive for AMC Theaters and becoming a published author, Campbell accepted an offer to coach at Southwestern College and restore its moribund track program. Campbell was promised a new track and field facility as well as ample resources, which the college consistently failed to deliver.

Using SC's dreadful tattered track, Campbell coached 15 teams to the state track and field championships, and sent Southwestern College athletes to the Olympics, including Guamanian sprinter Philam Garcia, who later became his assistant coach. His fellow coaches said Campbell and Southwestern College lost scores of athletes to other schools because they did not want to train on a crumbling track installed during the Johnson Administration of the mid-1960s.

UC Santa Barbara decathlete Josh Godfrey is an alumnus of Southwestern College who credits Campbell for his success in the California Championships and his university scholarship.

"His specializations were in sprints and hurdles, so he was kind of in deep water trying to coach me in pole vault, javelin, and other stuff," Godfrey said. "We made it work and he was super supportive. Whenever I had a decathlon meet, we would always take his car or rent a van and it would be just us, hanging out and talking a lot. He knows so much, so to me he was a really great coach, a really great mentor. He was a really nice, supportive guy."

Campbell has a soft spot in his heart for athletes with disabilities. He provides pro bono coaching for amputees running on blades and has helped to send local disabled athletes

to the Paralympics, including the most recent games in Brazil.

After 20 years at SC, Campbell became Athletic Director and Dean of Athletics at Cuyamaca College. He said leaving Chula Vista was a tough decision.

"I was a professional athlete for 13 years, then I coached and did another job for a while, and then I coached 20 years at Southwestern," he said. "It was a great career, but it was time for me to move on while I still had something left to offer."

SC Athletic Director Jennifer "Jef" Harper worked closely with Campbell and considers him a dear friend, she said.

"I admire all the things he has done as an author, Olympian and philanthropist," she said. "He's someone I've admired for years. I love him like a brother."

Campbell said he will continue to honor Harper and SC in a unique way.

"I'm going to be at the rival college over the hill at Cuyamaca and I'll probably be wearing their navy blue and sand colors, but somewhere on my body I'll have some cardinal and gold," he said. "Somewhere — might be a sock, might be some underwear — somewhere on my body I'll still have Jaguar colors on."

"On your Mark!"

Campbell said he plans to revive dead sports at Cuyamaca, including women's soccer and women's beach volleyball.

"Set!"

Existing sports will get a new kind of energy and focus, the kind an Olympic champion can provide.

BANG!

Campbell is already several meters down his new path. ■

# OVERWORK DRIVES MANY YOUNG PEOPLE TO EARLY GRAVE

By LILIANA ANGUIANO

I don't want to work. I don't want to work hard. I would like to live the life of Paris Hilton's dog, Tinkerbelle. Sadly that is an impossible fantasy. That said, American work culture is to blame for not encouraging sensible people to want to work.

American work culture is not working. Laboring in a 9-to-5 office job can be the equivalent to playing Jedi mind tricks on oneself to walk across a board of nails without feeling pain.

American workaholic culture dictates that we rise and grind, pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, girl boss and hustle until we drop. Then, in the far-off distant future, we may have 2.5 kids, a dog and a picket fence, thus fulfilling our American dream to live happily ever after.

As long as we are not dead.

Benefits of hard work have declined in recent years. Housing prices are at an all-time high. Americans are experiencing burnout by the millions. The wage gap between the poor and rich is higher than that of the French Revolution. With no guillotines in sight, the future seems bleak.



Americans are beginning to realize this. So are other workaholic cultures.

Americans are quiet quitting. Chinese are *tang ping* (lying flat). Japanese leaders passed laws to address *karoshi* (death from overwork).

Most of us must work. We work to eat, for shelter and to play. Work is a necessary nuisance.

Across the world, though, other cultures focus on creating work environments we can love rather than merely survive.

In Europe "Right to Disconnect" laws prevent management from contacting employers after work hours, an effort to encourage work-life balance. France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Ireland and Portugal have all passed versions of "Right to Disconnect."

This may sound like a far-off dream to Americans used to answering late-night emails, but just across the border in the far-off land of Canada, the concept is spreading.

Last June Canadian province of Ontario passed its own "Right to Disconnect" legislation, but not without pushback. Opponents claim "Disconnect" laws tear down



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the workforce and lessen productivity.

America's Quiet Quitting Movement reflects workers' desires for boundaries. Quiet quitting means not putting in more hours than employers pay for. If employers want employees to work more, they should pay them more.

Unfortunately, the gap between minimum wage and living wage is increasing. In San Diego County the minimum wage is \$15 an hour but the living wage is \$22.74.

Our capitalist class does not get it.

Kevin O'Leary, the Shark Tank investor, symbolizes the problem.

"People who shut down their laptop at 5 p.m. (who) want balance in life and want to go to (their child's) soccer game, they don't work for me," he said.

O'Leary embodies toxic American work culture. Overwork, burn out and stress have become the standard. Our health suffers. University College of London researchers concluded in a study published in the *European Heart Journal* that those who worked more are at greater risk for heart attacks.

Overworking is also deleterious to mental health. Japan has enacted laws aimed to stem death from overwork prompted by the suicide of a 24-year-old manager forced to work 190 hours of overtime a month. Japan's traditionally Type-A government awarded the man's family 51.7 million yen.

U.S. work culture expects overwork, burnout and exhaustion. Americans even boast about it.

Millennials and Generation Z have been raised to hustle until they drop. In high school students are pressured to reach highly competitive universities. High schoolers may

take six AP classes, piano lessons, basketball practice and volunteer at a shelter on the weekend — all to bolster that resume for university applications.

Once they get through a university, they may get stuck with tens of thousands of dollars of debt (or more). Once they get on the career hamster wheel, they feel the pressure to work until they drop. The American prophecy is fulfilled.

America's burnout epidemic should not come as a surprise since U.S. workers get half the paid leave of European workers.

The European Union requires at least 20 days of paid leave a year, the U.K. 28. The U.S. has no standards for paid leave. On average an American worker gets about 10 days of paid leave for public holidays.

Perhaps it is not that I don't want to work. Maybe it's that I don't want to work in the U.S.A. The old American dream has been

stomped on by donkeys and elephants.

Karl Marx's words simmer in the background.

"Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labor power," he wrote. "All that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labor power that can be rendered fluent in a working day. It attains this end by shortening the extent of the laborer's life, as a greedy farmer snatches increased produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility."

America is trailing most of the civilized world on work-life balance. Countries like Belgium, Germany and Norway are showing the way.

Maybe I am not destined to live as Tinkerbell, the pampered purse dog, but I am determined not to be a casualty of overwork. ■

**Perhaps it is not that I don't want to work. Maybe it's that I don't want to work in the U.S.A. The old American dream has been stomped on by donkeys and elephants.**

# WILSON STATUE MUST GO SAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

*Protestors say his anti-Latino, anti-LGBTQ stances do not reflect region's heritage*

By CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

**F**or nearly 30 years Pete Wilson was a popular mayor, U.S. Senator and California Governor.

History has not been kind to Wilson.

Today he finds himself in the company of confederate officers, bloody conquistadors and slave owners.

Human rights activists are campaigning to have a downtown statue of Wilson pulled down. San Diego's demographics have evolved and so has the perception of Wilson and his record of anti-Latino and anti-LGBTQ actions.

Wilson's enormously controversial support of anti-immigrant Propositions 187 and 227 catered to conservatives but alienated Latinos and progressives. Political scientists point to Wilson's anti-Latino activities as the main reason California flipped from a red Republican-leaning state to a blue Democratic



## TIME'S UP?

Activists insist Wilson initiated racist policies out of step with diverse San Diego County.



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## MONUMENTS TO RACISTS REMOVED FROM PUBLIC DISPLAY

In 2020 Pete Wilson's controversial statue disappeared briefly from its pedestal in Horton Plaza before returning weeks later. Other controversial San Diego County monuments banished from public land have not had return engagements. Three contentious monuments removed recently include:

### **Jefferson Davis plaque, downtown San Diego.**

In 1926 the Daughters of the Confederacy convinced the San Diego City Council to install a plaque memorializing Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who led the fight against the Union during the Civil War and attempted to bring down the United States. It remains unknown why the council would honor a man who narrowly missed being tried and hung for treason with the deaths of 618,222 on his hands. In 2017 the memorial was unceremoniously pulled from the wall with a crowbar without opposition.

### **Christopher Columbus statue, Discovery Park, Chula Vista.**

Located less than a mile from Southwestern College, the Columbus statue was erected in 1992 to honor the Italian explorer sailing for Spain who accidentally ran into the New World, but purposefully killed and enslaved its indigenous People. The city council voted 4-1 in June 2020 to remove the statue and rename the park to honor the indigenous Kumeyaay People. Councilman John McCann voted against the statue's removal. McCann was elected mayor earlier this month.

### **Stonewall Jackson confederate monument, Hope Cemetery, San Diego.**

The southern general was the prominent feature of a memorial honoring the confederacy. San Diego human rights activists called for the removal of the "confederate participation trophy" and it was pulled down in July 2020. Jackson was a slave owner and participant in the hanging of Kansas abolitionist John Brown. He was responsible for the deaths of more than 100,000 soldiers, slaves and civilians.

stronghold in the 21st century.

"Demographics is destiny," said Herman Baca, chairman of the Committee on Chicano Rights. "It was easy for Wilson to use us as *una piñata* when there weren't many of us voting."

Enrique Morones, founder of Gente Unida, said a statue of Wilson in multi-cultural San Diego is like a statue of a slave owner or confederate general in a black community.

"It is really embarrassing that the city of San Diego would have a statue honoring a person that promoted hate, supported Proposition 187 and approved of undocumented children being blocked from going to school or receiving health care," he said. "This is what Pete Wilson represents to so many of us."

Proposition 187 was a 1994 ballot initiative

to deny immigrants access to health care, public education and social services in California. Proposition 227, an initiative on the 1998 ballot, sought to ban bilingual education in California. Prop. 187 narrowly passed, but was struck down by a federal judge in 1997 who ruled it unconstitutional. Prop. 227 also passed, but was largely ignored by most California school districts which followed federal guidelines instead. The measure was formally repealed by California voters in 2016.

Wilson was an unabashed supporter of both measures.

"For Californians who work hard, pay

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taxes and obey the laws, I'm suing to force the federal government to control the border and I'm working to deny state services to illegal immigrants," he said during his 1994 campaign. "Enough is enough."

Wilson's statue was unpopular from the day it was unveiled in 2007. While a small group of supporters cheered at the sidewalk across from the Horton Plaza mall, hundreds of protesters fenced off by San Diego police voiced opposition across the street.

Morones said most elected officials in San Diego city and county indicated they oppose the Wilson statue, but claim to be powerless to remove it because it is private property on private land.

That is irrelevant, Morones said.

"It may be on private property, but thousands of people still see it every day," he said. "If it were a confederate flag or a swastika it would be taken down. Symbols of hatred at the heart of a city do not deserve protection."

Morones said he is disappointed in San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, an out member of the LGBTQ community, for not moving to have the statue removed.

"We talked to Todd Gloria before he was mayor," Morones said. "He said he would support us. Same with (San Diego Council Member) Steve Whitburn. As soon as they were elected to office they backed away and did not keep their promises."

Darwin Fishman, co-founder of the Racial Justice Coalition of San Diego, agreed. He said this is a relatively rare effort by Latino activists to have a statue removed. Most of the recent successful removals have been led by African-Americans, he said.

"I think it is a healthy movement in society to critically examine all statues, monuments and plaques that honor people," he said. "I think it is safe to say that in the case of many of the older ones most people do not know why they are put up in the first place. They might not be the best representations for society or for a particular community. It is okay to have that debate and discussion."

Fishman said he remembers the contentious Proposition 187 campaign.

"It viciously attacked and demonized Latino communities and Mexican immigrants," he said. "There are legitimate reasons why that community would not want that statue up. It is not a good representation for San Diego."

Ricardo Flores, executive director of Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a non-profit that assists underserved communities with grants and economic partnerships, said he was "repulsed by Wilson's xenophobic and racist agenda."

"The statue represents fear and hate towards Mexican and undocumented immigrants," he said. "I remember the ads (for Proposition 187). It was offensive and embarrassing. (The television advertisements) portrayal of hard working individuals — people I knew, people in my own family — was awful. They were portrayed as parasites with no value."

Flores said Latinos then and today are essential contributors to the regional and national economy.

"Latinos pick our food," he said. "I do not see other people wanting to pick our food in 100 degree weather for 8-9 hours a day. We provide a valuable service to our community."

Flores said he drafted a formal resolution to the San Diego City Council requesting removal of the Wilson statue and is awaiting a response.

Morones said Latinos and their supporters have battled the Wilson statue for 15 years. Victory seemed at hand in 2020 when the owner of the statue temporarily removed it, but it was replaced a short time later. He said he is optimistic that the statue will eventually be removed once and for all.

"Dr. (Martin Luther) King said 'the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice,'" Morones said. "We will continue to oppose this symbol of hate in the middle of our beautiful city. Pete Wilson, like Robert E. Lee and Christopher Columbus, represents a racist past that America is moving away from. Someday that statue will go away, too." ■



FORWARD

# 'Anti-Chicano' cruising ban repealed in South County's most Latino community

National City sparked a statewide reconsideration  
of laws targeting lowriders and modified vehicles

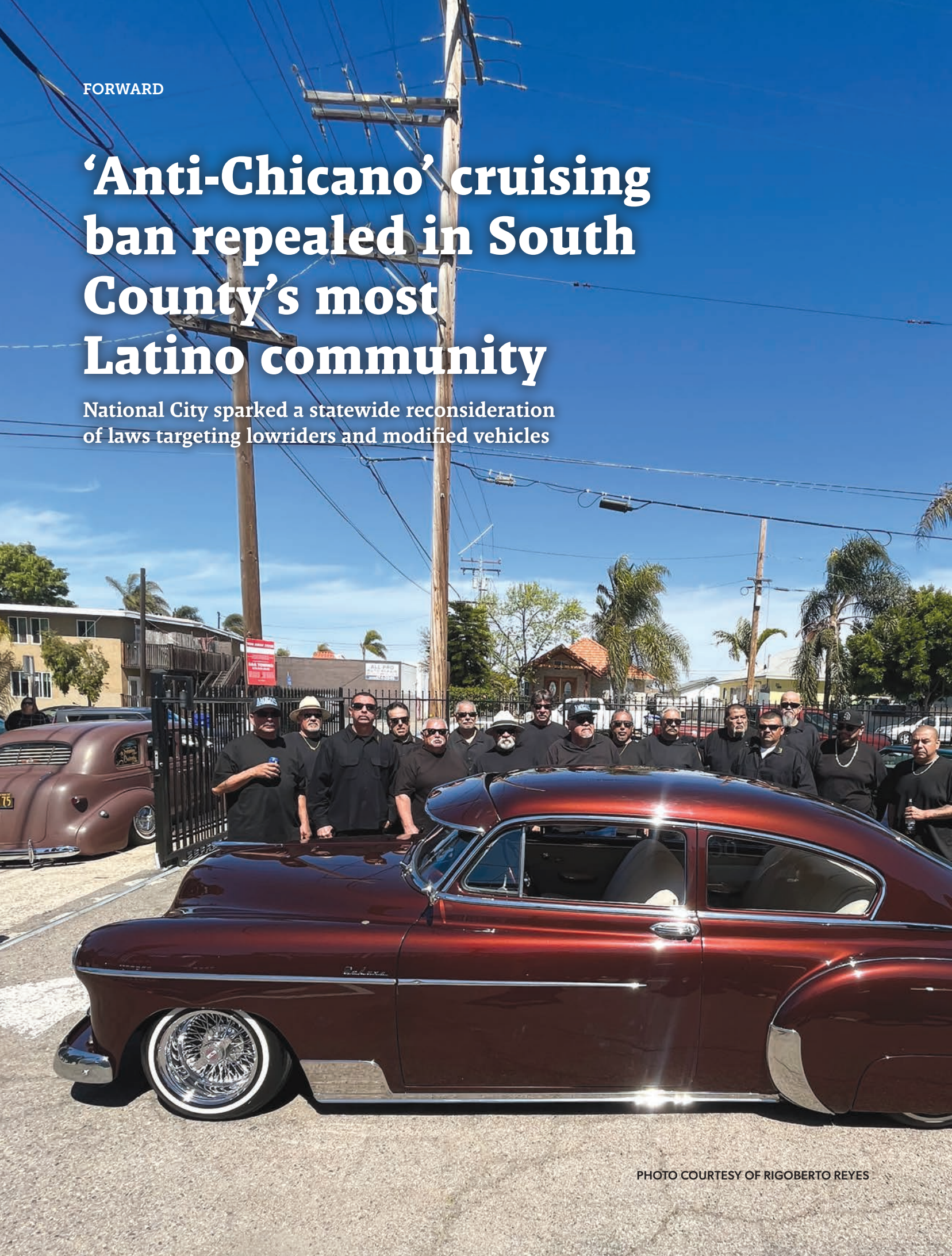


PHOTO COURTESY OF RIGOBERTO REYES



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIGOBERTO REYES

# CRUISING BAN LIFTED

## LOWRIDERS WILL RETURN

By RAZYLIN M. AVENDANO

**NATIONAL CITY —**

**L**ow and slow” is a go. National City has officially repealed a 31-year ban on cruising that Latinos have argued for decades was racist and demeaning. Now advocates for low riders and Latino car clubs are pushing for a statewide green light for the resumption of cruise nights in Chicano communities.

“*Si se pudo!*” (Yes it is possible) rang out in the council chambers.

Celebrations continued a few days later on nearby Logan Avenue where nearly 400 lowriders and exotic cars gathered under the bridge for the 53rd celebration of Chicano Park Day. Rafael Perez of the United Lowrider Coalition said the repeal of anti-cruising laws are reminiscent of the original fight for Chicano Park in 1970 and it was proper to celebrate “the community coming together...in such a sacred place.”

Legislation born in the South Bay

Legislation born in the South Bay has inspired cities like San Jose and Sacramento to repeal cruising bans.



### **'AS SOCIAL AS TACOS AND THE BEACH BOYS'**

Chicano car clubs worked hard to overturn the ban on cruising and low riders, including Los Amigos, the venerated organization known for its humanitarian work.



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has inspired cities like San Jose and Sacramento to repeal cruising bans. In February Assemblymember David Alvarez introduced Assembly Bill 436, which would amend the California Vehicle Code to allow cruising and the operation of height-adjusted vehicles.

Cruising, as defined by the code, is the “repetitive driving of a motor vehicle past a traffic control point” within a certain span of time. Alvarez’s bill would amend it to exclude Section 21100 — which currently gives local authorities the power to enact anti-cruising ordinances.

Alvarez said the time to end the war on lowriders has arrived.

“(AB 436) would allow individuals who want to participate in cruising to do so without the threat of potentially being pulled over by law enforcement,” he said. “Currently, under the California Vehicle Code, that activity is banned in several cities throughout California.”

Alvarez said his bill would also remove Section 24008 of the code that deems vehicles modified to be lower than the rims as illegal.

“The law currently says that if your vehicle is too low, you are violating state law in the entire state, not just in different cities,” he said. “This would make cars that are lower than traditional cars legal. So it is both the car and the act of cruising and bill (addresses).”

National City enacted its cruising ban in 1992 due to stated concerns about traffic congestion and gang activity. Latino leaders including Herman Baca of the National City-based Committee on Chicano Rights scoffed at the notion that middle aged professionals who often invest \$100,000 in a modified car were gang bangers.

“It was anti-Chicano to the core,” he said. “No one ever died in a high speed collision involving a lowrider.”

National City Councilmember Jose Rodriguez agreed.

“As long as the vehicle has the proper California tags and the individual driving has a license, they should be able to drive their car and cruise down Highland (Avenue),” he said. “It is a public road. I fundamentally believe that anybody with a vehicle has the right to drive down a public road.”

Lowrider cruising and car culture developed in Latino communities of the Southwest in the late 1940s and early 1950s during a national economic boom following World War II. Smithsonian Magazine noted that it was a stark contrast to the “hot rods” (cars modified for increased speed and acceleration) that were popular with many white Americans at the time. Many Latinos took to modifying their cars in a contrasting manner, creating the “low and slow” lowrider vehicles.

Rigoberto Reyes, founder of Los Amigos Car Club of San Diego and a vocal advocate for the lowrider cruising community, said he has been low riding for nearly 50 years. He was introduced to the culture as a young boy living in San Ysidro when he saw his first lowrider — a 1957 Chevy.

“The first time I saw that car, hitting the ground with the hydraulics, I was sold,” he said. “It was kind of like an automatic love affair. I was mesmerized by what I saw. I told myself when I am of age the first thing I’ll do is get one of those lowriders.”

Low riding and cruising increased in popularity during the Chicano Movement in the 1970s. It was



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIGOBERTO REYES





PHOTO COURTESY OF RIGOBERTO REYES

considered a mobile form of art and a pushback against the traditional standards of white America.

In the Reagan-era 1980s California began enacting bans on cruising, blaming concerns over traffic and violence. Reyes said lowriders drive slowly, but the form of expression is entirely peaceful. Low riding is a unique element of Chicano creativity, he said, not to mention California culture.



## ON THE ROAD AGAIN

After a 31-year absence National City and other Chicano communities may soon see a return of low riders and other modified vehicles cruising the boulevards. Falsely blamed for crime and gang activity by former Governors Ronald Reagan and Pete Wilson, cruising and low riders were banned throughout the state. Chicano activists have argued for three decades that the ban was racist and that low riders are a harmless, enjoyable part of SoCal culture.

Cruising is as California as surfing, taco shops, skateboards and the Beach Boys, said Baca.

Reyes said the repeal of cruising bans lets a beloved part of Chicano culture out of the penalty box and back into the California sun.

“We need to document our own history,” he said. “If we don’t, somebody from the outside is going to do it for us. And it’s not going to (be) from the same perspective that we lived it.”

Rodriguez said he hopes the bill will lead to the recognition of the cultural significance of cruising and encourage inclusivity in the diverse borderlands community.

“Let’s not push people away because they are different... let’s accept people for who they are,” he said. “Let’s embrace them because they’re my neighbors, they’re my friends. They’re my family. We all know each other and we’re all connected in such a small city like National City. I think we should embrace each other and each other’s passions.” ■

# ROARING SUCCESS

*SC's popular Mesoamerican mascot is 'the strong, silent type' and a fierce fan favorite*

By CHERI-ANN INOUYE

**A**s a young kitten growing up on the Yucatan Peninsula, Johnny Jaguar could not imagine he would one day be the popular mascot of Southwestern College, the coolest cat on the West Coast.

“When I was a kid prowling around the jungles and climbing on the old pyramids, my Tio Goyo was the mascot for the UNAM Pumas (professional soccer team) in Mexico City,” he said. “That’s how I became interested in mascoting. He’s still got the gig. He’s a legend. Maybe it’s in my genes.”

Juan Pablo “Juanito” Jaguar spent countless hours stalking the sidelines of Liga Mexico soccer pitches learning at the paws of his famous uncle. His big break, though, came when a highly-regarded college professor went to Mesoamerica to study Mayan culture and spotted Juanito ambling up the side of Chichen Itza. A long, strange adventure was about to unfold.

El Sol was granted an exclusive tongue-in-cheek April 1 interview with Johnny Jaguar following a Southwestern College

women’s tennis match. This interview was lightly edited for space and clarity.

**ELSOL:** Thanks for carving some time out of your busy schedule to meet with us, Johnny.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** No problema, folks. I read EL SOL cover to cover every time you come out.

**EL SOL:** Good to know, thank you. Please tell us how it is you came to Southwestern College.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Happy to. Crazy story. I was a juvenile jag climbing around on a pyramid back home when this Southwestern College art professor named Mark Van Stone approached like someone out of a Bob Dylan song or Indiana Jones movie. He had beef jerky, so I thought I’d make an introduction. Great guy. We hung out for a while and he drew a few sketches of me.

**ELSOL:** When did you see him next?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** He came back a few months later with an even bigger stash of beef jerky and a big grin on his



face. He told me he'd shown the sketches to his college president, this dude named Serafin Zasueta. Serafin, you know, like an angel. Anyway, Dr. Zasueta wanted to get rid of Southwestern's old mascot, the Apache, and Dr. Van Stone suggested the jaguar. Z dug the idea and sent Dr. Van Stone back to make an offer. I pounced at the chance and signed with Southwestern College in 2000. Been here ever since.

**EL SOL:** Gotta say we knew we had a badass black jaguar as our mascot, but we didn't know you had a name.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Well, yeah. Like everyone's got a name, right? But it's understandable because I'm not supposed to talk when I'm giggin'. It wrecks the illusion. There's lots of times I wanted to blurt out, hey, name's Johnny Jag! That's not mascot protocol, though, so I have to be cool and remain the strong, silent type.

**EL SOL:** Makes sense. What's in your mascot job description?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** I'm a little bit cheerleader, a little bit dancer. I rep our school mostly, so I have to make sure I'm looking sharp and sending out the right

message. The vibe is important, dudes, so I'm also doing my best to make my homies proud.

**EL SOL:** What's the best part of your job?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** That's easy, bro. All the people who smile and laugh and want selfies. Sometimes I feel like, I dunno know, like, sometimes I feel I'm kind of this positive force on campus who can make people's day a little brighter. Does that sound corny?

**EL SOL:** No, not at all. We've seen you have that effect on people.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Yeah, it's pretty cool. I get paid to be nice and to cheer people up.

**EL SOL:** Any downsides?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Well, you know, the usual mascot stuff. Some grumpy kid pulls my tail or the time someone spilled a Juice Adventure smoothie on my foot while we were getting our pictures taken. Every once in a while I scare a baby or small kid. That's a bummer, never mean to do that.



## SELFIE SWAGGER

Johnny Jaguar poses for scores of selfies with his fans at virtually every campus event. He said he enjoys 'making people's days a little brighter.'



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**EL SOL:** Tell us, please, about your role models, those heroic mascots you look up to.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** I'm always watching YouTube video of the greats, you know, like the San Diego Chicken, the Philly Phanatic, Silver the Wonder Pony from Bonitafest, Mr. Met, Bennie the Bull. The Padres Swinging Friar is underrated. I love his work. I really admire some of the old guard, too, like Tony the Tiger and the Cuckoo for Coco Puffs bird. That guy is hilarious and a great athlete.

**EL SOL:** Tell us about some of your career highlights.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Highlights. Wow, there are so many. I mean I loved being there when the women's soccer team won the league championship in the fall. So cool. The football bowl games. I remember when our cheerleaders were national champions a few years ago. We always have great cheerleaders and they are so underrated. Opening Day after COVID was awesome. It was great to see actual people back on campus after so long. It was fun to be in your newsroom during Mardi Gras with the flying beads and everything.

**EL SOL:** Well you know what they say, right? What goes on in the newsroom, stays in the newsroom.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Check. Mum's the word, amigos.

**EL SOL:** We know you've had offers from other schools and even the NFL. You've turned them all down. Do you ever think there will be a day you leave Southwestern?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** Oh hell no,

dudes. I'm an apex predator and this is an apex gig. I mean, I'm the face of the only college in the South County and the most diverse college in America. This is such an interesting place we live in, you know, with Mexico so close by and the Pacific Rim thing going on. There are so many interesting people here from every corner of the world. I mean, yeah, maybe I'd make more scratch moving to Utah or Missouri or, I don't know, North Dakota, but why would I leave here? Plus ain't no surfing in Utah, not to mention Lolita's or MJ's.

**EL SOL:** True that. What advice would you give a young person, or animal or ... whatever that thinks maybe they would like to be a mascot.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** I say go for it! If you have the commitment and are willing to put in the time and energy to learn the profession, you can do it. It's not easy. I mean, you have to work up your shtick, something that fits with the culture of your community. There's studying to do, for sure, but a lot of it is intuition, that gut feeling. Great mascots make thousands of decisions at every appearance. Is this a time to be crazy like at a football game, or should I dial it back a little, like at commencement. Can't really be clownin' during "Pomp and Circumstance," verdad? Respect the profession and pay your dues. Your time will come. Have a little faith in yourself and you can be a success.

**EL SOL:** A roaring success.

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** (groan) Dude, you had to go there.

**EL SOL:** Sorry, you get that a lot?

**JOHNNY JAGUAR:** All the time. ■



# ONGOING CORRUPTION POISONS OUR COLLEGE

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

**S**outhwestern College never seems to learn its lesson.

Crime doesn't pay nor does covering up crime. When a crime is committed, the perpetrator must be brought to justice, not protected, even if that person is an administrator. Especially if the person is an administrator. Yet our college's never-ending cycle of corruption tromps on, crushing our reputation under its jackboots.

This institution's woeful history of unethical and often criminal behavior in its top ranks is sickening. The ATM scandal is not an anomaly. It is business as usual, the latest in a long series of sleazy activity that seems to be handed down from administration to administration.

The brazen theft of an ATM machine by three employees of the SC Grounds Department — including manager Juan Chavez — is the kind of jaw dropping story no one would believe if it was not real. Chavez, Efrain Correa and Abdon Hernandez-Jimenez used a fork lift to pry an ATM machine loaded with money for FAFSA students from the floor of the

Student Center building. It was carted to the Grounds shop, forced open and emptied of \$9,600.

Hernandez-Jimenez, the expendable hourly employee, was immediately terminated, the sacrificial lamb of the trio. The penalty for Correa, a full-time college employee, was five months paid leave and his resignation.

The penalty for Chavez? A free pass to a full retirement.

Seriously.

It gets worse. College administrators kept the ATM incident tightly under wraps since September and might have gotten away with it had it not been for a laudatory governing board proclamation honoring the disgraced manager.

"...BE IT PROCLAIMED, that Juan Chavez is deserving of recognition for their dedicated years and services, and deserves the commendation of the Governing Board, administrators, faculty, staff and students of the Southwestern Community College District..."

A pat on the back to Chavez and a slap in the face to Southwestern's ►

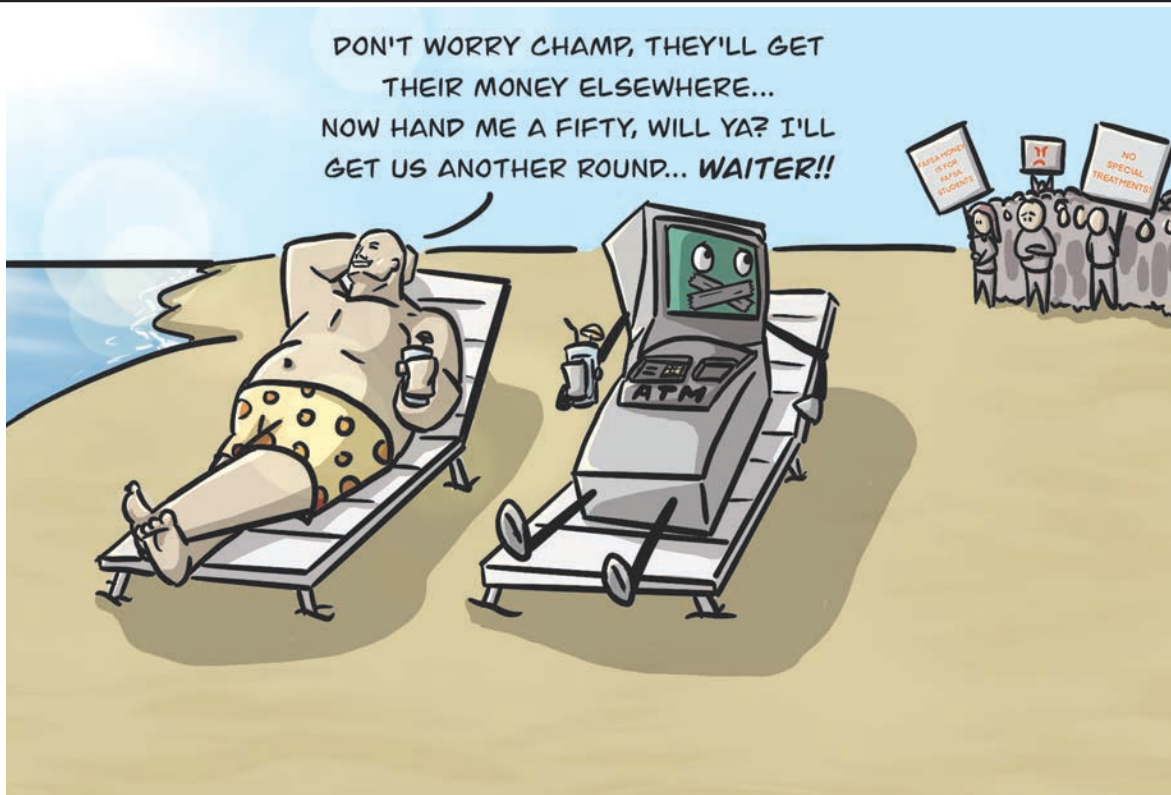


ILLUSTRATION BY EDMUNDO GODINEZ / STAFF

faculty and staff.

Sadly, reading through past issues of *The Sun* is a virtual crime log of venality and corruption. Southwestern College is a publically-funded feeding trough for piggish vagabond college administrators hired willy-nilly with scant (or no) background checks. A few examples:

### 1999

College President Tom Conte is forced to fire his friend, the VP of Academic Affairs, after the VP swats a female student on the butt at a meeting. It was not his first example of hands-on management. Conte secretly paid the VP a \$450,000 “severance package” equal to three years pay. Conte almost got away with this gift of taxpayer funds until *The Sun* broke the story. He was forced to retire early.

### 2002

President Serafin Zasueta faced 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine for spending

college funds on a political campaign. He was forced to resign.

### 2006

The college president and two administrator pals are fired or forced to resign for sexual harassment, a case that cost the taxpayers a small future.

### 2013

In a case the San Diego County District Attorney called the “worst corruption scandal in San Diego County history,” 12 SC administrators, governing board members and contractors they were taking “gifts” from were charged with 165 felonies for corruption, bribery, extortion, perjury and blackmail. All pleaded guilty to avoid prison. Former college president Raj Kumar Chopra and VP of Fiscal Services Nicholas Alioto led the way. Both had been charged with criminal activity at prior jobs. Eventually 22 SC administrators were fired or forced to resign.



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2011-22

A series of administrators in the Human Resources department are charged with criminal or unethical behavior and fired or forced to resign.

We could go on and on and on, but the question is, when does it stop?

Southwestern College has a corruption problem that is baked into the culture. It simmers like flickering embers and bursts periodically into a raging inferno. It may subside, but it never goes away. It cannot be extinguished. It decays our reputation and our spirit. It diminishes us.

Corruption at our college reinforces the reputation we minorities face every day in the South County. Corruption and dishonesty is a social stigma we seem to drag from our countries of origin and cannot shake off no matter how honest and ethically we try to lead our lives. It is not a good look for those who look up to us south of our border and it is certainly not a good look for those who already look down on the South County region.

College President Mark Sanchez and former VP of HR Janene McIntyre failed us big time and so did any governing board members and administrators who went along with the disgraceful ATM episode. Heads would roll at a more ethical college.

Good leaders are supposed to make us feel safe to be ethical, contributing members of the organization. While reporting this story we have had more than a dozen employees share other stories of theft and malfeasance, but all declined to go on the record out of fear. When employees fear retaliation for speaking the

**Good leaders are supposed to make us feel safe to be ethical, contributing members of the organization. While reporting this story we have had more than a dozen employees share other stories of theft and malfeasance, but all declined to go on the record out of fear.**

truth that is clear evidence of poor leadership and a toxic culture. College employees should not be forced to protect corrupt co-workers. We remain hopeful that a few brave employees will bring forth their evidence for the record so we can see once and for all how deeply this problem goes.

We are hopeful new trustees Robert Moreno and Corina Soto will raise the ethical standards of our college leadership. It is time to end the quarter century of wagon circling by college

administrators who protect each other no matter what. It is time to fiercely stamp out corruption at Southwestern College and it has to start from the top.

Our community deserves better. Voters in the Southwestern Community College District have passed a series of construction bonds to tax themselves nearly \$1 billion so far in the 21st century. Our community loves us and needs us, but our leadership routinely betrays and defiles us with cheap venality and sleaziness.

Our leaders are supposed to be role models and

people we can look up to. Our leaders are supposed to be people who show us the way forward. Right now, though, we are ashamed of our college leaders for allowing this kind of low grade corruption to roll on.

Our leadership is officially on notice. We are watching and so is our community.

Norma Hernandez in 2011 famously declared “the pay for play days at Southwestern College are over!” It is time for a new leader to declare that corruption in all of its ugly forms is over at Southwestern College and to really mean it. ■







# FREEWHEELING SKATEBOARD CULTURE IS A ZIG-ZAG ZEN

By CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

**S**kateboarding is a sport, an art and a way of life. It is exercise and therapy. It inhabits an internal void in a way that can feel spiritual.

It can also skin the holy heck out of your knees, bruise your elbows and throw out your back.

Therein lies the rub.

Skating is the Zen meditation of falling down and getting back up. It is conquering fear and shaking off pain. It is a *Kaizen* quest for self-improvement. It is Jonathon Livingston Seagull for terrestrials.

Riding a skateboard is like rolling through life with a squirt of WD-40. Sometimes we confront grumpy people

and testy security guards who call us vandals. Other times we roll up on kindly people who flash an encouraging smile and a thumbs up as if to say “keep at it!”

Skating is a transcendental outlet for Jocelyn Osegueda, a four-wheeling introvert who finds expression on her deck.

“I am not the kind of person who likes to talk about my feelings, so I skate when I need to offload,” she said. “The pain from falling distracts me from my emotions and is a way for me to cope. It just cancels everything out.”

Osegueda said she began skating in the seventh grade with her younger brother. They would skate aimlessly around their neighborhood, she recalled, as a way to arrive without traveling in the best of the Taoist tradition.

Injury is a constant possibility, she admitted, but never a deterrent. Skating is a constant dare that needs to be taken. ▶



## CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Skating legends like Tony Hawk inspire but do not intimidate recreational skaters who seek a buzz rather than bravura.

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“Thankfully I’ve never broken a bone,” she said, “but I’ve been messed up a few times.”

Once, while shooting down a ramp at a skate park, she fell in an awkward split, scraping her face and much of her body. It was a bad case of road rash, the dreaded asphalt malady of the true believers. She winced as she recounted how badly her wounds burned when she had to scrub them out in the shower. Later the scars became dermatological badges of honor.

Her favorite tricks are Ollies and 180s, she said, but she is most happy gliding the flatlands.

“I prefer to skate street, so I can just have some time to do something I enjoy alone,” she said.

Osegueda’s kid brother Rafael, 17, said he started skating in the ninth grade. As a youngster he enjoyed bombing hills, doing kick flips, vibing to his music and cruising around with his sister. Skating with Jocelyn brought him peace, he said. Still does.

Mark Ramirez, a shy 18 year old, rocked a royal Adidas mask, an oversized tee that flapped around his hips and ivory Converse that were worn out, but hanging on for another session. His shaggy brown hair bounced in wavy curls that cascaded down over his invisible ears. Ramirez started skating his freshman year of high school, he said, and was hooked.

“It’s a fun pastime,” he said. “Skating is good exercise and a way to destress after a long day. It gets me out of the house and helps me maintain a healthy state of mind.”

Ramirez said his favorite aspect of the skate community is that it supports

beginners.

Injuries loom, even for the greats. Legendary Tony Hawk recently posted photos of his broken femur with a caption expressing how recovery will be much longer due to his age.

“I am up for the challenge,” he said.

So, too, his femur.

An HBO skate documentary, “Until the Wheels Fall Off,” features Hawk at his philosophical best.

“I found my sense of purpose and shaped my identity through skating, and it nourishes my mental health like nothing else,” said the Baron of Bearings. “I’ve said many times that I won’t stop skating until I am physically unable.”

Hawk is able again and soaring on his board. So is Osegueda. Nothing can keep devoted skaters off their boards for long. The hills, ramps and roads await like the path to enlightenment...or at least endorphins.

Southwestern College has a mysterious Sunday crew that visitors can hear from a distance, but rarely glimpse. Its wiry members scatter at the sight of campus police or workaholic faculty like finches who spot a skulking cat. Guerilla skaters are to be heard but not seen.

When the heat moves on, the skaters re-enter the arena. Joyous racket resumes.

Jocelyn, Raphael, Mark and Tony are miles away and galaxies apart in ability, but connected through time and space. Skaters are bonded by their universal exhilaration and mishaps. Cool landings become good stories, spills become even better ones.

Skating is life. ■



# NO COMMUNITY AT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By IYARIE B. MURGUIA

**W**e are the lost generation of Southwestern College. We are the COVID cohort, the Zoom Zoners and masked marauders. We are the online loners, bedroom book club and the keyboard crusaders.

In other words, we have been cut off from each other.

So when we were finally able to bring our socially-starved selves back to campus in the fall we were bubbling with hope for new friends, collaborating classmates and possibly some romantic entanglements.

Nope.

The dictum that community colleges have no social life is true at boarded up, fenced out Southwestern.

Returning to in-person classes in August was underwhelming and disappointing. Students walked in with bright eyes, fresh outfits and hopes for new friends only to realize that every campus social center was shut down due to looming construction. Our cafeteria and ASO were largely intact, but locked up and vacant. We could peer in longingly at ivory hockey tables and tangerine couches, but yellow caution tape wrapped the building like an enormous malevolent Christmas present to warn us that we could not actually use them.

Thankfully we were left with dusty tables and chairs right outside the ruins of the cafeteria, like worn stones adjacent a crumbling pyramid. They offered hope for some sort of blessed interaction, perched as they were next to our doomed temples of socialization.

For a little while all was good, at least good enough. When midday classes let out the tables were draped with unwinding students and buzzing with conversation.

Then everything changed — again.

At the onset of the second semester buildings and paths were sealed off by six-foot high fences, causing confused students to stumble around like hungry rats in a maze without cheese.

Southwestern had its center gouged out. Our campus



heart that once swarmed with chatty friends, budding romances, and guitarists strumming their new chords is now an acre of annihilation. Southwestern's center is evocative of WWII Dresden or Hiroshima, a bombed out crater where once a thriving culture hummed.

Our once-bucolic campus is no longer a pretty site. Nor a friendly place.

Gone are the gritty but welcoming chairs and tables. We are left with one Spartan café of limited seating for 22,971 registered students.

Our ASO was obliterated. Some members of student government gave up, but others have fought on, working hard to stay relevant and make the best of a tough situation. Hats off to them because they were dealt a tough hand. Our ASO and our designated student gathering spot are wedged into a remote campus byway between the bookstore and the STEM building. There are a few stone tables dropped in there, but it is not the teaming hub of social interaction we knew prior to the demolition of our beautiful Student Center.

Construction will continue for 2-3 more years – at least. Our brief time as Southwestern College students is doomed to dust, grit, noise and isolation.

Unless...

A great deal of thought has gone into construction, but not enough into its impact on student mental health. Our college is a collection of smart and creative people. Let's all get busy thinking of smart and creative ways to nourish a social culture. Students need gathering places that allow conversations and comfort. We need time and space to reflect on what we are learning.

We are supposed to make lifelong friends in college, but that is not happening. That is sad and unnecessary. It also puts us at a disadvantage. Our future colleagues, business partners, teammates, husbands and wives pass in the gritty walkways like ships in the broad daylight.

COVID + Construction = Social Death.

Time for a new formula. ■



FORWARD

# Half century later Chicano Park has a museum of *la causa*

Another big dream comes true for community  
built on revolution, courage and imagination



PHOTO BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF





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# MUSEUM IS A NEW COMMUNITY PILLAR

By NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

## CHICANO PARK —

**I**t was a celebration that rumbled through the community like joyous thunder.

Even three blocks away the grand opening announcement rang through Barrio Logan, an aural symphony of rattling Aztec dancers, fiery mariachi licks, playful low rider horns and *gritos de gozo*.

Barrio Logan's Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center was open for business.

Getting to it was another matter. A phalanx of epic low riders sparkled and strutted with bouncing pride. Dancers with better feathers than Quetzalcoatl gyrated and rattled rhythmically in spiritual wisps of *incienso*. Visitors

wore pride on their shoulders like El Tri soccer jerseys.

Taking it all in with wide eyes and a wide smile was Rigoberto "Rigo" Reyes, leader of Los Amigos Car Club and a director of the new museum.

"It's a dream come true," he said. "We've been talking about this for 47 years."

The talking part is done. Brimming from the museum are the history and culture of Barrio Logan and the broader Chicano community. Each room is a walk-in memory book of the region's Chicano history.

One crowded area was the exhibit of eye-level pillars that replicated the towering structures supporting the Coronado Bridge. Chicano Park's enormous pillars are concrete canvases featuring some of the planet's most famous outdoor art. "PILLARS: Stories of Resilience and Self-Determination"





PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN BACA COLLECTION / UCSD LIBRARY

were miniaturized tributes to the tree-sized behemoths in the park. Like their outdoor muses, the indoor pillars were covered with inspiring art and history presented with the primary colored urgency of *la causa*.

Curated by Josephine S. Talamantez, Alberto Pulido and Valerie Jaimes, the exhibition featured 12 pillars, each representing a different organization with art and photos highlighting its work.

Talamantez, chair of the museum board, said the curators' mission is to commemorate and correct aspects of Chicano history that are misunderstood, misrepresented or overlooked.

"The focus of the museum is all inclusive," she said. "It is the art, history and science of the borderlands — both raza and indigenous communities of the borderlands."

Visitors jammed the Archive Room, a chamber of wondrous historical artifacts from the collection of Chicano Park Steering Committee icon Tomasa "Tommie" Camarillo. Dog-eared posters, faded photos, tattered flags



PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN BACA COLLECTION / UCSD LIBRARY



## BORN OF BETRAYAL AND CONFLICT

Residents of Logan Heights, with ample help from Chicanos and supporters from across America, wrestled the land that is now Chicano Park away from the California Highway Patrol and City of San Diego in 1970. Chicano Park has the world's largest collect of outdoor murals and is a Congressional Heritage Site. It is now a source of pride across the region.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN BACA COLLECTION / UCSD LIBRARY





PHOTOS BY NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA / STAFF



## CONCRETE CANVASES CONVEY CULTURE

Chicano Park’s iconic murals painted on the pillars supporting the Coronado Bridge inspired museum artists. Each miniature pillar has a theme organic to Chicano Park and the surrounding Logan Heights community. (top) A Kumeyaay woman and a basket with a rattlesnake design. (above) Amigos Car Club President Rigo Reyes near a mini pillar commemorating the towering Salvador Barajas original.

and other survivors of *la causa* hung triumphantly, clarions of what it took and what is possible.

Jaimes, the interim executive director of the museum, said the cultural center is something the community has needed for generations.

“(I wish) I could go back in time into my youth again and see the museum for what it is right now,” she said. “(It is) a welcoming space for our community, a cultural center for us to explore and ultimately love our identities. It would have helped me so much in my self-evolution and self-determination.”

Reyes said the aim of the Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center is to uplift the community, particularly its youth.

“It’s the community’s museum,” he said. “We want to develop a first class museum in the heart of a *barrio*. This community deserves it.” ■





FORWARD

# Woody Guthrie's last song transcends time as a clarion call for human decency

Racist radiocast inspires America's troubadour to call out mistreatment and degradation of Mexican farmworkers in one of history's greatest protest songs

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# ‘DEPORTEE’ STILL HAUNTS AMERICA

By NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA AND EMILY INGCO

*The crops are all in and the peaches are  
rotting  
The oranges piled up in their creosote  
dumps  
They're flying them back to the  
Mexican border  
To pay all their money to wade back  
again*

**W**oody Guthrie was pissed. Ravaged by the early stages of the Huntington's disease that would paralyze and kill him 20 years later, America's most famous songwriter of the first half of the 20th century could no longer play his famous Gibson Southern Jumbo guitar labeled with the rebel decree "This machine kills fascists."

But what he heard on the radio fired him to write one last great lyric.

Puttering around his Long Island, New York home in January 1948 Guthrie heard a bulletin on the morning news.

"Story out of California," he recalled the announcer saying. "A plane crash near Los Gatos killed 32 people. It ain't as bad as it sounds, though, because mostly they were just deportees."

Infuriated, Guthrie grabbed paper and pen. His hands were shaking from a mix of rage and Huntington's, but he scratched out a lyric that today is considered one of the most important protest songs ever written and a composition that has been recorded hundreds of times by the likes of Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, The Byrds, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell, Odetta, Dolly Parton, Cisco Houston, Hoyt Axton and Peter, Paul and Mary, among many others, including Woody's son Arlo Guthrie.





PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM Z. HERNANDEZ

## 'ALL THEY WILL CALL YOU WILL BE DEPORTEES'

(above) A mass funeral at Fresno's Holy Cross Cemetery for 26 of the 28 Mexican braceros who died in a January 28, 1948 plane crash in the Los Gatos hills near Coalinga. Many of the caskets were empty because the bodies were obliterated in the crash. (below) This marker at Holy Cross Cemetery was replaced by a monument in 2023 with the names of all the Mexican citizens who died in the plane crash.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WENATCHEE WORLD

There, on his kitchen table, Guthrie's rage became a poetic masterpiece.

*Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita  
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria  
You won't have a name when you ride the  
big airplane  
All they will call you will be deportees*

Some of the bodies of the bracero-era farmworkers were returned in pine coffins to their grieving families in Mexico, but most were buried in a mass grave near Fresno, according to Tim Z. Hernandez' seminal study "All They Will Call You." Newspapers in Fresno County did finally start to put names to the victims and locals made makeshift memorials, but the victims of the plane wreck at Los Gatos largely disappeared from the national conversation.

Folk music legend Pete Seeger, Guthrie's long-time pal and former bandmate in The Almanac singers, was the first to perform "Deportee: Plane Wreck at Los Gatos." He did so as a chant accompanied by his banjo plunking out a sad melody in a largely improvised attempt to get Woody's message out to sympathetic audiences. Guthrie, the master tunesmith, could no longer play his guitar and struggled to sing. Even half-finished, "Deportee" started to stir emotions.

Cesar Chavez was pissed.

The young U.S. Navy veteran who had begun his service to farmworkers shortly after World War II, read the lyrics and was further inspired to advocate on behalf of Mexican and Filipino farmworkers, people like himself and his family. He would have a second life-changing encounter with "Deportee" about a decade later.

*My father's own father, he waded  
that river  
They took all the money he made in  
his life  
My brothers and sisters come working  
the fruit trees  
They rode on the trucks 'til they took  
down and died*

Martin Hoffman was intrigued. As a Colorado university student he had attended a performance by Seeger that included his chant version of “Deportee.” He decided such a stirring lyric needed a melody. Years later, in 1958, while he was working as a high school teacher in California, Hoffman came up with a simple yet beautiful melody in ranchero waltz time that gave wings to Guthrie’s angry poem.

Seeger loved it. So did Guthrie. Legions of folk and rock musicians came to love “Deportee,” too.

*Some of us are illegal and some are not  
wanted  
Our work contract's out and we have to  
move on  
600 miles to that Mexican border  
They chase us like outlaws,  
like rustlers, like thieves ▶*

## PUTTING FACES TO THE NAMELESS DEPORTEES

Activists worked to learn about the victims commemorated in Guthrie’s iconic protest song and to retroactively honor them. Author Tim Z. Hernandez did exhaustive research on the dead in his 2017 book “All They Will Call You.” (top) A vigil at the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes. (center) A descendant of one of the passengers. (lower r) Hernandez (in hat) and Jaime Ramirez, grandson of a crash victim, at the R.C. Baker Memorial Museum in Coalinga on January 28, the 75th anniversary of the crash.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GUSTAVO ARELLANO / LOS ANGELES TIMES



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW YORK TIMES



PHOTO COURTESY OF JACOB YEAGER / KQED



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Guthrie grew up in Oklahoma during the disastrous Dust Bowl years and, like the deportees in his poem, led a vagabond life looking for work and trying to survive. He played piano and guitar in bars and clubs when he could get a gig, but he also harvested wheat in Texas and the Midwest as well as fruit in California's Central Valley. He learned passable Spanish and grew fond of the hardworking migrants who selflessly labored to provide for their families.

"Jest about the most noble folks I've ever seed," Guthrie wrote in his intentionally Oklahoman lexicon.

He soon got his first real break performing his songs on the radio in Los Angeles and recording deals followed. Guthrie's train-hopping travels informed his classics like "This Land is Your Land," "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You," "Do-Re-Mi," "Billy the Kid," "Jesus Christ," "Pretty Boy Floyd," "Philadelphia Lawyer" and many others. Bob Dylan has been called America's greatest songwriter, but he declines the title and insists Woody Guthrie was "a God-given gift to everyone."

Guthrie whisperer Cisco Houston took the first crack at recording a radio version of "Deportee" and in 1961 the song began to get airplay in pockets across the nation.

*We died in you hills, we died in your  
deserts  
We died in your valleys and died on  
your plains  
We died 'neath your trees and we died  
in your bushes  
Both sides of the river we died just the  
same*

Cesar Chavez was tired.

In 1961 he worked as a labor organizer who encouraged Mexican-Americans (as

Latinos were most commonly referred as in that time) to vote. He had scratched his way out of the strawberry and lettuce fields into the middle class and had a home in San Jose. Like many revolutionaries, Chavez had his moments of doubt and bouts of exhaustion. His grandchildren – including granddaughter Christina who attended Southwestern College – said "Deportee" changed the course of his life.

Christina Chavez said her grandfather did what so many Americans do when they hear a compelling new song on their car radio – he stopped in his driveway with the motor running and the radio playing Cisco Houston's recording of "Deportee." It was a seminal moment that led to his decision to double down on his work on behalf of migrants and form the precursor of the United Farm Workers union.

"It shook him up," she said. "Right to his core."

*The sky plan caught fire over Los Gatos  
canyon  
A fireball of lightning that shook all  
our hills  
Who are these friends, all scattered like  
dry leaves?  
The radio said they are just deportees*

Houston's recording launched a thousand ships – more accurately, a thousand versions of "Deportee: Plane Wreck at Los Gatos." Folk, country and rock stars from each generation have kept the song and its message alive for 75 years. Human rights leader Enrique Morones said it is one of the greatest and most important songs ever written.

"There are a lot of great protest songs, but none more stirring than 'Deportee,'" he said. "This is the 75th anniversary of a song that is still recorded and performed





Pilot: Francis G. A  
Stewardess: Wife: Lillian  
son

Guadalupe Ramirez Lara  
Severo Medina Lara  
Elio: Teupilo Macias  
José Rodriguez Macias  
Amal: Padillo Márquez  
Luis López Medina

Alfonso Mejía  
Francisco Llo  
Santiago García  
Rosabete Padilla  
Bernabé López García  
Juan Paradoz, Gonzá  
Ana María de Gracia  
Candelaria Hernández

Apollonio F  
Alberto C  
Guadalupe Her  
María Santa  
Juan Valen  
Wenceslao F  
José Valdivia  
Jesús Meza S  
Baldomero Marra

Co-Pilot: Marion H. Ewing  
Guard: Frank E. Chaffin





## RELENTLESS EFFORT TO LOCATE FAMILIES

Author Tim Z. Hernandez (right) stands with descendants of the Mexican laborers killed in the 1948 plane crash near Los Gatos Canyon. Since 2010, Hernandez has located the families of at least 13 of the 28 Mexican passengers on board the DC-3 plane that crashed in the Diablo Range, 20 miles west of Coalinga, California.





PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG KOHLRUSS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

by renowned musicians. That is a testament to its value and its staying power.”

Southwestern College Professor of Mexican-American Studies Dr. Gerardo Rios said the song “hits home” for him because he has family members who have been mistreated laborers.

“For a long time Mexican-Americans were seen as disposable in American society,” he said. “Woody Guthrie captured that and brought that message to a broader audience. Workers were not seen as braceros, but were called deportees in a degrading manner. Their names did not matter. They were people who did not matter.”

Rios said artists have special power and an obligation to use it well.

“The song brought the experience of my family to others in very concrete terms,” he said. “It says ‘we’re flying you back to the border.’ Now we need you, now we don’t.”

“Deportee” has enlightened listeners for three quarters of a century, Rios said.

“It gives exposure to the horrific treatment of Mexicans and migrant workers that is still the situation today,” he said. “I think the song keeps alive a critical American reality that migrant labor is the backbone of our economy.”

## COMING TO TERMS WITH 75 YEARS OF PAIN AND GRIEF

Musician Lance Canales bows his head at a memorial at Holy Cross Cemetery. The stone is inscribed with the names of the 28 farmworkers who died in a 1948 plane crash.

*Is this the best way we can grow our  
big orchards?*

*Is this the best way we can grow our  
good fruit?*

*To fall like dry leaves and to rot on the  
topsoil*

*And be called by no name except  
deportees?*

Morones said Woody Guthrie and Martin Hoffman are still working their artistic magic from their perches in Heaven.

“I recent years I’ve heard ‘Deportee’ in ‘La Pastorela’ at the Globe Theater and on KPBS,” he said. “The great Chunky Sanchez used to sing it at Chicano Park. Those 28 farm workers are martyrs whose tragic stories caused many thousands of people to think about the way we treat migrant labor in the United States and around the world. That’s the power of music.” ■





# EL SOL

*Forward*