

# CALAFIA

Issue 2020



# SYSTEMS



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# **A Letter From The Editor,**

When the Calafia crew met virtually to discuss the theme of this issue, Systems was an immediate choice but... complicated to define.

This was the challenge the youth of 2020's Calafia fellowship created for themselves—I mean, what the hell is a system?

Broadly, a system is a structure designed to create a status quo. It is both bureaucratic, like the American education system, and conceptual, like gender.

In the pages of this magazine, you'll find the experiences of California youth like Rosa who wants to know who her Coachella Valley school system was built to benefit. And Ivan, who asks us to look at the structures of our own upbringings and face the question, what does it mean to "be a man"?

The youth of this fellowship were tasked to produce this issue under the enormous pressures and loneliness of 2020 and I could not be more proud of the results of their labors.

Through their words, I am reminded that, though we may feel isolated under the systems we must operate within, our struggle is a shared one. That, underneath the structures designed to define us, we have more in common than might appear on the surface.

Well done team,

**Jarrett Ramones**

yli Communications Coordinator



# Stability In An Emergency:

*What an urgent trip to the ER poses for patients while in the hospital and after*

**by Rachel Livinal**

In 2010, the Mercy Medical Center launched its brand new opening on G Street in Merced. Located on the north side of the city, only a short drive away from the new UC, the hospital was majestic and shiny.

It served as the replacement for Merced's previous hospitals, both of which used to be located on the opposite side of town, and in buildings run by the county.

The newly established emergency room in Mercy would be the place most patients would go when in immediate need, but the amount of resources provided for sufficient quality of care would be the determining factor in every patient's overall experience.

Photo by Rachel Livinal

"I've only gone that one time and I did not want to go back afterwards because of it," said "Alex" (who has decided to remain anonymous) about their encounter at the ER. They were a sophomore in college and, then, a cis woman who had grown up in Sacramento.

Unfortunately, Alex's experience was anything but accommodating. The fiasco started with a numbness in the face, which they described as "nothing serious." After sitting in the waiting room for two hours and googling as an attempt to self-diagnose the situation, Alex's friends decided to speak with the workers at the front. Finally, they were taken to the back to see a doctor.

Long wait times are notorious at emergency rooms, often due to the high concentration of patients.

When a room is overcrowded and chaotic, it can be hard to determine who needs help the most. "We have categories, which basically go from one to five. One is you have to do something right now, or this person may lose their life. And five is, if they waited for a while, it wouldn't make much difference." According to Skip, an ER nurse at Mercy, a one could be something like a heart attack and a five anything from a runny nose to a headache. But even then, the categories don't always give crystal clear next-steps.





Photo by Daan Stevens on Unsplash

Skip says, “And then a lot of it is gut. There’s a lot of times you really can’t put your finger on what’s going on. And you have to figure it out. Those are the ones that you have to really, really pay attention to because it can go south in a hurry.”

It turns out that the hospital’s history of quality of care has been one of mixed opinions. Alex did not come out with a positive impression. After waiting for several hours to be taken back to a doctor, they were put through a round of tests. Alex describes, “And they just had me do facial expressions and exercises. And then after a couple of exercises, they were just like, yeah, it’s what you thought.” Their Google search was in fact correct. After being seen by nurses, Alex was seen by a doctor, who prescribed them multiple

medications. “It was a lot for my body and they didn’t really take time to explain to me what I would feel or how exactly it was helping me.” Alex has heard that other people experience a similar routine: prescribed drugs, not told much about them, and sent on their way.

The nurses and doctors are trying. “Usually the doctor will come in sometime while we’re getting the patient set up, evaluate the patient and then set up a plan of care for the patient. And then we basically direct that plan of care,” says Skip. Skip describes it as a well-woven team, with great communication and teamwork. Although, depending on the time of day, there may or may not be a couple of “float nurses,” who essentially float around to help people in need. Float nurses provide an essential part in every ER’s framework, allowing more patients to be seen in less time. However, when there aren’t enough nurses available, a problem arises, especially with patients like Alex.

Skip also describes the level of experience for the nurses: “We have a lot of seasoned nurses. A few years back, we took a lot of new grants.”

This meant new college students from the UC coming to work for the ER. Training these young students and giving them the attention they need is critical to the future of healthcare, since they will soon be responsible for the hospital’s patients. But it adds a new challenge for nurses like Skip, who are already stretched thin.

Skip says, “It’s hard working with new graduates because at the time I was a charge nurse and you had to really, really watch them because they

“WE HAVE CATEGORIES, WHICH BASICALLY GO FROM ONE TO FIVE. ONE IS YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING RIGHT NOW, OR THIS PERSON MAY LOSE THEIR LIFE. AND FIVE IS, IF THEY WAITED FOR A WHILE, IT WOULDN’T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE.”

didn't have that sixth sense." That sixth-sense that helps with identifying the level of urgency from injury to injury.

Of course as time has gone on, the students came to grapple with their senses, but the question of limited supply is still raised. **Float nurses aren't always available for patients, let alone students who need to be trained.**

Alex left the hospital eventually, with a hefty prescription and a nerve-wracked mind. But that night at the hospital was not the end of it. "My health insurance in Sacramento took me off of my mom's case. And so I didn't have health insurance when I went in and everything was lined up in the worst possible way. [But] I would say that they worked with me on that."

Alex was able to get their payment deferred until the insurance company was able to work with them to be put back on family insurance.

But even with the help the hospital offered, certain problems may not come down to their control. This whole case of going into the ER without any insurance is something incredibly relevant due to a policy known as EMTALA, or the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. According to an article published by Baylor University Medical Center, this act, passed in Congress in 1986, "was to ensure patient access to emergency medical care and to prevent the practice of patient dumping, in which uninsured patients were transferred, solely for financial reasons, from private to public hospitals without consideration of their medical condition or stability for the transfer."

**"BACK IN THOSE DAYS, PEOPLE WOULD WALK AWAY BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY, [AND] THEY WERE EMBARRASSED. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO COME TO THE HOSPITAL AND THEY RISKED THEIR LIVES NOT DOING THAT."**

In other words, the act ensures anyone the right to care at any hospital, no matter where they stand on their insurance.

Skip talks about the risks of healthcare before EMTALA was established, "Back in those days, people would walk away because they didn't have the money, [and] they were embarrassed. They didn't want to come to the hospital and they risked their lives not doing that."

The hospital has various programs set up and excellent communication with patients unable to pay their bill. On top of that, Skip explains that sometimes the nurses rally together to pay for small expenses, such as a smaller prescription or bill for some patients. But as far as accomodation for the expenses of medical prescriptions, the quality of care may be lowered.

Alex took that fateful trip to the ER in November. "I think all of January was doing the paperwork at the hospital. The refund for the prescriptions [wasn't all the] way up until March. And in terms of me and the information, I would say that the hospital provided me the information for how to pay their part of it, like directly to the hospital." But for the Pharmacy, Alex and their mom had to do extensive calls and research in order to finally get their money back for the medicine.



Alex was covered under the EMTALA act, which allowed them to go to the ER at the time of emergency. But it did not cover their continued problems. This poses a problem and a question: what are the downfalls of EMTALA?

According to an article from 2017 published from the Western Journal of Emergency Medicine, there are three misconceptions which could potentially lead to problems with the Act: “patients only receive care if they have an EMC, EMTALA contains no requirement for physicians and hospitals to provide uncompensated care or stabilizing treatment for patients with non-emergency conditions, and uninsured or underinsured patients are still responsible for the costs of care and will be personally billed for all services. There is no ‘coverage’ at all, only mandated emergency care for which the patient still must pay (or go bankrupt).”

An EMC, or emergency medical condition, is defined as “a condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in placing the individual’s health [or the health of an unborn child] in serious jeopardy, serious impairment to bodily functions, or serious dysfunction of bodily organs.”

The other two problems are narrowed to continued care and payment. Not only are hospitals not required to provide continued care for the patient once their EMC is resolved, but the patient is billed whether or not they have insurance. This means that hundreds to thousands of dollars must be paid by the person billed, no matter their circumstances.

With our healthcare system being one of the biggest moneymakers, the solution to every patient’s experience is simple: more resources. EMTALA needs to be expanded so that people like Alex and anyone who bothers to go into the ER will be prepared for the financial damage that could ensue the minute they are treated. But it doesn’t stop there. Hospitals could also hire more nurses to reduce long wait times, tendency to prescribe a quick fix for any illness or injury, and a lack of training for incoming students. Of course, the emergency room isn’t perfect; no emergency room is. But when you are in an emergency and you see that there is no other way out, do you want to find out that help has an expiration date?

# Embedded Filter:

## *Crumbling Education System*

**by Rosa Gonzalez**

With the world changing, many systems are advancing to fit our growing standards. But the American education system has remained almost as stagnant as ever. This system filters out whoever it wasn't originally designed for, such as low-income students and people of color.

Although these inequalities are not as explicit as they have been in the past, they continue to negatively affect multiple students, **especially in communities like mine**, where many students have fallen through the nets of the education system.

I live on the eastern side of the Coachella Valley, which is mainly composed of low-income, unincorporated communities. **Most of the people who live on the eastern side of the valley are people of color and more than 95% of the students at my high school are Latinx.**

Aside from the lack of courses offered, the majority of teachers fail to be inclusive with all their students. Of course, it is hard to know what +90 students need, but many educators focus on the “top” students without realizing the majority of students are being left behind. Alumni and current high school students of the area, including myself, feel extremely unprepared for future college-level courses.

The classes offered by our school aren't enough, and of course, **we have to try even harder to succeed**, compared to other students across the country in terms of readiness for college and professional jobs.

An educator from the Eastern Coachella Valley, Mr. Alfonso Taboada mentions how teachers have “misconceptions on how to teach, since they themselves were successful in school. They then try to replicate structures that prevent students from succeeding. ‘This is the struggle you’re facing and here is why,’ but some teachers don’t explain why. We are teaching students to assimilate because they see their communities as burdens.”

**The education system we know today is the traditional system in which teachers give information while students accept the ideas without question.** Many times these students are not given proper lessons and are instead given “busy work,” as Ryan Licea, a senior from the Eastern Coachella Valley claims.

This form of traditional teaching can also be referred to as “banking education,” in which teachers merely deposit knowledge into the students. As influential education philosopher Paulo Freire mentions, “teachers know everything, students know nothing,” which can harm students since no critical thinking is introduced into the learning environment. Such ideas shut down a student’s creativity and interest in many school subjects.

Many times, we as students are stuck teaching each other, and while group discussions can be beneficial, most of the content is found on our terms without teacher guidance. Such work can help promote independence, but there is no guidance on whether we are doing things correctly.

Letter grades are also a part of this failing system since students find themselves in positions where they do not care about what they learn as long as they pass. The idea of failing is so embedded into the educational culture that we lose focus on the importance of retaining useful information.



We see this idea of failure everywhere, from school posters to hit tv shows and movies, such as Night School and No Manches Frida. Instead of actually trying to learn something, all we see is people trying to pass or else we'd be perceived as complete losers and failures - as students not worth giving a chance. We don't have many classes that introduce us to careers or even expose us to the many careers we can do. We have "core courses" such as: Integrated math, physical education, history, and English, but who is benefited by such courses if the courses given don't necessarily prepare students for common adult-life tasks?

## "THIS SYSTEM FILTERS OUT WHOEVER IT WASN'T ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR, SUCH AS LOW-INCOME STUDENTS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR."

The majority of students go into adulthood not knowing how to file taxes, make appointments, or knowing the importance of government participation. We know  $y=mx+b$  and that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell, but we don't know how to properly manage our finances. A senior from the Eastern Coachella Valley, Ryan Licea asks "Am I really ready to deal with the obligations of being an adult?" Then again, we have no choice but to learn, whether it be through older mentors or even from negative experiences.

Of those educators who are inclusive, many have to go out and buy supplies for their students, since schools don't offer many. The recent budget cuts have affected the number of books and supplies offered to students, which puts many teachers in a difficult situation while finding teaching resources.

My district, the Coachella Valley Unified School District is already at a disadvantage compared to districts from the western side of the Valley, which is a wealthier district with more resources. This inequity then leads to lower graduation rates and college attendees/ graduates from the Eastern Coachella Valley.

To create change, we must all unite for a greater purpose, especially teachers and students. Something teachers can do to combat this systematic failure would be to introduce new ways of teaching. Although introducing new ideas different from what some have been teaching for years might be hard, it will help many students. Incorporating ethnic studies into school subjects would help students feel a connection to the lessons being taught.

I lost interest in school in middle school, when I found myself disconnected from the information being taught at school. I realized I wasn't learning anything, but instead memorizing what I needed to pass. I was told this mentality would get me nowhere in life, yet I wasn't taught what would get me places. As someone who comes from a low-income household, education is essential for me. Now in high school, I find myself trying to pass every class with an A to try to get into a university, but have I really learned what I need to be successful in college and adulthood? Or am I only doing this because everyone forces this idea of passing upon me? Because I am a person of color in America, I feel like I have to graduate with honors or resources will have gone to waste.



As I entered high school, I entered a program that exposed me to my culture while following the state of California's curriculum, and helped me **once again gain interest in school**. This program helped me gain motivation but also enlightened me about the many inequalities and struggles students of low-income communities face.

As someone who has taken multiple ethnic studies in high school and has been exposed to authors of color in my English courses, I can confirm that this has helped motivate me to pay attention in class. **I see people who are like me in my reading pieces in school, who go through the same struggles I do, and can't help but feel happy to learn what they have to offer.**

Even former Desert Mirage students and college graduates feel that including students' culture into teaching would have been an amazing resource to have. Alumni Edeli Reyes of Mecca states, "Being exposed to

other authors coming from a similar background. It would have helped inspire a new/ different perspective. This would've helped me do better in some courses since many curriculum-based books are a very narrow minded perspective. I would've come to college with more experience."

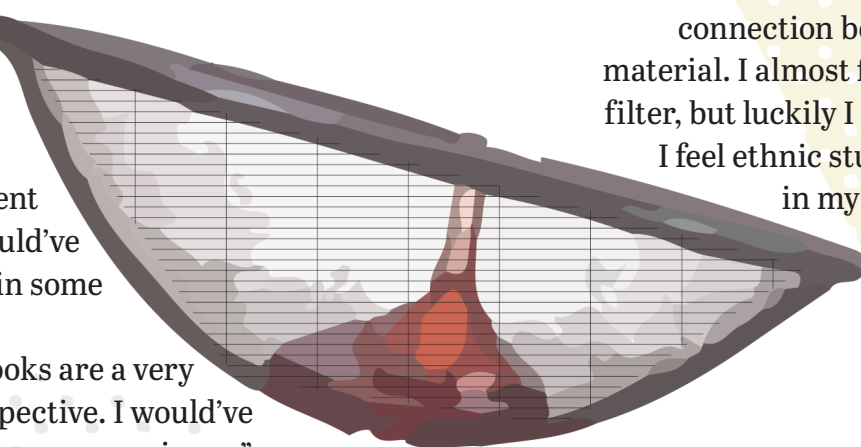
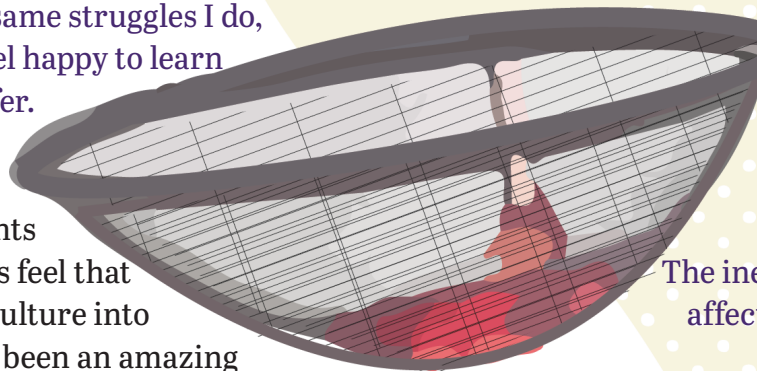
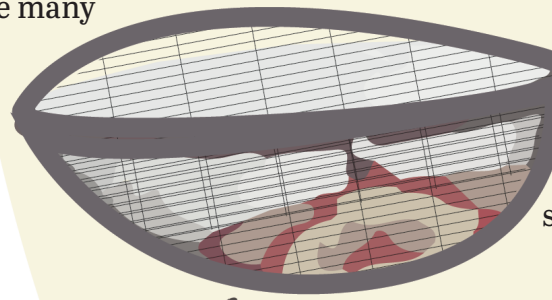
The education system fosters the growing generation's ideas and prepares students for the future of the world. Despite this, many students remain **held back**

from accomplishing their dreams merely because of their **economic and social background**. Although this system doesn't only affect people of color and low-income students, they remain the most affected.

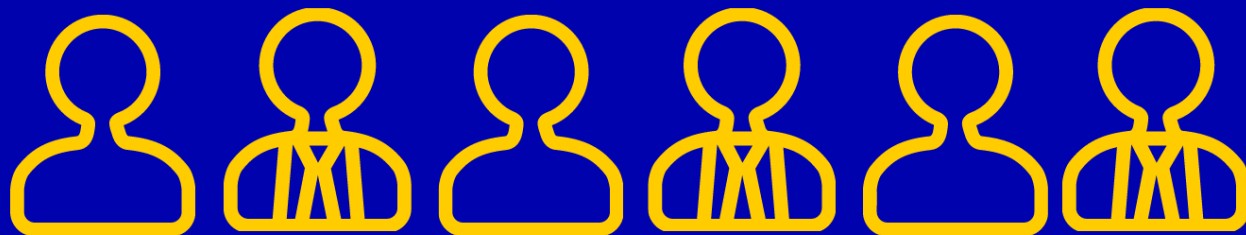
Many of these students, who the system fails, **lose a sense of identity**, and feel misplaced in society.

Many become a part of the growing statistics regarding teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and unemployment. **The inequity within the system has affected students throughout our nation for far too long.**

If we want to capture the attention of those who fall, we must show a connection between them and the material. I almost fell right through the filter, but luckily I managed to rise, and I feel ethnic studies was a big factor in my rise as a student and as a person overall.



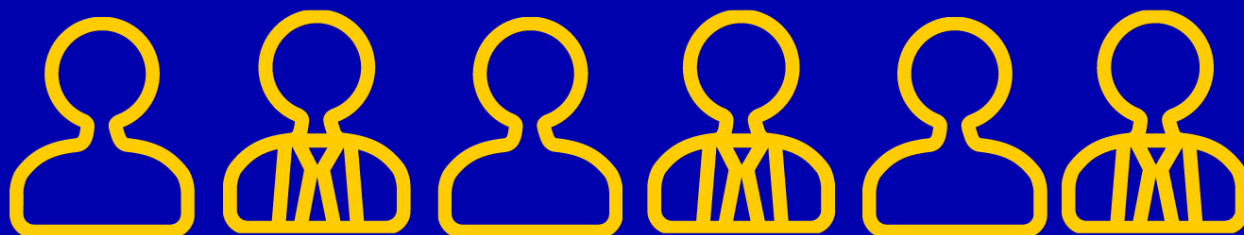




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# An American Spectre: How Education Was Infiltrated By Capital & Greed

by **Ceferino Martinez**

There's a spectre haunting American education, a ghost that has lingered for over a century. A once thriving institution now stagnates as the nation teeters under the **weight of systematic failure**. Underfunded and under supported, many students across the nation have been abandoned. The early American schools were built on the idea of good will and progress. Horace Mann's reforms in the late 1830's sought to bring universal schooling to children across America, passing statewide laws, like compulsory schooling in Massachusetts, giving opportunity to impoverished kids through literacy and vocation skills.<sup>1</sup>

In 1850, women began implementing school lunch programs all over the United States in order to feed students, many of whom were immigrants and had been malnourished due to poverty. The march of progress rang true within early America.<sup>1</sup>

However, a shadow would soon creep in. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, scientific management with the support of early millionaires began a process to socially engineer an education-industrial pipeline where, over the course of decades, grades matter more than practical skills and the class time was optimized to prioritize efficiency rather than necessity for future adults.<sup>2</sup>

Conservatives began using the free lunch programs as a way to culturally assimilate immigrants by "abandoning the diet of their parents."<sup>3</sup> Early segregationists in collaboration with southern plantation owners in the South **defunded Black schools** during reconstruction after Republicans lost their senatorial seats in Congress, damning an entire people into apartheid. It's no coincidence that our current school system shares a large resemblance to an old industrial factory: you clock into a class, take a lunch break, and clock out like a routine from a factory.

"CONSERVATIVES BEGAN USING THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAMS AS A WAY TO **CULTURALLY ASSIMILATE** IMMIGRANTS BY ABANDONING THE DIET OF THEIR PARENTS."

1 Blakemore, "A Brief History of School Lunch."

2 Foster, "Education and the Structural Crisis of Capital," 27-28.

3 Blakemore, "A Brief History of School Lunch."

4 Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, and Lash, "The Turnaround Challenge...", 14-38.



Ever since the 1900's, robber barons like Ford and Rockefeller have slowly been influencing our country into valuing students as a resource. In the school-to-factory pipeline, **kids are more or less treated like employees to a machine rather than functioning adults.**

In the 2000's Bill and Melinda Gates spent over 2 billion dollars lobbying schools through the Turnaround Foundation in an effort to "reform."<sup>4</sup> Instead, they used the money to coerce schools into forbidding tenure for teachers, **implementing harsh crackdowns** on teachers unions, and extending the school day. Kids were also subjected to more discipline and longer school years forcing many schools to close due to the new policy.<sup>5</sup>

Since the start, many billionaires, alongside former CEOs, have been using corporate style "venture philanthropy." Originally used by Andrew Carnegie as a way to justify the massive wealth of the upper class, venture philanthropy allows billionaires to hide their private interests behind charity. The reasoning of this is twofold: one is to maintain positive goodwill, and the second is to influence inner city schools within the United States to adopt long term programs that aim to benefit their industry without having any of it count toward the IRS for taxes. **Many schools lack the funding that keeps their services solvent.** Through lucrative grants, the rich prey on this lack of funds, offering aid and private donations in exchange for a series of unfair contracts and guidelines.<sup>6</sup> This leads to schools closing and forces students and teachers to be at the mercy of private charter schools.

When corporations have decision-making power over how schools operate, schools then function to serve corporate interests. However, this and many other projects by corporations is merely one of many.

In the early 1990's millionaires began the process of lobbying the importance of "school choice" through **charter schools**. What people didn't know is that charters siphoned money and funds from the public sector to the private sector through charter vouchers, further weakening the allocated funds that were meant for public schools.

Because of this, teachers in the United States have to frequently negotiate contracts with the schools and go on strike to maintain their funding, putting many teachers at risk.

**"WHEN WE NEGOTIATE OUR CONTRACTS, WE FIGHT FOR BETTER WAGES, WE FIGHT FOR BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, BETTER BENEFITS AND LOWER CASE LOADS MAKE OUR JOB A SUSTAINABLE CAREER FOR FUTURE TEACHERS."**

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<sup>5</sup> Foster, "Education and the Structural Crisis of Capital," 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 21-24

Aryn Faur's experience as a representative for the Berkeley Federation of Teachers has granted her insights into the state of school funding and privatization. An avid trade unionist for most of her career, she describes her experience as a teacher and an organizer. **She and many others saw firsthand how charter schools squeeze public education in Chicago.**

"When the charter gets a stronghold, they pull money from the city budget from the school. That leaves greater pressure and less resources."

"If we really want quality education for our students, we need that funding." She and many teachers in Berkeley had to pay out of pocket for school supplies for students as the district remains unable to keep up with the growing demand for education.

Teachers also **sacrifice** autonomy in the name of standardized results as many school districts rush to fill graduation quotas. This pushes many students into courses that focus purely on "academic college readiness" in order to push students into certain careers with funding that fail to prepare them with the basic skills for being an independent adult.

**" I DON'T THINK THERE IS A MONOLITHIC EXPERIENCE OF BEING SOMEONE IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT I DO SEE AN EROSION OF OUR ABILITY TO EARN A MIDDLE CLASS WAGES AND HAVE BENEFITS."**

**- ARYN FAUR**

Current academics have prioritized college requirements and extracurriculars to ensure students are competitive in the "real world" when they should be preparing students for adulthood. Social skills and practical street smarts win battles and keep the gears going.

While funding is critical, without a proper channel for students and kids to voice their opinion or have a say in the academic process, change is downright impossible.

**Currently, the American model of Student Councils gives students very little actual say in the governing of the school.<sup>7</sup>** Students can't vote for classes, can't demand to fix the cafeteria and definitely can't voice their opinion without being silenced by the faculty. We have an identity crisis in this country. Every year, in cities across the country, schools promote ideas of democracy and equality when its students don't even get the right to represent themselves.

Most working class students will likely never have the chance to climb out of poverty, much less become millionaires. Giving them the ability to democratically make a decision in the place that they

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Butera, "Class of 2017 Valedictorian Speech," 2017, Wyoming Area Secondary Center

<sup>8</sup> The Austrian Embassy Organization Website.



learn for most of their lives would at least give students a fighting chance and alleviate the pain of surviving in an industry where everything is mass produced for a low cost, or as Con Blomberg says, “a depiction of a post scarcity economy.”

What if I told you there is hope for a better world? Look over at Europe, the small yet sturdy Federal-Republic of Austria is considered by many as the pinnacle of public education within Central Europe. **It's schools are completely funded and free by the government.**<sup>8</sup>

Discordia, a student hailing from the Austrian state of Carinthia, explains how her education system differs from that of the United States. Their class sizes are smaller, their school day is shorter. Most high school graduates can either join a “Berufsbildende Höhere Schule,” or a trade school in English, or a public university, free of charge. Although most schools in Austria don't have a public cafeteria, most welfare and public service laws in the country have alleviated the poverty rate within the nation, giving families the ability to spend more on themselves.

Her country employs a system of student representatives to voice their opinions in a proper democratic student congress. Comprising several representative Student Led Trade Unions, they voice their opinions and desires to the Austrian Government. Although she says that the system is still semi ineffective in getting all laws by students passed, it still provides a better benchmark for students to voice their needs.

**The amount of control that corporations hold within education is immense, their influence runs deep within American society.** They have control over our institution, our funding and our future and, at its current state, it's an immense shadow that looms over the continent.

I can't say what the future holds. Historically and politically these problems cannot be fixed nor reformed at the highest level of power.<sup>9</sup> But what I can Say is that only through radical changes in our national education that push the power to students and working class people will we be able to break our chains. There are always ideas and praxes that we should never be shy to embrace. Students and teachers demanding change and proper representation will be a step in the right direction, a path to peace and prosperity beyond compare.

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<sup>9</sup> Schneller, “Capitalism and Public Education in the United States,” 101-107.

# Gender System

by Loughlin Browne

Growing up, **femininity** was simultaneously something I shunned and something I secretly yearned to be a part of. I distanced myself from femininity as a child, as I was taught that it was synonymous with being shallow and weak. Adopting the mantra of many Rom-Com boyfriends, I subconsciously declared myself “**not like other girls**” simply because I was multidimensional. At the same time, my suppressed queerness made me feel as though femininity had no place for me.

My internal conflict peaked under the fluorescent lighting of RiteAid’s makeup aisle when I was twelve. Gazing upon mascara bottles, I burst into **tears**, confessing I wanted one. I was a **fraud**: weak, superficial, not the smart, driven girl I’d thought I was. But my mother explained that femininity could only add to my character, and could never detract from it.

I felt foolish and antifeminist for **diminishing** things because they were feminine. Ever since, I’ve enjoyed feminine activities. I enjoy doing makeup for the creativity and routine, even if I’m alone. Femininity provides me with confidence.

**But this past year, I’ve questioned this comfort.** I don’t want to believe that my sense of feminine empowerment is just a marketing scheme, and yet is it coincidental that every patriarchal beauty standard has been rebranded as willfully reclaimed by women? While the decision to embrace femininity may feel like something self-driven, is there anything empowering in embracing oppressive ideals, or does that just make them more comfortable to bear? Is femininity inherently comforting to me, or am I just uncomfortable when I’m not complying with femininity? I must acknowledge that my self image does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is a measure of where I place myself in the context of every societal ideal I’ve been taught to pursue.

I want to know my **love of femininity is a choice of real self expression**, not a crutch, but I don’t know if I ever will. I find myself jealous of men like Harry Styles who can explore traditionally feminine fashion and know that their interest is self driven.

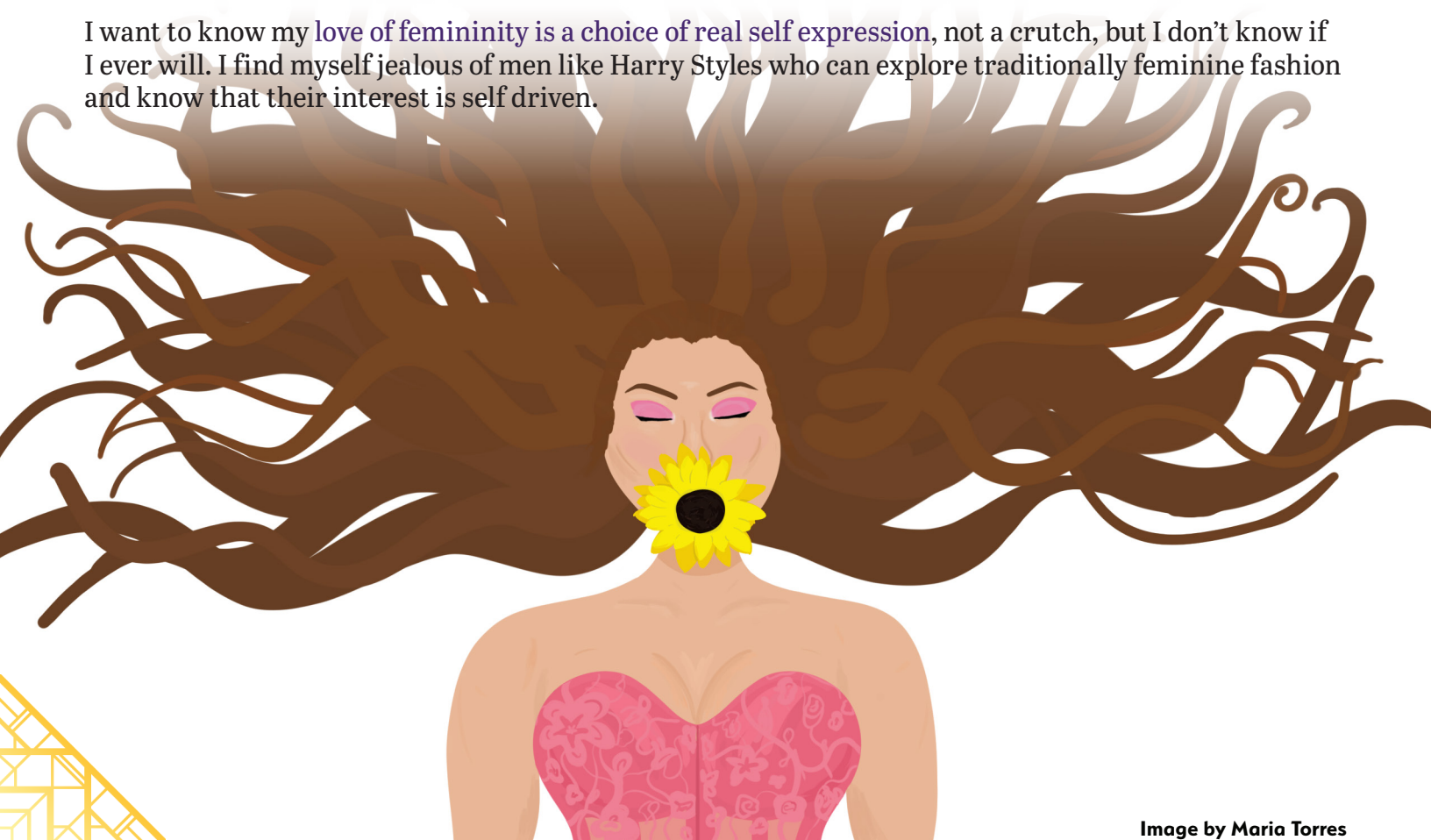


Image by Maria Torres



# HOW TO HELP UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE

*by Nayeli Veloz*

As an undocumented woman growing up in a country where you're supposed to "better yourself," along the way I learned the American dream isn't all that people always say it is.

In order to "better yourself," you need to go through a lot of struggles first. Getting a job, good health care, college applications, and housing – all of that was and still is a struggle for undocumented people. You want to do things right. Being undocumented closes many doors that only money can open. I have been in this country since I was two years old. I am 18 now and I realize that not much has changed since I first arrived here.

My living situation is better, but all the issues I mentioned are still an issue. When Covid-19 hit, many jobs closed down, both of my parents worked in restaurants and they lost their jobs. My uncle and aunt's hours of work got reduced. Classes online aren't as great as one thinks. As much as I wanted to continue my studies, the issues that were happening around the world and at home were a big distraction. I didn't have my own space for concentration in classes or do to my homework, and my parent's home didn't have the best internet when my 3 siblings and I were connected for school. With no jobs, how are you going to pay the bills, the food and rent? Being undocumented means you don't get help from the government which makes it even harder.

The fear of getting detained by the police or ICE is one that lives in all of us who immigrated and are undocumented. That fear makes us silent, and we aren't able to do as many things as we would like. When I was in high school, there was this trip to New Zealand to represent youth from my school. I was so excited when I heard about it, but at the same time was upset because I knew I wasn't going to be able to attend and have that experience. When I was a senior, I had the option to go to a college for a week and get a little sense of what I wanted to study and play the sport that I wanted. The college trip was in New York and that was another experience that I wasn't able to have as an undocumented youth. The fear of everyone seeing my Mexican passport was terrifying. Many things came to mind: what if ICE is there when I get off the plane? What if my peers react differently knowing this? Even supporting protests was hard because when it gets intense, cops show up and if I get detained I am on their radar.

Although we do not meet the requirements to be in this country, we still have rights and that is something that all undocumented folks should know. These are a few things that you should know if you are ever detained or police interact with you.



## Your Rights:

1. If immigration ever shows up at your home, you have the right to not open the door if they do not have a warrant. Be prepared to know the difference between the right paperwork they show you. They can slide the warrant under the door or leave. If they ever come looking for one person and can't find him/her they aren't allowed to take anyone else. Be prepared to contact a lawyer if you or anyone you know is ever in this situation. **A warrant of removal/deportation does not allow officers to enter a home without consent.**
2. You have the right to remain silent and you **DON'T** have to say anything if a lawyer is not present. You also have the right to privacy, they aren't allowed to search your home /car without a warrant and it needs to be signed by a judge.
3. If you have been arrested by the police you have the right to a government appointed-lawyer and one local phone call, and if you are calling your lawyer the police is not allowed to listen to your phone call. If you have been detained by ICE, you have the right to contact your family or to consult your lawyer, but the government doesn't provide one for you or have an officer inform the consulate of your detention. Remember your immigration number ("A" number) and give it to your family. It will help family members locate you.

## Ways to Protect Yourself:

### *Challenge removability and ICE's allegations*

- The Government has the burden of proof and must prove that you are removable; you can deny all of ICE's charges against you

### *Citizens of the U.S.*

- Derivative citizenship: My parents naturalized before I turned 18 years old
- BUT – different rules depend on the year and in what way they were naturalized

### *Lawful Permanent Resident with a criminal history but not deportable*

- The state crime must match the federal definition of the crime
  - E.g. Moral crime of deportation= permanent robbery = and is deportable
    - CA law of car thefts include "joy riding" (temporary theft) and is not deportable
  - E.g. Robbery involving a home is a crime of violence and is deportable
    - Definition of robbery in CA = includes robbery of stores, not deportable
- Drug crimes are deportable offenses
  - 30 grams of Marijuana or less, exception= not deportable

### *Asylum Requirements:*

- Personal fear of persecution, violence, or torture
- The motive for the persecution is because of religion, race, political opinion, ethnicity, or for being part of a particular social group.
  - Survivors of domestic violence
  - LGBTQ
  - Witnesses to crimes
  - Activists
- The government in the country you came from cannot protect you

### *U Visa Requirements:*

- Be a victim of a crime that qualifies (domestic violence, felonious assault, or extortion at work for being an immigrant).
- Report a crime with the police/department of labor, and help in an investigation
- Have suffered substantial physical, mental, or emotional harm

### *T Visa Requirements:*

- Have been a victim of trafficking
- Be available for the investigation of the trafficking
- Demonstrate extreme and unusual hardship if you were deported



### *Special Immigrant Juvenile Status(SIJS)*

#### *Requirements:*

- Under 21 years old
- Single
- A family court determined that you cannot reunite with 1 or 2 parents for abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
- It is not in your best interest to return your country of birth

#### *VAWA Requirements:*

- Married to (or child of) a U.S. citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident
- Abused by that U.S. citizen

#### *Cancellation of Removal Requirements:*

- 10 years of continued presence in the U.S.
- Have a child, spouse, or parent who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
- That U.S. citizen will experience "extreme and unusual" hardship

#### *Adjustment of Status through a family member requirements:*

- One member of the immediate family who is a US citizen:
  - Father/Mother
  - Spouse
  - Children + 21 years
- Enter legally to the country or petition before April 30, 2001 (245(i))
- If you enter without inspection in the country:
  - Consular processing and demonstrate "extreme and unusual hardship" to your children or spouse.

Source: California Immigration Youth Justice Alliance

I would like to give you all some information as well about where to get help if you ever come across a situation like this. In California, there are many ways you can reach out and get the help you need. The organization that helped me with my information and has been great at their work is named California Immigration Youth Justice Alliance. This organization has been one of my favorites to work with and learn from. They focus on placing immigrant youth in advocacy and policy delegations in order to ensure pro-immigrant policies go beyond legalization, and shed light on how the criminalization of immigrants varies based on identity.

There are some basic ways we can help each other and our community. Undocumented or not, there is still way you can help. If you ever come across a situation where ICE/police is detaining someone you can record, remember to keep some distance - that way, you're not interfering - but have some evidence if someone's rights are being violated. Even being bilingual is a big help when someone doesn't understand what is happening. Not knowing what is going to happen next for us is always on our mind when we have a government that isn't all in on giving the help that is needed, and when we have racism and policies that make it even harder for one to succeed. The struggles that many undocumented immigrants are facing are more complicated that one realizes. Everyone has a story to tell, and we can all do our part to help.





Nathan, He/They



Ivan, He/They



Arley, He/They

# 2020 Vision

*by Ivan Manriquez*



The car just parked almost four houses away from your destination. You look out the window and let out another passionless sigh. You look down at your feet to make one final assurance that neither charrola of arroz nor frijoles have spilled in the back of your mother's car even though it has been difficult being crammed between your siblings.

You get off with the food and pass the cars of your cousins, tias, tios, family members you never got too familiar with... heading towards your grandparents home. You enter through the loud black tin extremely antiquated doors and see everyone there in the backyard... smiling, laughing, drinking. You briefly watch as you examine everyone and even take in the scent of alcohol, the pounds of beef ready for grilling, and yet, **the aroma of homophobia and bigotry** provides a greater waft. It is another Sunday with your family.

You make your way through the sociable faces and do your best to greet everyone there, making sure you look them in the eyes, smile accordingly, and provide a firm handshake. Always make sure it is firm, no matter the age - a man must greet like one. It is always important to also greet men and women distinctly. A gentle and calm hug for familiar women--aunts and primas--and an amiable limp handshake to any desconocidas. With the men, there were no hugs... just firmness. Once you settle in a bit, and once your mom is nowhere to be found, you have to go somewhere and talk to someone, but everyone is family, no? That should not be hard at all. Yet, for someone like you, it will be the most difficult decision to make. You could play with your guy cousins... who have taunted you and called you slurs and, "lil sissy" but do you really want to act involved with anything sports-related? You could chill with your girl cousins... who are cool and do not do much... but then others will start questioning you: 'why you always hang out with girls', and do you really want to deal with that? You can not hang out with your other family, because they will only ask you if you have a girlfriend... and what will you do when their next lethal question is "do you even like women?"

For a lot of people, this is the experience we are subjected to from early on, an experience that has molded us to be who we are now, but has also kept us from that identity for so long growing up. Being gay alone is something that will be difficult in 2021 and for future generations of young queer individuals, but growing up queer and Hispanic is an experience that is so bewildering and even traumatizing. As young men, we are forced into this tiny box of "what a man should be." He is to be firm, strong, practically emotionless, somewhat of a casanova--with women, of course!--athletic, and supposed to have guy friends with the same personality.

Anything outside of that deserves to be labeled with a homophobic slur that rhymes with "narizon." In a Hispanic household, a young queer individual is not to even embrace that queer culture into their lives either. Even though, while we were growing up, the pop music was releasing so many great little gay anthems, we could not play them too loud in our home because we did not want our family to find our likes suspicious. This life and unshakeable identity has left me isolated in that small box where I was unhappy, torn between a reality I did not want and a reality that I am.

YOU BRIEFLY WATCH AS YOU EXAMINE EVERYONE AND  
EVEN TAKE IN THE SCENT OF ALCOHOL, THE POUNDS OF  
BEEF READY FOR GRILLING, AND YET, THE AROMA OF  
HOMOPHOBIA AND BIGOTRY PROVIDES A GREATER WRAFT.  
IT IS ANOTHER SUNDAY WITH YOUR FAMILY.

I am a man, but I do not fit the description that my family expects me to adhere to. I am no longer that 11 year old overly-sensitive, introverted, Beyonce-loving, queer little boy. I am a 19 year old, self-assured, Beyonce-loving, liberated, Pansexual Man. Before this last year, I was unable to admit that because of the system of machismo and falling under the depiction of "the ideal man" my family expected of me. In 2020, I have finally been able to look in the mirror and really ask myself the question that obviously bothered most of my problematic ass uncles since I was just an adolescent, "Do I even like women?"

As the year began, I found myself practically enraptured by one mutual friend--who was a woman!--who I eventually fell in love with and was fully prepared to begin posting about on all my social media. I found myself thinking about her all day, sending her snaps, actually sending good morning/good night texts. I wanted to be her man, but that feeling did not last for it was not mutual, especially when she found out more about me. She found out I have talked to a few guys before, which obviously did not sit well with her at all. I was introduced to a system that reprimanded people, especially guys like me. Guys like me are not always received well by potential girlfriends.

So, she ghosted me and I experienced what rejection feels like, but it did not end there! In March, I was rejected by my #1 choice college. These two significant rejections threw me into a bout of unhealthy habits, painful reflections, and necessary self-realizations.

An unhealthy habit I encountered was comfort eating. COVID-19 quarantine was in full-affect and I was sort of elated knowing that I would not have to physically see the girl who did not like, have to see my peers as they boasted about which colleges accepted them... nobody got to see how my body looked for a bit. YAY!

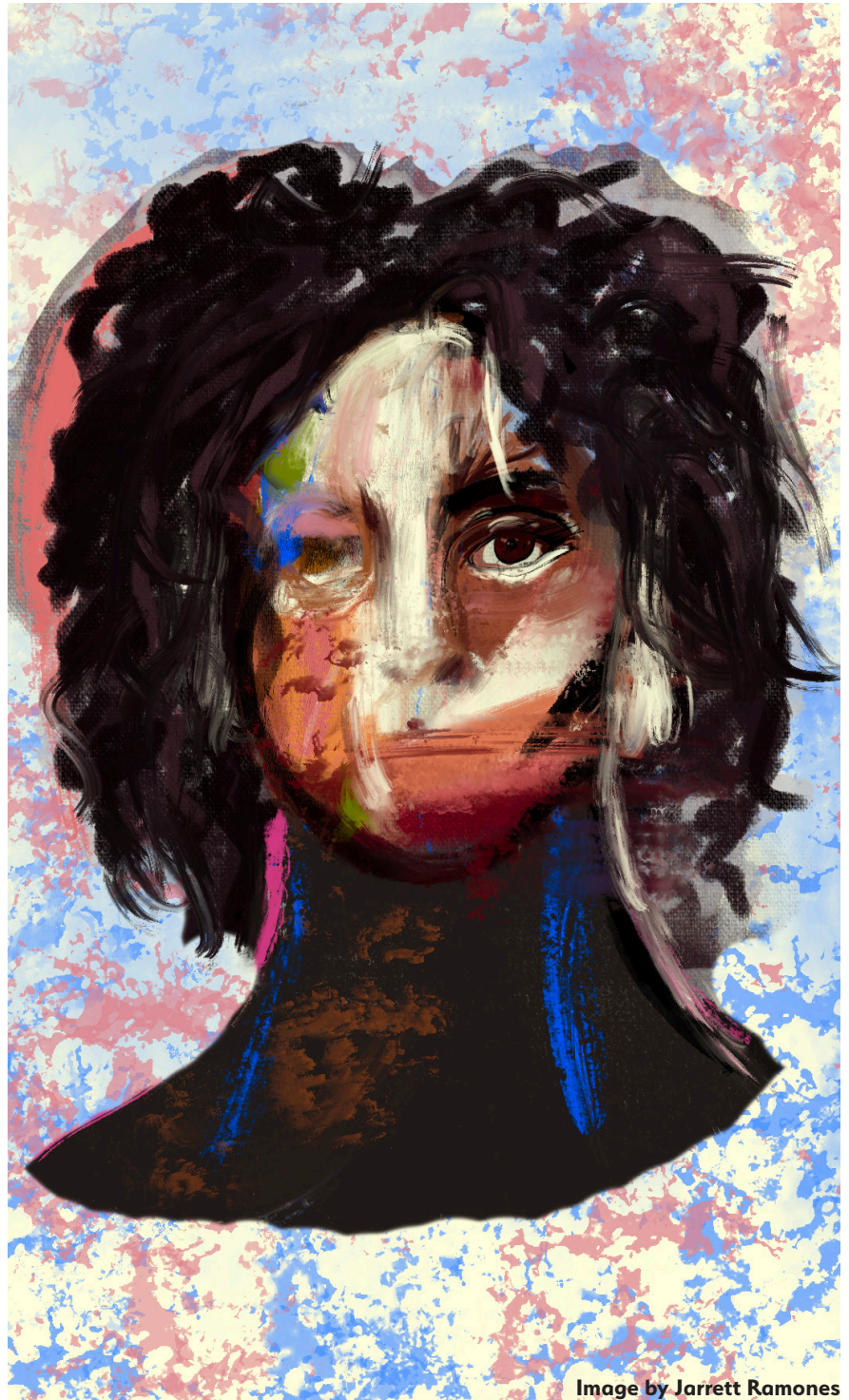


Image by Jarrett Ramones



So I stayed in my room, alone, with my cats, with my unhealthy carbs, and most importantly with my thoughts. I have always known that I was attracted to men and women, but it was something that I knew not to share with my family. The foundation of the people who raised me has always been standard. "Be a Man" has been instilled within me and I knew that if I strayed from this structure, I would have a lot of problems. In most Hispanic households, this organization is reaffirmed. When Hispanic children exhibit even the slightest hint of homosexuality, they are deemed a problem. Now this may be a hasty generalization, many people of the same ethnic background as me have experienced that homophobia or even more harsh sentiments within their own home. All in all, in 2021 that should be a system of bigotry and hate that should not be perpetuated against young Queer identifying individuals.

Before quarantine, I was busy, most often away from home and away from family. I spent time and effort in my extracurriculars, my homework, and with my friends. I was a busy bee with a lot on my agenda and very little time to myself or with my family. It sounds like a bad thing--me not being with my family all the time--but it was great for me. Away from home, I was myself.

Extremely extroverted, optimistic, quite usually singing and dancing, all in all, a little gay--or at least with a hint of some flamboyancy. At 17-18 years of age, a person needs that environment, or at least I did. I longed to be myself, yet knew that I would not be allowed that experience being at home. During quarantine, I was deprived of that experience. Being at home, I had to censor myself almost entirely. With everyone in one house, private time was futile. Therefore, I placed myself in a box... literally and metaphorically. I stayed in my room all day long, with the exceptions of going to the bathroom and going to the kitchen. Not being able to be the individual that was full of life led me to be the individual full of carbs. Within the span of three months, I gained almost 30 pounds. Why did I react in such a way?

I pondered: the environment of my home rendered me into a basic guy with a personality of a grape, instead of the outgoing person I was. Yet, I was supposed to be like that at home--not necessarily a grape, that's a hyperbole--but someone I just was not. The system of my home only recognizes me as that, "an ideal basic guy" with no sentimental feelings, without an unhealthy obsession with Beyonce or Mariah Carey, and most definitely without a physical attraction to guys... all in all, a boring person. That system led me into a spiral of confusion and a lack of identity. I knew that I was different, but I was torn because I knew that no one I literally share blood with would embrace it because of that system. So then, in order to cope with the drastic change in environment... I ate the pain away!

The most painful aspect of this sort of identity crisis/depressive episode was that no one noticed a thing. My family probably just assumed that I was sad about school closing, but no one ever bothered to ask me, "How are you doing?" As a man, I should be fine, I should not be sad about a disease turning me into a hermit, I should not feel empty and extremely unfulfilled. I should "grow some balls" and face my issues head-on without needing the assistance of anyone.

I was rejected by someone I think I was unfortunately in love with, I was rejected by a college I dreamed of attending, and most significantly I was rejected by the people who are supposed to embrace me just the way I am.





