

# False Promises

the chasm between home and hope

BULNES

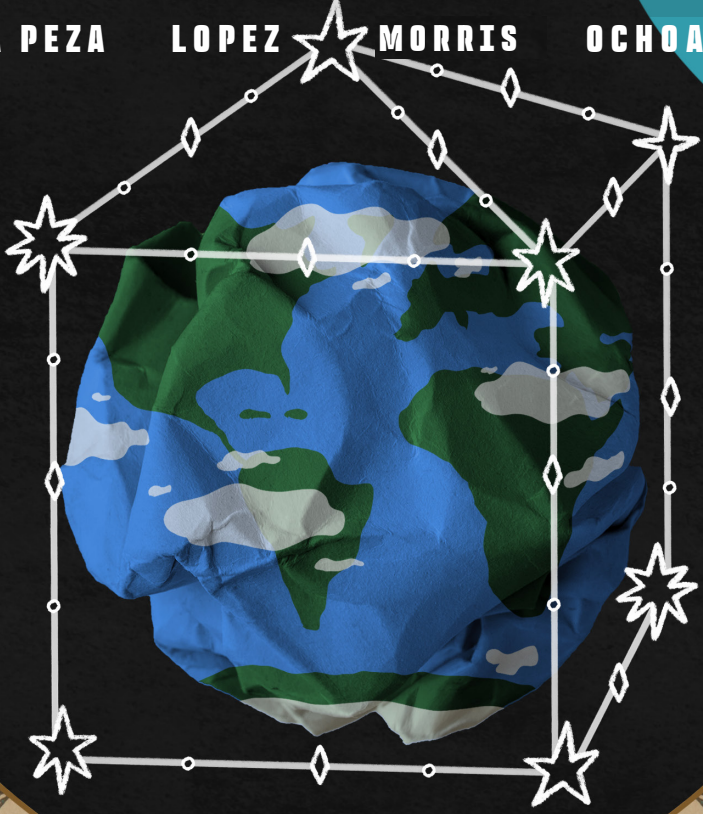
DE LA PEZA

LOPEZ

MORRIS

OCHOA

ZUNIGA



CALAFIA 2024

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Calafia is yli's statewide youth policy journal that amplifies the narratives of young people on topics and issue areas important to them and their communities.

Calafia's past issues have focused on youth criminal justice reform, educational equity, and addressing stigmas within communities of color.

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Calafia Fellows are selected every year from each yli office to create and edit the issue's theme and the stories presented. They are also mentored by experienced reporters, travel to statewide and national media conferences, and learn the steps to producing a printed publication.

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*the chasm between home and hope*

CALAFIA YOUTH POLICY JOURNAL ISSUE 8 PUBLISHED BY YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

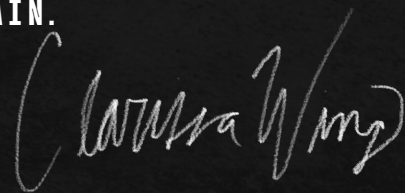
## ED NOTE

CENTERED ON THE THEME OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE, THIS YEAR'S CALAFIA FELLOWS TAKE US THROUGH A JOURNEY OF PERSONAL NARRATIVES, OP-EDS, AND PODCASTS AS THEY EXPRESS THE ALARMINGLY COMMON CONCERN FOR THE DISPARITIES THAT LIE WITHIN OUR SYSTEMS. WITH A COLLECTIVE WORRY ABOUT THE HOUSING CRISIS AND UNSETTLING CAUSES FOR DISPLACEMENT, THE BATTLE OF NAVIGATING BARRIERS AS A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT BORN OF IMMIGRANT PARENTS, AND THE AWAKENING OF CLASS IDENTITY IN A TOWN THAT SEEMS UNIFORMLY ALIKE, IT IS APPARENT THAT OUR FELLOWS RECOGNIZE THE CHANGES THAT MUST BE MADE TO FILL THE EXISTING CHASM. THESE PROFOUND REVELATIONS AND THE UNCOVERING OF SUPPRESSED TRUTHS ARE PRECISELY WHAT THIS PUBLICATION IS.

FALSE PROMISES: THE CHASM BETWEEN HOME AND HOPE PRESENTS THE POWERFUL VOICES OF SIX YOUTH DEDICATED TO CHALLENGING THE INEQUITIES THAT HAVE BECOME ALL TOO NORMALIZED. MARÍA, JARRETT, KATELYN, NANCY, ADAMARI, AND I ARE HONORED TO HAVE OBSERVED THE PASSION THAT HAS TRANSPIRED IN EACH OF THE FELLOWS AND THE UNWAVERING GROWTH THAT SPROUTS FROM EACH PROJECT. THESE STORIES ARE TOLD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FELLOWS, YET THEY SHARE RESOUNDINGLY SIMILAR EXPERIENCES WITH MANY.

CALAFIA FELLOWS, ALEXIS ZUNIGA, GABBY OCHOA, IRIS VAJAIRA LOPEZ, JESSE MORRIS, MAGGIE DE LA PEZA, AND MIA BULNES, THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR VOICES WITH THE WORLD AND FOR POURING YOUR HEARTS INTO THESE PIECES THROUGHOUT THE PAST 9 MONTHS OF CALAFIA.

AND TO OUR DEAR READERS, AS YOU REVIEW THIS PUBLICATION, IT IS OUR HOPE THAT YOU TOO WILL COME TO UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF A STORY AND REALIZE THAT HONESTY AND EMPATHY ARE WHAT WE NEED TO BEGIN REPAIRING THE INJUSTICES THAT REMAIN.



CLARISSA WING  
SENIOR FELLOW

# IN THIS PRINT

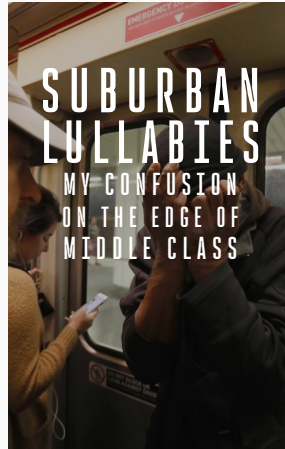
## *False Promises* *the chasm between home and hope*

### ISSUE 8

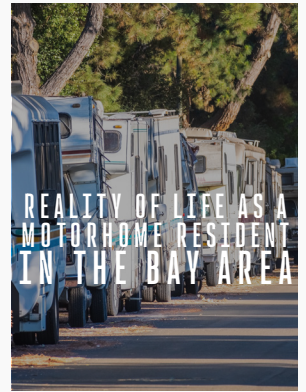
**04**  
NANCY  
AGUILAR



**10**  
MAGGIE  
DE LA  
PEZA



**18**  
GABBY  
OCHOA



**05**  
GABBY  
OCHOA

ABUNDANCE FOR SALE:  
REFLECTIONS  
ON THE BAY AREA  
HOUSING CRISIS

**20**  
IRIS  
LOPEZ

THE COST OF  
DREAMS IN  
SILICON VALLEY

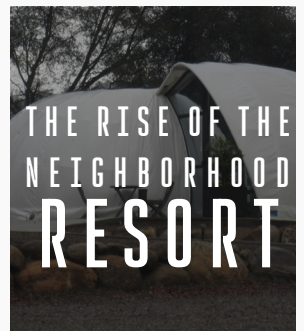
**06**  
IRIS  
LOPEZ



**12**  
JESSE  
MORRIS

WITH FOOD TO SPARE:  
VOLUNTEERING AT AN  
AFFLUENT TOWN'S FOOD BANK

**21**  
JESSE  
MORRIS



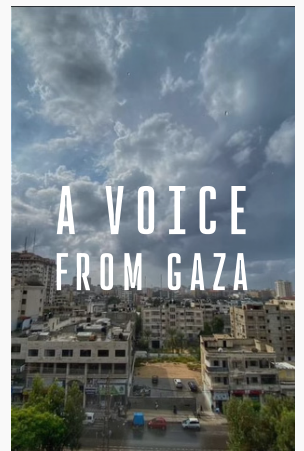
**08**  
MIA  
BULNES



**14**  
ALEXIS  
ZUNIGA



**22**  
MIA  
BULNES



**09**  
KATELYN  
CHANG

FREAKING  
ALGORITHMS!

**16**  
MAGGIE DE  
LA PEZA

FOOTHILL GOLD LINE  
BURSTS  
SUBURBAN BUBBLE

**25**

DESIGN  
GALLERY

# FEATURING

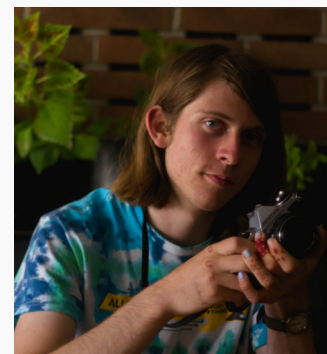
# FELLOWS



MIA BULNES



IRIS LOPEZ



JESSE MORRIS



GABBY OCHOA



MAGGIE DE LA PEZA



ALEXIS ZUNIGA

# SENIOR FELLOWS



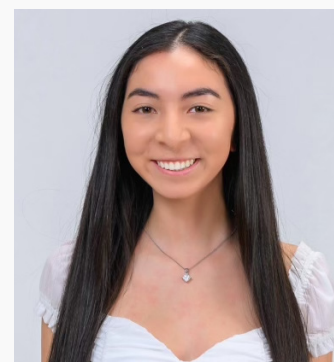
NANCY AGUILAR



KATELYN CHANG



ADAMARI COTA



CLARISSA WING

# AI: THE THREAT TO THE FLAME WITHIN

Nancy Aguilar she/her

Growing up, I did what my parents asked of me, such as doing chores around the house, taking care of my siblings, and following the path they wanted me to follow. I never questioned why I shouldn't do as they say. After all, they only wanted what was best for me and I wanted to help them. My parents sacrificed and suffered a lot for me and my siblings. My dad especially suffered extreme hardship - it's what our family carries within. It was hard for me to break away from the need to always repay them for that hardship. It didn't matter if my happiness was the cost of making sure my family didn't struggle. It didn't matter how I felt, all I wanted was for my family to be taken care of and for my dad to be proud. Nothing mattered more than becoming wealthy. For years I didn't matter until I was wealthy.

Then, in my junior year of high school, I put together a Christmas poster for a club charity event. That's when I realized, I love to create things. This was something I wanted to pursue in life. I want to succeed as an artist and make a living out of it. I finally managed to see that I mattered and needed to live for myself. I had to be selfish for once and do what I wanted. Being an artist helped me break away from the chains that weighed me down. Being an artist gave me purpose and became my life. Art has helped me so much and nothing has ever made me happier despite its struggles.

Art was a skill I had to build from the ground up. I was willing to put in the hard work. I remember reading finance books my dad gave me about achieving success through your drive and passion. I imagined drive and passion as a flame within. I felt my flame dwindling doing what my dad wanted. Art was the spark that reignited my flame.

But now with AI technology, my flame is being taken away from me again. AI programs have made things so much worse for artists as these programs can generate "art" pieces. Many AI users are using programs to generate art pieces with the artists' styles without consent or compensation. Many artists have spoken out but not much has been done yet. Adobe, for example, was called out by many artists for selling licenses of AI pieces mimicking their styles and names. AI is harming artists in the worst way possible. By stealing their art.

What I hate the most about AI is that people are selling AI pieces. This discourages me the most as an artist. I want to start an art business and it takes a lot of time and hard work. Building a following where people want to buy your art is even harder. I've seen AI users with large followings on social media, with comments admiring and praising their AI piece. I've seen them put links to prints they sell of the AI pieces they post. AI pieces have become hard to distinguish from art that has been made by a human. It takes a lot of time and skill building to get to a point where your art is "good enough" for people to buy. It's awful to know that someone who wrote word prompts was able to create an amazing piece good enough to buy.

Some people don't care where or how things are made as long as they get the product at a decent price. It makes me wonder what's the point of working so hard on art.

How will I be able to compete with AI? I can't create amazing art quickly enough, I'm only human. I can choose to use AI, but I don't want to, even though it could make things easier for me. I don't want to use a tool that's built upon the hard work and lives of others. Sometimes I want to give up but I can't give up on art. It's everything to me. What gives some peace of mind is that AI pieces can't be copyrighted if created by AI. This means that AI art isn't worth protecting like human created art. I still have value and my art is worth protecting.

Anyone can be an artist. AI can bridge the gap between accessibility and art skills. Technology has come a long way and new innovations appear. Digital artists use many tools to help with their art process. I use 3D models to help with references and an autofill tool to help with flat colors. AI can become a tool for artists - this is the argument many AI users make when confronted about the harms of AI programs. But right now, it isn't helping. A lot of artists started their art journey with paper and pencils. If you work at it, your creativity will find a way to make its way into the real world somehow. AI can quickly generate a piece and you can spend time revising prompts until you get your desired result. Artists spend years creating and honing their skills. It isn't easy but the results of your art are worth it. You'll love the AI result but you'll never understand the love of creating art from the result of your hard work. You can't replicate that kind of love.

I'm protective of art and feel negative towards AI because my dad almost took art away from me. I got accepted to a school with special electives. I was going to take graphic design. I was really happy and excited to take the class. A letter from the school came and I needed my parent's signature. I went to my dad and I caught him frustrated. The stress of finance was heavy on him. He was upset that I wasn't doing what he wanted after years of him telling me. He said he wouldn't let me take graphic design unless I made a thousand dollars online in a month. I signed a paper with that agreement. I was heartbroken. My happiness was taken away just like that. I didn't meet the goal. My dad forgot about it and I threw the paper away. I wasn't going to let him take art away from me.

Now, AI is threatening to take art away from me again. I went through a lot in choosing to be an artist. AI art makes me feel so frustrated and angry. It is a slap in the face and disrespectful. Why did I have to struggle so much to do what I love? What is the point of creating something of myself only for AI to do it better than me? AI doesn't have the years of struggle artists go through for their skill. What was the point of my suffering? It's not fair. Now I have to work harder and find a way to succeed as an artist. But I'm too persistent to let the flame art ignited die. Nothing will take art away from me. It's my turn to make sure art isn't lost, and sharing my story is just the beginning.

# ***ABUNDANCE FOR SALE:*** **REFLECTIONS ON THE BAY AREA HOUSING CRISIS**

Gabby Ochoa she/her

I am able to smell the harmonious ingredients that make up my mother's chilaquiles with frijoles and eggs as I wake up in the morning with sunlight beaming through the blinds. With my dog by my side and the coziness of my bed covered in warm and homey blankets, I am able to sleep peacefully throughout the night. I can foresee the thrilling Friday game nights when my boisterous family competes for money during *lotería* and *cinco loco*. Every year, my family and I create new memories in my home, which functions as our time machine. I can rejoice in vivid memories from the past.

I've been privileged to have financially secure parents who have the ability to provide my brother and I with a home filled with an abundance of memories. Some families do not have access to a household that serves as a time machine due to the housing crisis in California. With skyrocketing rents, a dearth of affordable housing, and residents being evicted from their homes, the Bay Area housing crisis continues to be a concern. I frequently wonder why it is so expensive to live in a warm and secure shelter. These outrageous costs leave an enormous impact on thousands of people's lives, who are ultimately left unhoused.

As my family drives through the streets of San Francisco, the city is brimming with unhoused individuals. Living in the Bay Area or even California is a privilege, when it should truly be a basic right that should be offered to all.

Financially struggling people are disproportionately vulnerable to the housing crisis, leaving them with the possibility of being evicted from a safe residence and left to fend for themselves.

During my morning walks with my dog, Curry, I've seen more unhoused people in my neighborhood in Pacifica. It's appalling to see that the streets I walk in everyday are not as safe for others as they are for me. Others are forced to live on the streets without a sense of safety, comfort, or assurance that everything will be better the next day. In just the past year, I've seen an increase of unhoused people on my regular walks by the beach with my family. I had never seen unhoused people in my town before, yet everyday I now see someone living by the grocery store I regularly shop at and individuals living in tents on my typical drive to school.

As I step outside of my home, I am constantly bombarded by an abundance of "For Sale" signs in my neighborhood. Everytime I see an abandoned home, I ponder if the family that lived there left because they couldn't afford to live in my city. The serene landscape of my city that is filled with warm and golden sand and the rippling surfaces of the sea isn't able to be appreciated because of deplorable housing prices that constantly force people out. It's becoming apparent that the area I live in has transformed from a place of peace and beauty to one with economic disparities.

# THE FIRST-GENERATION EXPERIENCE LOW-INCOME IMMIGRANTS



Iris Lopez she/her

The sad sighs of my mother, seeping through the thin walls of our home, tell a story all too familiar. Over the phone, my grandma discusses the essential funds she needs for medications, or the payments pending for my mom's half-built home in Mexico. A home she's been waiting two decades to complete and inhabit. It is in these moments where we consider reassessing our own necessities to ensure that the rent is paid on time. These are realities that serve the unrelenting cycle of hardship for undocumented people who are subjected to surviving low wages and endure barriers in accessing government support.

Confronted with these financial challenges, U.S. born children must battle with the decision of chasing their dreams or their parents'.

The United States has over 11.2 million immigrants with the motivational pursuit of building a better life, many of whom form families. 1 in 5 Latinos are enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2020. With roughly 71% not enrolled due to, in most cases, needing to work to support family. Immigrant children become their families' only hope in breaking generational chains of poverty. Many, raised by parents who didn't reach grade school, and arrive not knowing English. The "escape" route comes with either working full-time, or relying on education.

Ashley Pirir Gomez, a third-year, first-generation student pursuing Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, asserts that as an older sister, "I do feel like I need to set the example because I want them to know that it is possible for them to make it."

Like Pirir, I am also a college student navigating through the intricacies of higher education while shouldering the weight of my own standards. I often find myself wondering if my decision in pursuing Communications was the correct route. "Paga bien?" my family asks. Now I battle with myself, wondering if this path was, in fact, selfish.

"I wanted to do creative writing." Ultimately, she chose a career that can pay the bills. "I was very discouraged of being an author... I sometimes wonder what would've happened if I didn't take that advice." Pirir says.

Am I a disappointment, who may not be able to climb the same socio-economic ladder as an engineer could? Have I wasted my parent's sacrifice?





# ONCE WHEN GROWING UP WITH GRANT PARENTS

My mom has been supportive of my educational journey, and we have talked about what it would be like once she gains citizenship. “Quiero trabajar donde cuido viejitos,” is what she always emphasizes. The aspiration of having a job involving the kindness of her heart. She has always talked about hoping to one day partake in the stepping stone of owning a home in the U.S. This is the biggest aspect of the American dream — one that 31% of the undocumented population was able to fulfill in 2019. How long would that take me?

Since most undocumented parents do not have the privilege of education, most first-gen students are left to navigate paths on their own, teaching themselves the resources they need to succeed. How to prepare for the SAT and interviews, or discover internship opportunities. If I was able to conquer that, I often defined it as luck, but I was still no expert. I placed myself in a loop where confidence was an issue and failing wasn't an option. If my education was at risk, the prospect of losing my scholarship would only become an added pressure.

Many first-gen students face the monstrosity of imposter syndrome when attempting to advance. McLean Hospital describes it as the experience of “repeated feelings or thoughts that they are incompetent or not good enough.” But it's more than just this “incompetent” feeling about ourselves. When I started at UC Berkeley, I was surrounded by a sea of faces that rarely reflected mine, planting seeds of doubt and hesitation within me. Most students had a background of attending the top-ranked private/boarding schools or having college educated parents. They can easily step ahead with the connections their families hold, and withstand the competitive atmosphere of Berkeley. Having to overcome these challenges and work twice as hard, I made sure my parents only witness what's golden. Any opportunity I didn't take felt like I'd affect my family's future.

How are undocumented families supposed to find their way in a system that often keeps them from earning enough to live on, let alone achieve their American dreams? This is a system that has broken families, and fueled my childhood with arguments and unending stress when it came to money. These frictions eventually placed me into this position where my whole family is relying on me. This responsibility forced me to grow up fast. I have a deep desire to take my parents out of poverty, but that desire clashes with my personal desire to follow my dreams. The harsh reality is that, whatever I choose, these types of luxuries are just unreachable for many of us, no matter what we do.

Congress must work to create a pathway to citizenship and establish protections for all undocumented families, enabling them to reach their full potential and attain better jobs with greater pay. It hurts me to see my mom, let alone manage two jobs, while coming home to her third shift as a parent. Undocumented people have sacrificed so much and deserve to have a future where they can truly thrive.



# The River of my Community

Mia Bulnes she/her

To some people, simple things can bring happiness, like the sound of rain, a sunny day, or a river. A river can be a beautiful place to relax and enjoy the outdoors. But for me, the waters of a river remind me of my country and family. In the river of my father's hometown, my little inner child grew up. It was a place that held joy and peace, and all of us would gather on weekends to enjoy nature and the river.

I still have the vivid memory, warm as summer, of the refreshing water and the little fish swimming by my feet. I still remember the rays of sunlight on my face, the beautiful sound of birds singing their songs. The river was an escape from our worries, a place where we could be free from societal pressure. A year before I moved from my country, like a bolt in a storm, the news announced that part of the river was closed. The community was alarmed and realized that, little by little, the river was drying up due to the activity of a company that began to deplete the natural resources.

At that point, no one had the economic power, and this company had the power to make decisions. As if it were a hurricane, everything collapsed.

People gradually ended up without water in their homes. One day, I wanted to give water to my puppy, and I was faced with the reality that there wasn't even water for myself. It reached the point where the town was declared in drought, and the city council did nothing about it. Chaos.

Our small town didn't have one of the most important elements of life, which is water.

Everything crumbled, the happy memories of my childhood will never be there again. 2020 arrived and the decision to move from my country was in my head, the hope of having my last memory before leaving my country was fading. After 3 years of having left my country, I still have the desire to return with my family to the place we loved so much, but it remains only in memory.

# Freaking Algorithms!

Katelyn Chang she/her

I love putting pen to paper — or fingers to keyboard — and letting my imagination run wild. I have written endless short stories, penned personal essays, and authored Op-Eds. The world is my oyster as long as my brain can translate itself into words and grammatical structure. To me, writing is an outlet for creativity and my record of the beauty of being human.

Growing up in San Francisco developed a large part of my identity as a writer. Born to two struggling immigrants and graduate students, where home was a two-bedroom apartment that housed five, I was immersed in diversity from a young age. Creativity followed. On my journey to school, I admired colorful graffiti art strewn across countless walls, observed artists selling paintings off the side of the street, and tapped my feet along to the addicting cadence of subway-playing musicians. But, on the flip side, growing up in the Bay Area also meant adapting to a different rhythm: one of innovation and perpetual technological advancements. After 18 years as a Bay Area resident, I was more than accustomed to the development of these new technologies that were created to better daily life— as a human, student, and writer. Applications and software including the likes of Grammarly and Google’s grammar check served as useful tools that combined machine learning techniques with natural language processing to aid writers, including myself.

Chatbot 3.1

■ you

Do youth have a future or will ai take over?

◆ Chatbot



So it was no surprise when AI model Chat GPT first “blew up” on TikTok. To me, it was only a matter of time. Talks of artificial intelligence and a future filled with robots had already begun decades ago, especially in Silicon Valley, and I was prepared for a future of automation. In fact, my initial reaction when Chat GPT became mainstream was: This is only the beginning. I was intrigued, asking myself, “Is this the future of the world?” “What can Chat GPT do?” I signed up for an account right away when I realized this AI chatbot could solve my tediously difficult math homework.

Yet, what began as a simple tool for answering problematic homework questions quickly became much more. Suddenly, not only was my “For You page” filled with users creating professional cover letters and generating elaborate cooking recipes, but also showcasing the ability of this chat bot to generate realistic-sounding essays and masterful paintings from nothing but a few, simple, user-inputted keywords. My life began to feature a constant barrage of AI-related headlines. My phone would vibrate daily as my NY Times and Washington Post updates would load in: “Human beings are going to be eclipsed.” “AI Poses Risk of Extinction.” “Training My Replacement: Inside a Call Center Worker’s Battle With A.I.” This AI sensation wasn’t only happening online. In the classroom, AI related discussions on academic integrity were all too common between students and staff. Ultimately, these instances were a barrage of warnings of a society destined to transition into a revolution of automation, but this time replacing a human ability I believed was untouchable: creativity.

I couldn’t even escape discussions of AI at home. “You need to learn how to code,” my father would tell me, after “Technology is the future. Make sure you’re a part of it.” “What about me?” I would fume internally. What about my ability to create as a human, without the assistance of AI or technology? To my father, human creativity, long thought to be irrevocably irreplaceable, was now just that. My original essays and articles constructed from hours of hard work? Extensive artworks created by friends? Replaceable. By freaking algorithms.

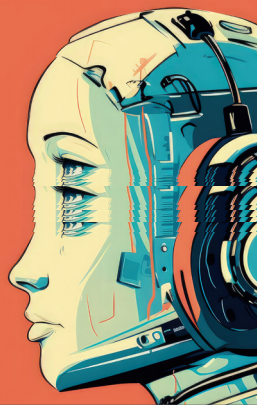
Yet, it’s undeniable, even to me, that AI programs including Chat GPT, Dall-E, and Midjourney have indeed become useful tools. In fact, I still consult Chat GPT daily for frustrating homework problems rather than trekking 20 minutes to office hours — easing my workload as a student tenfold. But, as a writer, I struggle to adopt the same welcoming approach. A look of disdain plants itself on my face everytime I ask a chat bot to generate me an essay that even remotely touches on the human experience. Every time, they fall flat, feeling mechanical and robotic, rather than artistic and colorful. But it seems I’m the only one who notices this phenomenon. My parents, who have never valued writing or the arts, are in awe of such powerful AI platforms. “Why pursue writing or art with a tool like this?” they proclaim. “Everything you could ever want to create can be done right here.” To my STEM focused friends, there is no difference between an essay or article written by a human or by a chat bot. “Writing is writing. Drawing is drawing.” “If it looks like an essay, reads like an essay, then it is an essay,” they say. Frustration never fails to set in on me during these conversations. Can they not see the difference between my writing and a Chat GPT generated personal narrative? Can they not feel the life that exudes from my works? The way emotions jump off the page? The way my writing is a testament to my real life experiences?

Today, while many headlines in the media cover AI generated works winning competitions and scoring “5s” on AP English exams, there are also countless initiatives such as UChicago’s Glaze that have been created to use machine learning to protect artists and their creations from being used to train emerging AI models. Still, where is the fine line? My biggest question still stands about the use of artificial intelligence and whether or not it can be utilized ethically. Dialogue on ethics in the creative space have always been a point of contention. For machine learning models, where the ability to create AI generated pieces rely on learning patterns based on existing artists’ pieces, there is no method to ensure whether or not artists are being compensated or given credit for the use of their works. AI usage seems to be another area where, without regulation, faith in human good will be the only determinant for an ethical coexistence with these technologies.

As a college freshman, I fear for the future. It seems as if creativity has become less and less of an integral value to society as a whole. In a capitalist system, where efficiency is valued above all else, it should be no surprise. Why bother with treasuring the human experience when it reaps no financial benefits? Chat GPT can create a unique company logo or mission statement with a single click of a button. To many, my parents included, there is no room for human creativity when it cannot compete with time frames measured in milliseconds.

Despite the discourse in my own life and across the world about the ethics of AI, one truth remains: These models aren’t going anywhere anytime soon and AI is undoubtedly the future. For Gen Z, and specifically youth creatives, where does that leave us? I’ve thought about AI more than I can remember, especially regarding my own future. And frankly, I’m not sure what to do.

error



Countless coming-of-age films and books center around a teenage protagonist, whose ultimate goal is to escape the great woes of suburbia. These “woes”? Typically boredom and monotony.

I was born in the local Foothill Presbyterian Hospital, one of the many establishments dedicated to the defining geography of Glendora, “pride of the foothills.” My parents attended the local elementary schools, middle schools, and high school, staying to raise a family alongside their own high school friends who they’d stop to greet in the grocery store. The suburban culture raised me. However, like a child growing to see the flaws in their parents, I too noticed serious shortcomings in the way my community was set to live and breathe.

The norm of Glendora, the epitome of the suburbs, is seen as a privileged middle to upper-class position. The town tends to assume that this is a uniform truth among the whole of Glendorans. We do not grow up thinking deeply about economic inequality because the lullabies of financial comfort have put most of us to sleep; in this little bubble, our dreamlands are filled with downtown parades and homecoming celebrations, and class becomes an afterthought. You assume your friends will be able to pay for their ticket when you go to the movies. You walk into homeroom and assume no one slept in their family’s car the night before.

This, however, does not make these things true, no matter how accustomed more privileged Glendorans are to thinking them.

Last year, as a sophomore writing for my Tartan Shield newspaper, I partnered with my editor-in-chief, Crystal, to cover our bimonthly school board meetings. One night, some administrative staff from Glendora High School—where we attend—were called to do a presentation covering the progress of programs and student well-being. They began by presenting the economic demographics of the school.

# Suburban Lullabies

## My Confusion On the Edge of Middle Class

Maggie De La Peza she/her

Forty-two percent of students were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. We were both admittedly surprised. Glendora seemed so well-off.

This, I began to understand, is one of the greatest pitfalls of suburban culture—of my suburban culture. Many of us are blinded by the sprawl of identical middle-class houses, of identical green front yards, of identical Tacomas and jeeps in the high school parking lot. We fail to realize the financial realities of our community members that are not so easily recognizable.

There are aspects of my own economic reality that are invisible to my peers too, something I got an inkling of as I sat in an honors English classroom listening to classmates speak of the pressure their PhD-holding parents put on them. A year later, I sat in an AP Seminar classroom of seventeen other students, selected based on academic achievement, as they presented introductory slideshows showcasing their essences as people. Again and again, there were stories of their parents’ graduate school experiences, photos of global travel, and in one instance, a slide dedicated to my classmate’s expansively renovated home. My peers had done nothing to offend me. However, rising to the surface was the sense that I had failed to notice something about myself; a long-held blindspot began to make itself known.

I'll be a first-generation college student, born to tradespeople who couldn't have dreamed of living in Glendora if our house hadn't been bought over thirty years ago, when it was a fifth of its current value. I knew this, yet the suburban culture of economic blindness, in which all are happy and equal because their overwatered grass is the same shade of green, had rocked me to sleep too. Now my dreamland took the shape of an identity



crisis. In years past, I had been surprised every time I qualified for financial aid, every time my AP tests were \$5, every time I was reminded I could get school lunches for reduced cost. I had watched friends buy Lululemon without a second thought while I was governed by an anxious urgency to save my money and pay back my mom for every little purchase. These dynamics had not crossed my mind as significant; there had been no distinction between myself and the Glendorans living in the million-dollar foothills.

There is no doubt that I am privileged and comfortable, without real need for anything, but by the zephyr of suburban sameness, some fog had rolled over me. In my view, obscured by living on the cusp of working and upper middle class, I had not seen how so many Glendorans lived not just in privilege but in casual ritz.

A collective fantasy of false equality had enthralled all of us who have sat at any such level of comfort.

By their portions of financial privilege, even those who are not-so-upper class have become both the subject and the accomplice in perpetuating this myth—myself included.

If suburbanites could see past the sprawl of false uniformity, I think the will to engage in real economic justice would grow. Maybe a part of coming-of-age is a kind of blindness, a tunnel vision of one's own problems as all that there is. Boredom and monotony are the worst suburbia can serve up. In that sense, Glendora (and the many other suburbs that share its real woes of class and identity) are still young and growing up. I invest hope in the great possibility that dialogue surrounding financial disparities may open up among Glendorans. The community will grow in cognizance that not everyone is suburban nobility and that there therefore remains a need for generosity and economic justice initiatives. The trancelike complacency could be buffed away, to reveal a community that just wants to do good by their neighbors.

# With Food to Spare:

## *Volunteering at an Affluent Town's Food Bank*

Jesse Morris he/him

A driver pulls into the Three Rivers Art Center parking lot, holding out two fingers representing the number of families they are picking up for. A line of volunteers drop full-sized boxes of produce into the driver's open side door. "You sure you don't want another box? It all needs to be gone, or it'll go bad," calls a volunteer next to me after recognizing the driver.

For most of my childhood, I have grown up in the traveler's utopia of Three Rivers. It is given the name from the three Kaweah River forks that flow snowmelt from the Sierra Nevadas to the ever thirsty crops of the California agricultural lands. Nestled between Sequoia National Park and the sprawling checkerboard of the Central Valley, it is a destination for many visitors escaping their daily hustle and bustle. The townsfolk consist of park employees, small shop owners feeding the mass tourists, and well-to-do retirees.

In reaction to COVID, the National Park closed, stemming the flow of visitors that kept our town's economy afloat. Without the regular flow of income, economic hardships formed. To help provide needed support, local operations stepped up to ease the stressors. Through this effort, the local food bank was ramped up.

Worn out from social isolation, I started showing up for handout days, the only volunteer under 30. Both at my local town's food bank stationed in the local worn down Art Center, and at a wider-reaching food pantry and distributor called Food-Link. A day was similar at both food bank distributions: 30 or more cars would line up with their gaping trunks drooling in suspense for the volunteers to place in them tomatoes, milk, and corn.

As we chat with the driver, we dump in a couple more boxes of strawberries - a truly enormous proportion compared to what they can eat. But for us volunteers what other choice do we have? The Art Center does not have sufficient cold storage, and the produce cannot survive under the unforgiving dog day's sun.

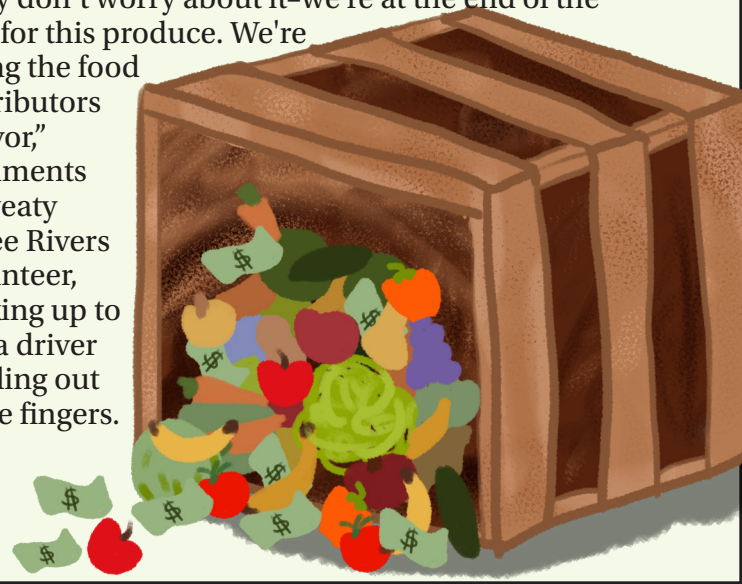
One dusty hot Wednesday morning the delivery truck plastered with Food-Link rolls in next to our sun-bleached Art Center. Volunteers crowd around on tiptoes like eager children on Christmas morning to see "what's inside today." When the delivery doors open, we see on the metal truck bed rolling mountains of produce, boxes strapped together, teetering from their own height and weight. A magnificent sight, this delivery is not unusual for the time but the quantity still left me feeling bewildered.

Looking down from where I was posted up on the truck, I could see a couple dozen awaiting cars. There is no way that our small community can use this copious amount of produce.

A couple miles down the road, Food-Link, runs a movable food pantry that is able to access rural communities that do not have their own food banks. You know the food truck is in town from the pop hits or mariachi music belting from a volunteer's car door. Here we gave out measured allotments of nutritious produce, even a small box for many people is a God-send, taking the place of cheap chain burgers.

This juxtaposition of our well-to-do town with corn to spare fed to cows, while Farmersville, a local movable food-bank drop off left struggling families with only a 'supplement of food' to feed their kids. Was no one else seeing this waste?

"Hey don't worry about it—we're at the end of the line for this produce. We're doing the food distributors a favor," comments a sweaty Three Rivers volunteer, looking up to see a driver holding out three fingers.



# Staying Home: the Impact of the Housing Crisis on my Life

Alexis Zuniga she/her

As a young adult who just graduated from Fresno State, I am constantly thinking about my next step in life. And I'm not just talking about my career moves. I am constantly thinking about my future housing needs.

When I first began my college journey, I decided to stay home rather than move out so that I could focus solely on my education. On-campus living was unaffordable and was a set-up for future debt. I knew that this financial burden would affect my mental health severely in the future.

Being an independent individual, I've always wanted to move out on my own but, sadly, that is not quite possible.

Currently without a job or a stable means of income, I have no choice but to stay home. The housing market is too high for an individual to live comfortably with one income.

My goal in the future is to live independently. I want to experience having the creative freedom to decorate my house how I envision it without having to compromise with another person. Living alone would allow me to learn more about myself, to understand my own values, my own beliefs, and simply understand the feeling of being truly independent. Maybe in the long-run, I will learn that I desire constant company within my home. I won't know that completely until I experience the feeling of living independently.

The honest truth is that I am terrified to move out. Growing up, I witnessed the struggles my parents faced on a daily basis to provide for their family and pay their rent. We did not always live in the nicest houses. For years, we lived in a small 4-bedroom house with 10 other family members. Another home was infested with rats that lived within the walls, and another was a tiny 2-bedroom home located near Fresno Community Hospital. I understand and appreciate all the sacrifices my parents made to provide their best for their kids. My fear as an adult now, is that I will struggle financially to pay my bills. I do not want to return back to a moment of living in poverty.

In order to avoid this fear, I plan to stay with my mother for an additional two years to save enough money to buy a house. As I learn more about investments, buying a home seems to be the best way to invest my money into my future and financial growth. However, the market for houses is so high that it feels like my goal floats farther away from my grasp.



# The Terrifying Reality of the Housing Crisis in the Central Valley

Alexis Zuniga she/her

Living in the Central Valley has many beautiful wonders, from the abundance of agriculture, the rich history, and the limitless access to surrounding cities. I can take a day trip to hike in the mountains, dig my toes into the sandy beaches a few hours west, and face my fear of heights at amusement parks. I have access to all these glories but it comes with a price: An expensive price on housing.

California is extremely expensive to live in, especially within the bigger cities. California has several cities with the most expensive rent in the entire country, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. In 2021, the Public Policy Institute of California conducted a survey that reported that 90% of California residents complained about their state's unaffordable housing.

Fresno, where I grew up and live today, is California's fifth largest city and experienced some of the biggest increases in rent nationwide during the pandemic. The County still needs more than 30,000 affordable housing units to meet the needs of residents.

The substantial shortage of affordable housing for residents is due in large part to the longevity of single-family zoning regulations. These policies restrict apartment construction on certain areas of land. Although California's population has declined in recent years, it is still one of the most populous states and affordable housing construction has not kept up with demands. Due to the limited supply and outsized demand, the price of houses and monthly rent have skyrocketed. In 2021, the average cost of a house nationwide increased by 18.6% during the pandemic.

Although the market is slowly declining, housing still remains on the higher spectrum.

The expiration of safety net programs such as CalFresh food assistance and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit is the main cause for California's increased 13.2% poverty rate, according to Cal Matters. As these resources are taken, individuals are left financially struggling to afford rent and their additional bills.

Fresno resident, Anthony Lebar, 25, has lived in his apartment for only two years, but has already experienced four rent increases in that time period.

His rent used to be \$750 but now has jumped to \$1000 a month; not including PG&E bills, food, transportation, or common household expenses.





As a result of these increases, and as a sole income household, Lebar is currently living paycheck to paycheck.

Adding to the problem is that, for decades, wages have not kept up with the rate of inflation, making it harder for everyday people to afford housing. It is nearly impossible to pay rent and additional necessities with an income of \$15.50 an hour in California. This leaves low income earners with few options for housing, often in neglected areas where homelessness and violence are present.

To address the housing crisis, California needs to urgently create more affordable housing options.

In recent news, Oct 11, Governor Newsom signed a housing package consisting of 56 bills that is intended to resolve the housing crisis. These bills release housing construction limitations so that institutions are allowed to build affordable housing options.

The benefit of these bills is that they allow organizations and property owners to effectively utilize their space to increase housing opportunities.



Without more affordable housing, some Californians are moving out of state, which is having a ripple effect on local economies.

Jordan Blanchard, 25, plans to move to Texas within the next year or two with her boyfriend because of their affordable housing and exemption from income tax. Even with teacher and police officer incomes as well as owning their house, they are struggling to afford their monthly bills.

Cities need to invest in neighborhoods that have been historically neglected, and invest in affordable housing. Cities also need to do more to ensure safety around existing affordable housing. "I live in the ghetto. There is a lot of homeless people. There's a lot of drug addicts. There's a lot of gangs and gang violence surrounding my area" Lebar said in a recent interview.

He said that there had even been homicides in his apartment complex as well as an attempted burglary in his own home.

The unfortunate reality is that the primary places that affordable housing is available in the Central Valley is within areas consumed with violence. With inflation and the migration of individuals from larger cities, rent will only continue to increase within the Central Valley.

I believe a solution to the housing crisis is to create more affordable apartments within the Central Valley. As our population within Fresno expands, housing needs to accommodate those demands. In addition to expansion, the price of rent and housing needs to reflect the income of everyday individuals with minimum wage salaries; keeping in mind the economic damage due to inflation.

*This opinion originally appeared in The Fresno Bee.*

# FOOTHILL GOLD LINE

## *Bursts Suburban Bubble*

Maggie De La Peza she/her



In small-town California, the sun is always shining and the birdsongs are always beautiful but not loud enough to disturb anyone. The nuclear family plays on their perfect green lawn and when the children go off to their first sleepover, their parents are not too anxious because the parents hosting are old high school buddies.

Karen Cullen, descendant of the first permanent settlers of a suburban San Gabriel Valley city called Glendora, has been a resident most of her life – since 1945 – and describes her memories of the town as “a big family in a small community”: “Everybody knew each other and took care of each other,” she says. “We had an idyllic life. You felt safe. You didn’t even think about not feeling safe.”

My dad, Marco De La Peza, was raised by Glendora with a nearly identical feeling of comfort in the eighties: “It was just fun. There was no pressure. I didn’t have to make money, I could just do whatever I wanted.”

“Class was never a topic as far as I can remember. It wasn’t something we were worried about or talking about,” he explains. Since forever, a bubble has seemed to encapsulate suburbs like Glendora, preserving them in rose-colored hues in the minds of many of their residents.

However, a bubble cannot hold up against a speeding train.



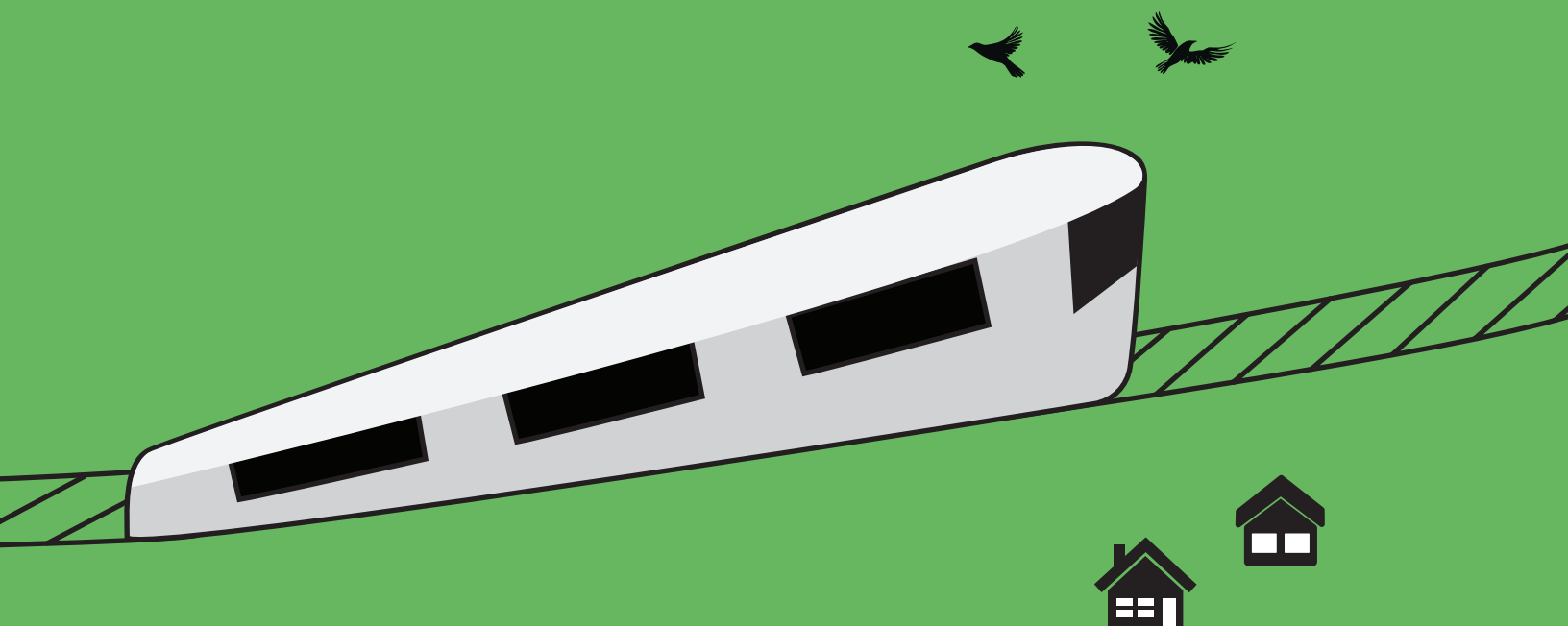
In 2024, a train station will be finished for a Metro Gold Line extension called Foothill Gold Line, spanning from Glendora to Montclair. For a period of time, the Glendora station will be the end of the line. Residents have been complaining for years, objecting to the arrival of more unhoused people. "I talk to people so often who say, 'I feel really sorry for the homeless,'" says Cullen. "I wanna help them, but they can't come here."

"Quit being so afraid of change," my dad says in frustration, and he satirizes the suburban aversion to seeing those with economic struggles: "What do you want to do? Build the wall around Glendora. Don't let these people in, because only the good people live here, right? Only the moral white people live here. Don't let those other people in, they're ruining us."

But Glendora is no longer the self-imagined Shangri-la, protected from the discomfort and unattractiveness of wealth disparity, that many of its settled-in residents have always conceived of it as. Our median household income is \$106,718 and the median value of a house is \$749,400. However, 42 percent of Glendora High School students are considered economically disadvantaged and 7.2 percent of Glendora residents sit below the poverty line.

Despite nearly half of local high schoolers being at disadvantage, Glendora is relatively privileged. Just next door in the Azusa Unified School District, 79.5 percent of students are considered economically disadvantaged, and 13.2 percent of residents are in poverty. Financial struggle is becoming a hallmark of Southern California, and suburbs are no longer the safe exception.

The absolutism of Glendora's insulated barriers to the "outside" is waning. The new consciousness this allows in primarily calls for honesty—being honest about what is happening and what we do when it comes to confronting these changes. This may be the most loving thing a suburbanite can do for the town they adhere to so affectionately. An immense passion already exists for the issues suburbanites are open-hearted toward, like supporting the public school district. In an era when financial strain is being associated with the Californian identity—suburban or not—let's extend that spirit of neighborly support to the community members most impacted by wealth disparity.



# *The Reality of Life as a Motorhome Resident in the Bay Area*

Gabby Ochoa she/her

The City of Pacifica along the coast of California is encapsulated with immense beauty. Residents are surrounded by the gentle waves that crash on the shore, by the golden sand that leaves a warm comfort like no other and by trails filled with serene and earthy tones.

Though they live in Pacifica, the people who reside in motorhomes are not able to enjoy the same level of serenity and stillness as others who dwell in the comfort of their homes. Instead of being treated with dignity, they are pushed into the margins while under constant pressure.

To address the number of motorhome residents, the city of Pacifica has adopted ordinances that aim to reduce the number of large automobiles on the streets. In July 2021, the Oversized Vehicles Ordinance was passed, which placed restrictions on parking for motorhome residents as a safety measure, assessing where they could park in the city without compromising the safety of other road users.

However, some are unsure about whether the city enacted this law to reduce the number of oversized vehicles or whether their sole purpose was to lessen the quantity of motorhome occupants.

Anita Rees, executive director of the Pacifica Resource Center—which seeks to provide critical resources and support to those in need—commented, “The [ordinance] was not about the vehicle being an eyesore... It really came down to a way to try to address people who were living in those vehicles and the fear based on stereotypes of people who are unhoused.”

Motorhome owners were ultimately left vulnerable by the regulation as they were forced to relocate out of the city because their vehicles did not comply with the new safety regulations.

Motorhome residents not only endure pressures at the hands of the City of Pacifica, but from the people of Pacifica as well.



During her time at the Pacifica Resource Center, Rees has encountered numerous complaints from motorhome occupants who feel unfairly treated by their neighbors.

Rees recounted several instances of discrimination where motorhome residents were specifically targeted: their vehicles have been vandalized, parts of their vehicles have been stolen, and they have incessantly been bothered by others honking their horns as they pass by throughout all hours of the night.

She said that “someone’s license plate was covered with black paint to the point where their license plate was [unreadable], so that they could potentially get in trouble if they were driving or even parked.”

These numerous incidents depict how owners of motorhomes are not treated as human beings and are frequently subjected to cruel abuse from their own neighbors.

These inequitable laws and treatment from the City of Pacifica and its citizens depict the harsh circumstances that motorhome dwellers in Pacifica are forced to succumb to. In order to alleviate these pressures, it is up to the people to abandon their differences between themselves and motorhome residents.

Rees placed emphasis on the significance of relationships between motorhome dwellers and housed residents as no one should be seen as superior. She described, “It’s essential to be a good neighbor to people who are struggling economically. People living in a motorhome are often ignored and vilified. It’s so important to see them as humans, and to see them as your neighbor.

They are somebody’s child and they have a family, just like all of us.”

Despite the fact that Pacifica has made some economic progress regarding disparity, such as their Safe Parking Program, it’s ultimately the responsibility of the residents of Pacifica to disregard stereotypes associated with motorhome residents, and rather treat them with dignity in order to mitigate malicious acts and be able to provide funding for those in need.



# The Cost of Dreams in Silicon Valley

Iris Lopez she/her



“Dude, my weekend was insane! I went to this pool party at my friend’s mansion. You should’ve seen her room—it was as big as your entire house!”

The words stung. Throughout my childhood, I often wondered why my mom made us eat recalentados for days, insisted on thrifting my birthday dress, or bought off-brand cereal. “Es lo mismo,” she’d say. For a long time, I thought she just didn’t appreciate the allure of malls or the taste of Cinnamon Toast Crunch. I came to realize she was walking a tight line, balancing each expense, trying to stretch a \$15/hr wage to cover our Silicon Valley rent.

As our neighborhood changed, it became dominated by tech giants like Google and Facebook. With them came an influx of new workers, often pushing aside the families who had lived there for generations. The issue wasn’t just local—it was systemic. A system that prioritized profits over people, viewing land as just another commodity, a piece of real estate. That meant that many, like us, were forced to pack not only our bags, but memories, leaving behind familiar streets and faces. In this upheaval, countless families found themselves slipping into the shadows of poverty.

Every Halloween, my mom suggests we roam the streets of Atherton. “That’s where the big chocolate bars are,” she’d say. And come December, we’d drive to San Carlos Tree Lane, a dazzling stretch of homes adorned with Christmas lights, where imaginations brought floating deer and Santa to life.

As we passed each opulent house, my mom would whisper, “Un día, esto será nuestro.” “Pronto,” she’d promise. But pronto turned into years, then decades. Our lives were defined by deferred dreams in a land where the American Dream is elusive. This sentiment was shared by many in my community. With six-day work weeks, no retirement plans or 401ks, parents hold on to hope that their children might one day become doctors or engineers, ultimately fulfilling the dreams that capitalism promises yet so often denies, especially to those who are undocumented.

Eventually, my family and I had to move to the Central Valley to leave the financial strain. Home begins not to feel like home anymore. That meant no more short visits to mi tío Jorge’s, walks to the baylands, and having to adjust to a place where no one knows our names. Life became quieter and distant. So what if her friend’s room was as big as our entire garage home? I found joy and comfort there. I had a slice of shared space, a spot adorned with Disney princesses and the color pink that reflected who I am and that kept me warm at night. Our space echoed with laughter and love, and the milestone of my growing years.

Although it was different, moving away was our escape. It freed us from the relentless reminders of what we couldn’t have. Living on the sidelines, watching the wealth around us but never being able to step into that life was tough. I often wished there were more resources in my community to support individuals struggling with rent. But with that chapter behind us, it not only brought us new beginnings but a sense of relief.

Each night, as I slept in our new Patterson home, I would silently thank mami. The gratitude wasn’t just for the roof over our heads and food on the table, but for teaching me the true value of things and the importance of family. Her sacrifice is deep and unseen. She paints our lives with colors more vivid and real than any Silicon Valley dream could ever offer.

# The Rise Of The Neighborhood Resort

Jesse Morris he/him

Once a year, on Halloween night, hundreds of costumed trick-or-treaters visit my neighborhood. Our town draws nostalgic parents with its authentic Halloween experience, an island stuck in the 1950's. Some families rent a home for the night; others drive from nearby towns. During the last five years, there has been a shift—the same number of kids—but fewer houses handing out candy. What before was a colorful row of houses is now a dark row of Short Term Rentals.

Short-term rentals (STR), often coined AirBnbs, are converted houses travelers can book for a few nights. They are an attractive alternative to hotels. Who wouldn't want to rent an entire home for the price of a hotel room? Due to demand, the STR market has become highly lucrative, incentivizing homeowners to convert long-term rentals to more profitable STRs. The profitability has also led investors to purchase affordable houses at the expense of the marginalized working class.

In California alone, in 2021, there were over 300,000 STRs on Airbnb's website, enough housing to potentially solve homelessness with a house and a half for every unhoused Californian. In my little town, Three Rivers, California, which sits at the gateway of Sequoia National Park, short-term rentals compose 22% of the housing, almost eliminating long-term rentals. The few long-term rentals competing with STRs are exceedingly costly, making it

difficult for the National Park to retain employees who cannot afford where they live. One permanent employee I spoke with has a PhD and rents an old RV.

Meanwhile, eviction is rising across the state due to rising costs and the loss of affordable housing. California struggles to build enough affordable housing to keep prices low. In my town, fewer young families are moving in due to housing costs. The consequences of this have been felt in the shrinking school and the closing of the only preschool since there is no need for its services.

STRs are not homes. Instead, they are a passive income for investors—keeping a house unavailable when people need a home. Often, STR investors don't live in the community, paying cleaners and managers to run the business. Distancing themselves from the operation makes it easy to miss how their actions are reshaping the identity of a community. The housing market has become a stock exchange—treating houses as commodities to trade and use at will for the greatest profit.

Many small towns like mine thrive on tourism, and short-term rentals attract tourists, drawing customers to local businesses—but at what expense? Investors recognize that cultural and unique places are profitable. Ironically, they end up diluting and fragmenting these communities. Where

before was someone's neighbor, a hotel stands; dissolving the communal cohesion with new strangers each weekend. STRs are creeping into neighborhoods—a place before blocked from tourists—changing the community's future.

Most importantly, we must consider what a home is. Where are our priorities—in money or community? It can be difficult to find solutions in a complicated situation like STRs, with many players involved, from the corporation to the renter. We must use all the tools in our toolbox, like boycotting the industry. Is it ethical to rent an entire house for only a weekend stay? If you are considering investing in real estate, maybe rethink and choose to invest in your community—wealth is not happiness.

The ethical responsibility of a "home" owner dissolves quickly in a free market. We must use the government to hold STRs accountable. Regulation is necessary for an equitable state that cares about its communities. We must advocate at the city, county, and state level for change. Solutions like those proposed in the California Senate Bill 584 which intends to use STR taxes to fund affordable housing, a compromise for housing advocates and investors.



# A Voice From Gaza

Mia Bulnes she/her

In the 21st century, society continues to witness events that violate the inalienable human rights that every individual should have access to from birth. The genocide happening in Gaza Strip, Palestine is being talked about by many but heard by few, an inhumane event where people are dying for unjustifiable reasons. As the violence escalates, I wonder, is it justified to sacrifice the lives of thousands of innocent people with the goal of uprooting the “weeds”? How is it possible that some can sleep soundly knowing that around 50% of Gaza strip population is children, and that they are incessantly bombed and forced to live in one of the largest open-air prisons in the world?

The Gaza Strip, a place only 25 miles long and 7.5 miles wide, is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. The Gazan people face inequalities and issues such as lack of housing, food, water, and electricity. Over 70% are refugees, and lives are being taken away in the blink of an eye, whether it be for political or economic interests.

I will never forget the images of a father carrying the remains of his children in plastic bags, crying in agony in the hope that they would come back to life, or the image of a mother giving her son sea water to drink as a last resort.

It's a heartbreaking situation, and it's important for us to listen to the voices of the people who are experiencing this situation. Khaled has lived his entire life in Gaza but was an exchange student in the United States during high school for a short time. Now he is in the United States due to being displaced by the war in Gaza.

*Can you tell me about your life back home?*

My whole life has been in Gaza. It's a place that has always faced numerous challenges, like domestic issues and the complex relationship between the government in Gaza, the neighboring governments, and Israel. Palestine, in general, is under occupation. Gaza's situation has been quite challenging. In 2006, there were elections and Hamas was democratically elected by the people, leading to their control over Gaza. Since then, Gaza has been under a blockade/siege by Israel and also faces restrictions from Egypt.

Israel controls the borders, including the commercial and civilian ones, while Egypt controls the southern border at Rafah, which allows people to travel to and from Gaza. The situation has always been complicated and challenging.

Before 2006, it was a bit easier when the Fatah government was in control. People could go in and out easily. However, after Hamas took over, restrictions were imposed by the global community and Israel, putting Gaza under a blockade.

As a result, many things couldn't enter Gaza, although some were allowed. Traveling became more difficult, with borders opening only once or twice a month, despite thousands of people wanting to travel.

The other crossing controlled by Israel, called Erez Crossing, requires a special permit from the Israelis. You need to go to Jordan via the Allenby Bridge and then travel to your desired destination in the world. However, obtaining this permit involves a vetting process that takes around 30 to 50 working days, which is like two months. Additionally, to travel to Jordan, you need a Non-Objection Certificate, which is like a visa. So, people have to plan ahead at least two to three months before they can travel.







Someone told me that getting gold is easier than getting flour to bake, because it is now very, very scarce. People need food, they need clean water, but that's not available.

*What hope is your hope at this moment?*

Most Gazans had to evacuate their homes in Gaza City and in the north on October 13th. A million and a hundred thousand people were told to evacuate. A lot of them are still in Gaza, but at least half a million or more than that are still in the South. My family and I evacuated and we lived in three different houses in three different areas because we could not all fit in one house.

My mom and my sister live in a house in the south. My brother and his family and two other sisters of mine live in another house. I really worry for them. I fear for their safety. I wake up every day looking at my phone, asking them if they're okay. Just one message from them means the world to me right now.

I'm not very hopeful, honestly. But I have to hold onto any kind of hope. I also have to pray for their safety every day. When I tell you I have hope, it's more of a wish that this all ends very soon and we can go back to our homes in Gaza City if it still exists. I can't speak about hope now. I can only be wishful about them returning back home eventually and them being safe right now.

My apartment, the whole building was hit by a bomb and was leveled to the ground. Even if I go back now, I have to find a new home, start from scratch. It's a lot to handle. I sincerely hope that my parents and the rest of my family don't have to go through the same thing. We have a family building where all my relatives live, but I live in a different building, and unfortunately, that was the one that was targeted. It's really disturbing. I am hopeful that my family can return home and start again.

And even as the travel day approaches, they're not sure if they'll get the permit or visa to Jordan. I've personally experienced this uncertainty before.

*I heard about how the state of Israel has been blocking the amount of food that can enter Palestine. How has that affected you?*

Before the war, Gaza was under a blockade. But many things were still coming into Gaza, like food and other supplies. We couldn't say that we were hungry. We used to have almost everything. Certain things couldn't go into Gaza. Israel claimed they could be considered dual-use, meaning they could be used for civilians or for other purposes. However, since October 7, all the borders were closed and nothing was allowed to enter Gaza. Two to three weeks after the war started, the international community was able to pressure Israel to allow around 35 aid trucks to enter Gaza. To give a perspective of how dire the situation is, Gaza needed 500 trucks of supplies daily in order to fulfill the needs of the community with more international community pressure. More and more aid trucks are being allowed to enter Gaza. It is not enough for everyone, but at least something is getting in. I know from personal experience, I lived in the war for a month.

It was a struggle to get water, food, anything. If you wanted bread, you had to wake up at five in the morning, go to the bakery, stand in long lines for like 4, 6, 7 hours just to get your basic bag of bread. And if you wanted flour to bake, it was even harder.



*What is something everyone needs to hear?*

People need to see the human side of our stories. They need to see the suffering of the people right now in the Gaza strip to understand we're living in survival mode under continuous bombings. Death, thirst, and hunger surround us everywhere now. We also have to fight over resources.

There is an American nurse (Emily Callahan) that works for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). She worked in Gaza during the war and she recently evacuated and left Gaza to the US. In her interview with CNN, she talks about her experience in Gaza and how bad the situation is. I think watching this interview would be a good starting point for young Americans to get a perspective about the situation. There are also other young journalists who are actively documenting their lives under the war and bombings.

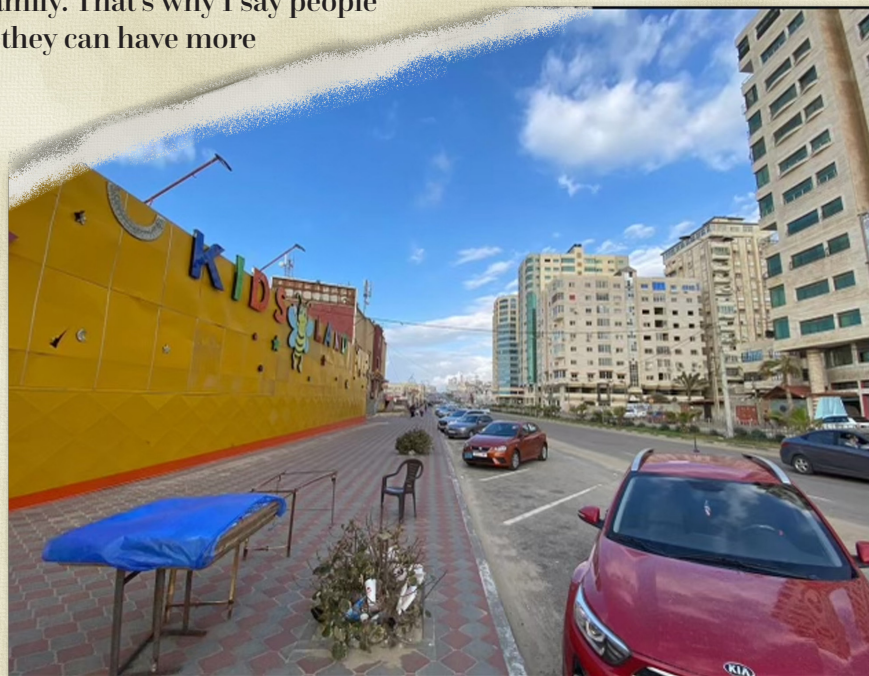
What's happening is catastrophic. You have 2 million people under death every day. I mean, anything from the world right now makes a difference. Any voice, any kind of support makes a difference for young people to understand more about the occupation of Palestine. They need to not judge Palestinians based on what happened on October 7th. They need to go back 75 years, to 1948, when Israel occupied Palestine. That is the root cause of the entire conflict.

They need to understand the whole context of how it started, why there is hate on both sides, and basically the grassroots of why this is all happening so they can understand the October 7th events. Then they can understand how Palestinians and Americans perceive what happened on that day. And they can judge it objectively.

Whatever the reason, on October 7, the response was that more than (as of November 26) 14000 people were killed. More than two third of them are women and children, around 7000 are still missing under the rubble and are unaccounted for. There are more than 30000 people injured.

Anyone with a conscience can't live their lives when they look at what's happening in Gaza. I left Gaza on Friday. I stayed in Egypt for three days, then I came to the US. I spent a month in the war in Gaza. I feel extremely guilty for leaving my family behind. Personally speaking, there's so much guilt, there's so much pain, so much sadness, so much worry about my family. That's why I say people need to pay more attention to what's happening so they can have more empathy at least.

*More empathy is the key to this conversation. If only we, as humans, learned to be more empathetic, we could solve past, present, and future conflicts and prevent wars. As Khaled shared, thousands of people are dying, and as witnesses, we have the power to decide whether to simply sit, watch TV, and get on with our lives or to speak up and make a change. Empathy is exactly what the world needs.*



# BEFORE/AFTER GALLERY

THIS MAGAZINE WAS BASED ON THE DESIGNS CREATED BY AUTHORS OF THE PUBLICATIONS

### PERSONAL NARRATIVE

*Suburban Ullullas*

**Suburban Ullullas**  
MY CONFUSION ON THE EDGE OF HOME CUBAS

50% 60's style  
- muted color palette  
- illustrative style!

## Nanas Suburbanas

### Mi Confusión al Borde de la Clase Media

Magda de la Peza, diseñadora de interiores, es una de las mujeres del mundo de la cultura cubana que, a través de sus proyectos, está creando un espacio para la cultura cubana en el extranjero. En esta entrevista, nos habla de su experiencia en el extranjero, su trabajo como diseñadora de interiores y su compromiso con la cultura cubana.

Nací en el Hospital Proteriano Football local, uno de los muchos establecimientos dedicados a la geografía defensiva de Glendale. El hogar de mi familia. Mis padres asistieron a las escuelas primarias, secundarias y preparatorias locales, queriendo para mí una familia tanto a sus propios amigos de la secundaria, a quienes se determinó a educar en la familia de comensales. La cultura suburbana me cría. Sin embargo, como un niño que crece viendo los defectos en sus padres, yo también me sentía deficiente en la forma que mi comunidad estaba destinada a vivir y crecer.

La norma de Glendale, el destino de las suburbios, se como una posición privilegiada de clase media a alta. La ciudad fundó a su vez que era una verdad uniforme entre todo Glendale. No creemos personal profesionalmente sobre la desigualdad económica porque las planes de la comunidad financian para los vecinos de la zona de la mayoría de nosotros. En esta pequeña burbuja, muestra un tipo de cultura de clase media de la zona de centro y suburbanos de la zona de clase media. Así como se encuentra en un momento de transición. Así como se encuentra en un momento de transición. Así como se encuentra en un momento de transición.

## The Rise of the Neighborhood Resort

Green to represent grass

What is a home? A home is a place where you can relax and recharge. It's a place where you can escape the stresses of the world and find a sense of peace and tranquility. In this article, we explore the rise of the neighborhood resort and how it's changing the way we think about home.

## The Rise of the Neighborhood Resort

Jose Morris, architect

Once a year, on Halloween night, hundreds of costume-wearing residents of our neighborhood gather to celebrate the season. It's a tradition that has been going on for decades, and it's one of the things that makes our neighborhood special. In this article, we explore the rise of the neighborhood resort and how it's changing the way we think about home.

MAGGIE DE LA PEZA DESIGNED BY MARIA TORRES

JESSE MORRIS DESIGNED BY MARIA TORRES

## MIA BULNES

### Un Voz desde Gaza

DESIGNED BY MARIA TORRES

## ABUNDANCIA EN VENTA: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA CRISIS INMOBILIARIA DEL BAY AREA

Gabby Ochoa, diseñadora

DESIGNED BY MARIA TORRES

## LA EXPERIENCIA DE LA PRIMERA-GEN PADRES INMIGRANTES

### THE FIRST GEN WHEN GROWING IN MIGRANT

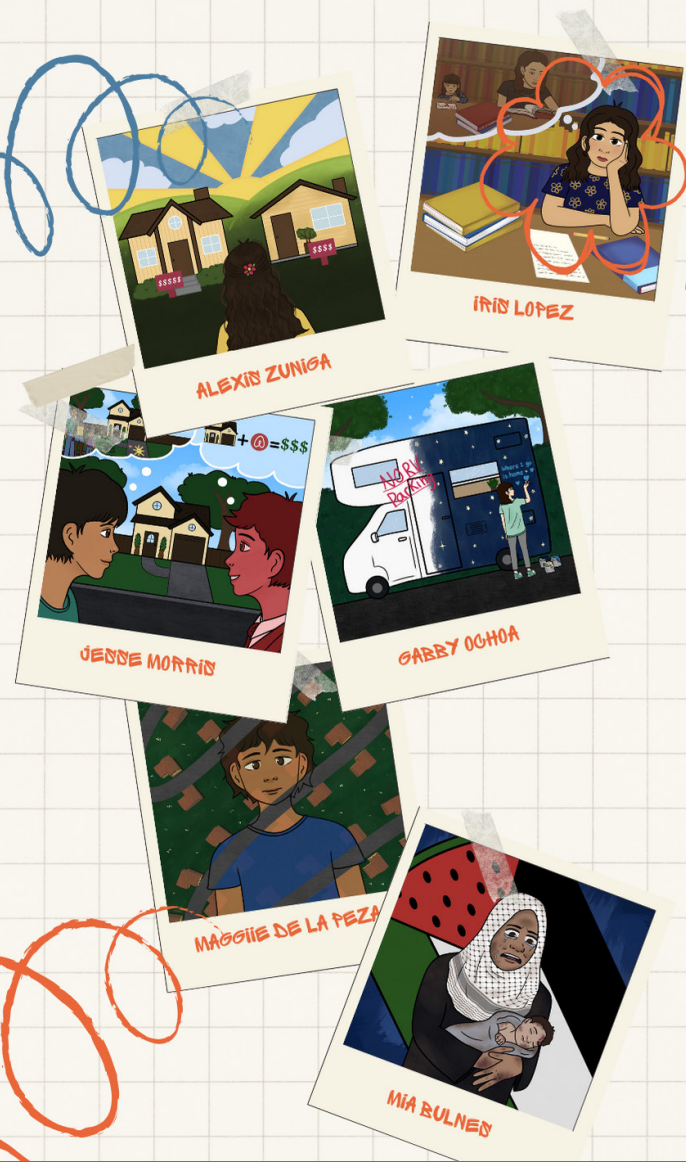
Family Portrait

DESIGNED BY ALEXIS ZUNIGA

## The Terrifying Reality of the Housing Crisis in the Central Valley

Alexis Zuniga, writer

DESIGNED BY ALEXIS ZUNIGA



# FALSE PROMISES

THE CHASM BETWEEN HOME AND HOPE

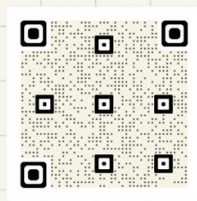
# PODCAST

STREAM THE ENTIRE SERIES

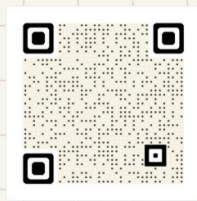
Spotify



Amazon Music



Deezer



## THE CREATIVE CODE

[NEW YLI PODCAST]



WITH CALAFIA'S SR. FELLOWS  
**KATELYN CHANG &  
NANCY AGUILAR**

COMING SOON

FOLLOW YLI'S INSTAGRAM  
FOR UPDATES



# You are *never* a bother



Whether it's a low point, a crisis, or something you can't exactly put into words, get help for yourself or a friend.

To speak to a caring, trained counselor, call or text any of these numbers:

**Call or text 988**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

**Call Teen Line** at 1-800-852-8336 (6 PM-10 PM PT) or text TEEN to 839863 (6 PM-9 PM PT).



# JOIN yli

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...and more!

Check out [yli.org](http://yli.org) for more information

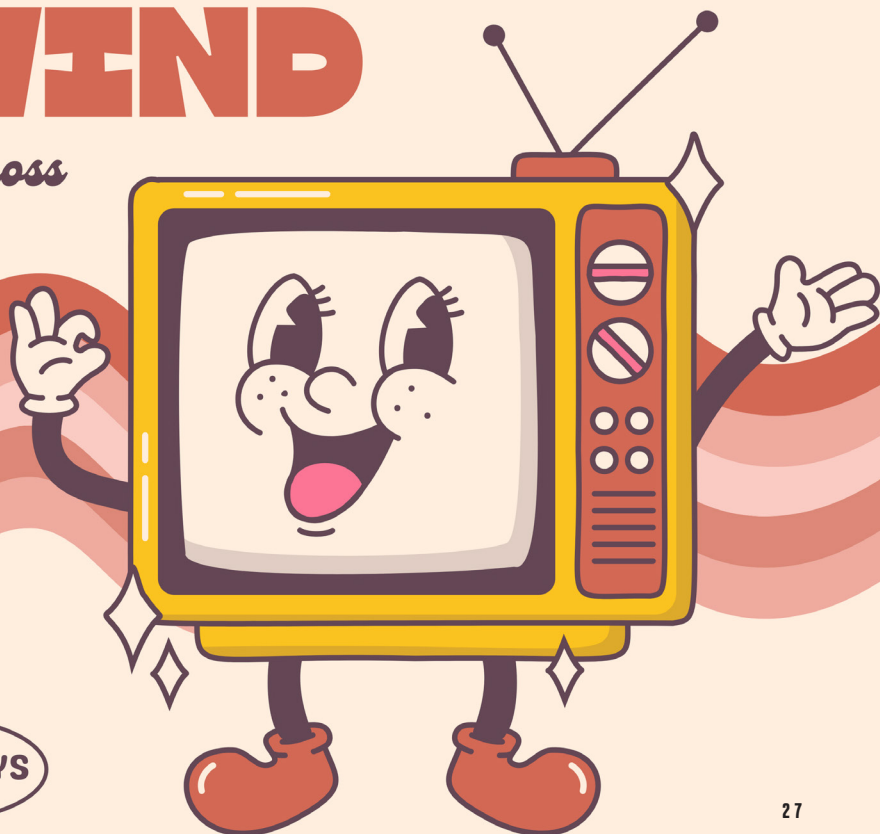


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