

CALAFIA



UNRAVELING STIGMAS

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Schools

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Boyle Heights

Thoughts From a
Proud Anchor Baby

Calafia Issue 3 Summer 2016

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Editor's Note

stig•ma /'stigmə/

noun

1 a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.

Faced with a world filled with stigmas—of race, gender, age and wealth—young people have made a choice to act.

In a world created for us rather than with us, we protest to undo the damaging policies that keep us from realizing our dreams.

There are miles to go before the work is done, but young people like those featured in this publication are changing the script.

In these pages, you will find brave young people who choose to answer injustice with their own voices.

Consider this publication a call to action. To the young person who may be reading this—the world needs your story.

It's time to unravel the stigmas.

un•rav•el /,ən'raʊəl/

verb

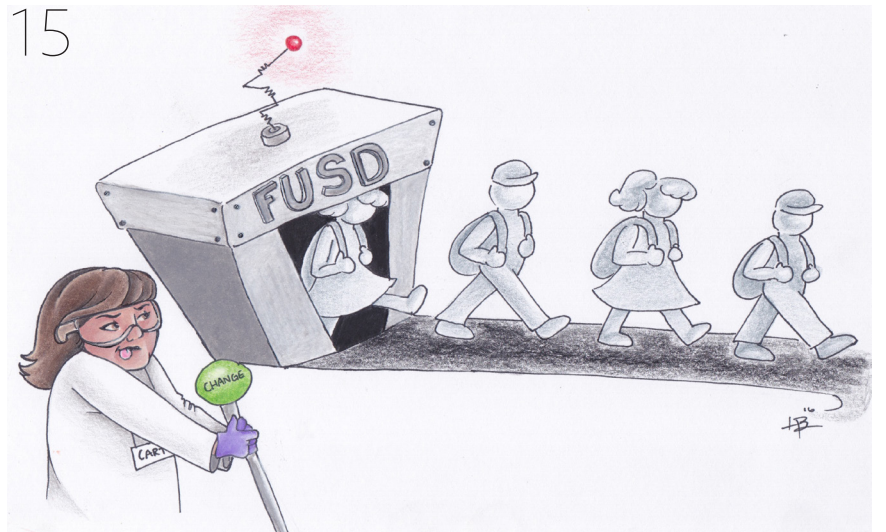
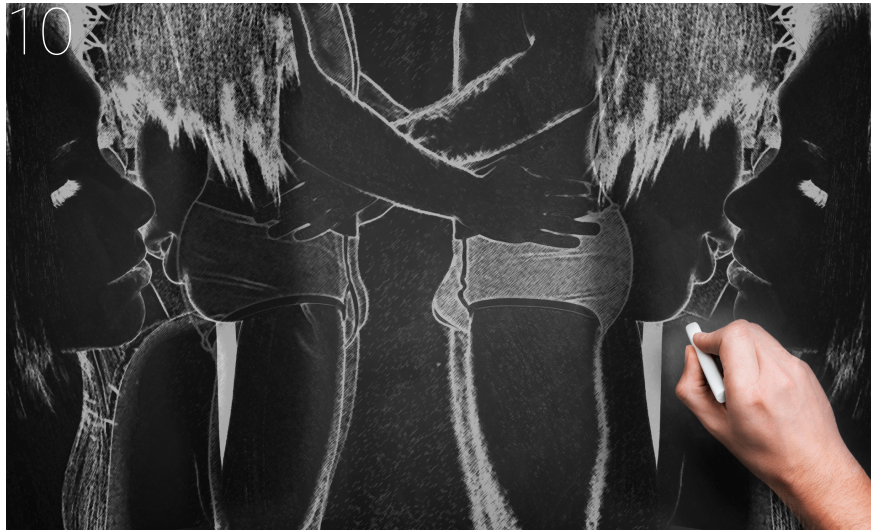
2 investigate and solve or explain something complicated or puzzling.



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YouthWire is a network of media hubs that train California's next generation of community media.

YOUTHWIRE



Choose Freedom Over Fear

Words and Image. Randy Villegas.
South Kern Sol.



“Wall Off Trump” protestors at the RNC in Cleveland this summer.

This summer I attended the Republican National Convention in Cleveland and witnessed the battle over immigration firsthand.

Mijente, an immigrant rights group from Chicago, held the “Wall Off Trump” event, where people took a stand in solidarity with the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in an attempt to build a literal human wall and block Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump from entering the RNC.

“Undocumented and Unafraid! No Papers, No Fear!” they chanted outside the RNC.

Later in the day, anti-immigrant supporters were verbally attacking a man, telling him that he needed to go back to his country. I overcame my fear, to challenge the group and asked them how they could support such a policy of deportation.

When I explained to them that millions of people have virtually no path to obtain legal citizenship because of quota laws and a broken system, an anti-immigration person said, “Well I had a friend from Puerto Rico who came over and did it the legal way!”

He was quite surprised when I informed him that Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory making those born in Puerto Rico U.S. citizens.

This encounter left me angry but also sad because of the ignorance of this man.

Many of those who are anti-immigrant don’t understand the struggles of the undocumented community or immigrant families, and the process they must go through to even obtain a green card. My frustration isn’t just with this man but with our education system that has failed him.

As I was debating, an older man interrupted us, trembled as he shook my hand, and said, “Thank you so much for standing up for us. I’m an immigrant from Croatia. I have been here 6 years with a green card, and I can’t get my citizenship.”

I humbly shook the man’s hand and wished him well. It felt good to stand up for something I believed in, when so many remain quiet. There are millions of undocumented immigrants in this country afraid to get loud for their cause, simply because they fear being deported. That is why I speak up. That is why I get loud. In the words of Desmond Tutu “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Now is not the time to play politics with people’s lives. Growing up in Kern County where over 50 percent of the population is Latino, I observe hard working Mexican Americans in my community every day. The field worker toiling long hours in the hot sun, the overwhelmed teachers and counselors encouraging their students to pursue higher education and the

‘undocumented’ Mexican American parents who never give up on providing a better life for their children are my neighbors.

On my way back home to Bakersfield I thought of the “Wall Off Trump” demonstration. I remembered seeing people in “Free Hugs” shirts surrounding supporters and protesters alike. I remember seeing the Sikh man in a Captain America costume with a sign that said, “Let’s kick some intolerant ass with compassion.” I saw people chanting for unity. I saw people unafraid and engaged.

Then I remembered the rallies in Kern County that I helped organized. I remembered seeing hundreds of residents organized at a park to protest mass deportations. I remembered the sound of banda music in the park as people ate together. I remember youth gathered and engaged boldly for a cause they believe in.

That is how we all should live. Without fear. Without fear of persecution for your immigration status, your age, your ethnicity or race, your gender, or your sexual identity.

That is what freedom is, and that is what this great country stands for. So the next time you see someone spewing hate and dividing people, do not be afraid to stand up for what’s right. Stand up for unity and for inclusion in our system. through the power of your vota.

This Is Not a Drill: An Account of a School Shooting Scare in Long Beach

Words. Jessica Salgado.
VoiceWaves.

Editor's Note: There have been 190 shootings at schools since 2013. This terrifying reality hangs over students and employees alike. Below, VoiceWaves reporter Jessica Salgado recalls her recent experience of a separate incident — a shooting scare at an East Long Beach elementary school.

I was running late to my job as a teacher's aide. It was an unusually hot October day in Long Beach, so when I finally got to work I was still feeling flushed from the heat. Other than that, it all felt like a normal day. The kids — about 14 5-year-olds — started cutting out skeletons for Halloween, while the principal's voice came over the PA, announcing that district officials would be visiting our classroom in five minutes.

Two minutes later came a very different kind of announcement — the school was on lockdown. "This is not a drill."

I moved as fast as I could, shutting the blinds and unsure if any of this was even real. Each year, the Long Beach Unified School District holds lockdown drills in all its elementary schools, but that day was not planned. I kept repeating the words in my head: "This is not a drill."

We gathered all the kids from the halls into the classroom, locked the doors, closed the blinds, and tried to be quiet. As fast as my feet raced, my mind, did, too. "Is this real? Is this really

happening?"

I then noticed that the door window was left uncovered and I panicked, unable to find something to cover it. Then, through the window, I saw the school secretary. Her expression eased my fears. "I got this," it said.

I moved my kindergarteners to the carpet in the middle of the classroom and handed out books. I told them to just look at the pictures, since they are too young to read. I then decided to read to them, not aloud but in whispers. The children seemed intrigued, even happy. Inside, I was terrified. I did not know if there was actually a shooter around, but I was ready to protect these children at all costs.

About 20 to 30 minutes passed, my nerves in a high state of anxiety, before the principal came back on to say that we were safe. At that moment, processing everything that had just happened, I did not know how to feel. I was happy to be alive.

None of us were ever given details of what prompted the lockdown. Local media never reported it. I later learned from a teacher, who searched for the answer on the Internet, that an armed person was seen in the apartments across the street from campus, just a few feet away from the gates of our school.

To me, this experience was traumatizing and

if real, could have had even longer-lasting effects to my personal well-being. Students who experience traumatic events while growing up in a poor environment could be considered disabled, as reported by NPR.

My heart sinks whenever I hear about campus shootings on the news. I just think about how selfish these actions are. How can someone be so sick as to harm a child?

After situations like this, gun control often becomes a hot issue. I would personally like to see more mental health awareness throughout the community.

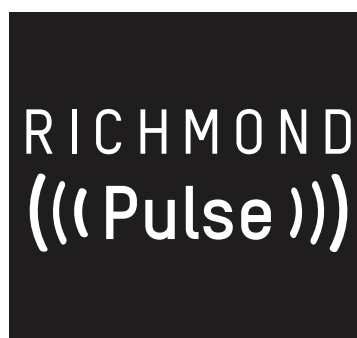
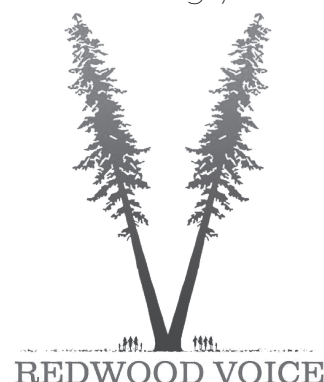
I think that teachers should be trained to emotionally support students during and after such traumatic events.

Sure these students are kindergartners and half of them didn't know what was going on but what about the other half that knew? What's the next step after an event like this occurs?

The day of our shooting scare, school safety did a fantastic job in getting to our campus on time and watching over our wellbeing.

We need to find ways to prevent things like within our community. It is really tough to find a solution to this situation, but action needs to be taken to keep children and the community safe.

YouthWire would like to thank the following youth media partners who contributed to this issue of Calafia.



#WordsMatter -- No Human Being is 'Illegal'

Words. Karla Martinez.
Coachella Unincorporated.



As a child, I thought anyone born on this earth was part of the United States. I did not know what being “legal” or “illegal” meant. When I heard the word “illegal,” I automatically thought about drugs or murder. So when I began to hear people being called “illegal,” I wondered whether it meant these people were as bad as drugs and murder.

Then I started to see terms like “illegal alien” and “illegal immigrant” in the news. It seemed like everyone was reporting on what these “illegals” were doing. But I still didn’t understand why these people, who looked like me, were being branded “illegal” when really, they are just undocumented.

I personally know the struggle undocumented people go through just so they can work toward a better life for themselves and their families. My father was undocumented until I was 10 years old. All I knew at that early age was that we needed to be careful. I remember hearing the words “illegal alien” thrown around, and I immediately wanted to hide my father, just like Michael and Elliot tried to hide E.T., because that is what I thought it meant to be an “illegal alien.” I felt like it was my job as an eight-year-old kid to protect my

father’s identity, and I thought if I tried really hard, no one would know that my father didn’t ‘belong.’

Growing up in the Eastern Coachella Valley, a predominantly Hispanic and Latino community, I can tell you that my family’s experience is no different than hundreds of other families who live here and across the nation. And because I know these undocumented people are my neighbors, family members and friends, I care about the words they are called.

Even when I first became a youth journalist at the age of 14, I took seriously the way I spoke about others, and I still try very hard to represent people honestly and fairly in all my stories.

Isn’t it time everyone, including the media, do this too? Words do matter.

The media has a huge influence on how people in the United States view immigrants. Large media networks like CNN, the Associated Press and the New York Times set the tone for how people in our country talk about immigration and immigrants.

Whenever I hear reports about “illegal immigrants” in the news or see the term in articles, I feel deeply saddened because the word “illegal” is dehumanizing and no way to describe a human being.

I was encouraged when I found out that Define American and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists started a petition to urge the New York Times to update their editorial guidelines and to stop using the word “illegal” when describing undocumented immigrants. As of now, the petition has 2,763 supporters.

Both CNN and the Associated Press have already committed to stop using the word “illegal” when describing undocumented immigrants. It’s time for the New York Times to do the same.

I encourage all media organizations to stop using the word “illegal” when talking about undocumented immigrants, because there’s nothing illegal about being human.

Thoughts From a Proud Anchor Baby

Words. Anonymous.

Images. Author's family.

South Kern Sol.



My grandfather passed away in Mexico earlier this year. I had not seen him in more than ten years, but I remember his face, his voice, and his calm and gentle personality. What broke my heart was seeing my father suffer in sadness. It has been more than two decades since he has seen his own parents.

Knowing that my father couldn't even attend his funeral, I broke down. Now, even as my grandmother continues to grieve, my family cannot go to see her.

Like many other immigrants across this state and the nation, my parents came to California from Mexico seeking opportunity. They created roots and began to raise their family. I was born here and am a U.S. citizen.

I have spent most of my life wanting to feel more security for my family, often fearing I would wake up finding they have been taken away from me and my siblings. Growing up in a mixed status family is to experience these fears daily.

In June, the Supreme spilt a vote on Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) which struck down the President Obama's executive action on immigration.

This means my dad will remain undocumented.

With DAPA, my dad might have been able to travel to Mexico to attend the funeral, and to see my grandmother without fear of being denied re-entry. Instead, my family will continue to suffer from the sense of loss that comes with separation. I have not felt the warmth of my grandmother's hug for years. I've been unable to taste the deliciousness of her home cooked meals, or even see her beautiful smile through anything but a photograph.

Because of our broken immigration system, my parents cannot pay a visit without the risk of not being allowed back.

I am grateful that my family has had the opportunity to make our own little American dream right here in California. Things have not been easy. My parents have made huge sacrifices so that me and my siblings can have a chance at an education and an opportunity to thrive in the world.

When my parents were sick, we worried about their lack of health insurance and feared that doctors would question their immigration status. When I got sick, I hesitated even asking my parents to drive me to the doctor, knowing

that driving anywhere was a risk.

Thankfully, with the passage of AB 60, my parents were able to get driver's licenses. And with passage of SB 4, undocumented kids across the state can now access health care. These steps have helped ease some of the anxiety for families like my own.

Still, in spite of the progress, there are those who want to turn back the clock. GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump talks of deporting all 11 million undocumented immigrants, while one-time presidential hopeful Jeb Bush called people like me "anchor babies."

But maybe that's not such a bad term, because I'm grounded here in the United States, and until we see meaningful immigration reform I will fight until no human being is labeled "illegal." I am a proud citizen who cannot wait to share the moment of joy when my family no longer has to live in fear.

So call me an anchor, because I am what will keep my family's ship together until we are ready to sail toward a future together in this country.

Writing Off the 'Bad Kids'

Words. Victor Seguin.

We'Ced Youth Media.

As a young person, I always hear how important education is and how I need to do my best in school in order to succeed. But if people truly want me to be successful, then why am I not being given all the tools I need to thrive?

With technology rapidly taking over classrooms, and computers changing the way students learn, there are growing numbers of students being left behind. Unfortunately, I am one of them.

I am a senior at Yosemite Continuation High School in Merced, one of two continuation schools within the Merced Union High School District. While I've had a good experience here — compared to my previous school — Yosemite is still considered the 'school no one wants to go to.'

Yosemite is a relatively small school with around 350 students. Most of the students here have had trouble with schoolwork, or have excessive absences or other challenges that get in the way of their education.

Which is why I find it ironic that students like myself, who are considered special needs, are not being given the resources we need to succeed but instead are written off as "bad kids."

That might explain why students here are given hand-me down computers and books that regular high schools throw out. Many of the laptops have missing keys, broken screens, and batteries that do not charge.

We are also not permitted to take laptops home like students at high schools elsewhere in the county do. I've heard different reasons for why this is. One is that continuation students don't have a lot of homework, so we don't need the extra time with the computers. But how are students expected to complete assignments in the short time we have during class, just 42 minutes?

I've heard others say laptops should not be handed out to students because they

have access to computers at the library or at home, but this is not true. Parts of Merced are very impoverished, where the average income for a family of five is just \$21,000. In a lot of these areas, personal computers and access to the Internet at home are luxuries people can't afford.

Finally, there is only one library in Merced. Situated downtown, the library is hidden behind the Courthouse and County Museum. Getting there is difficult because

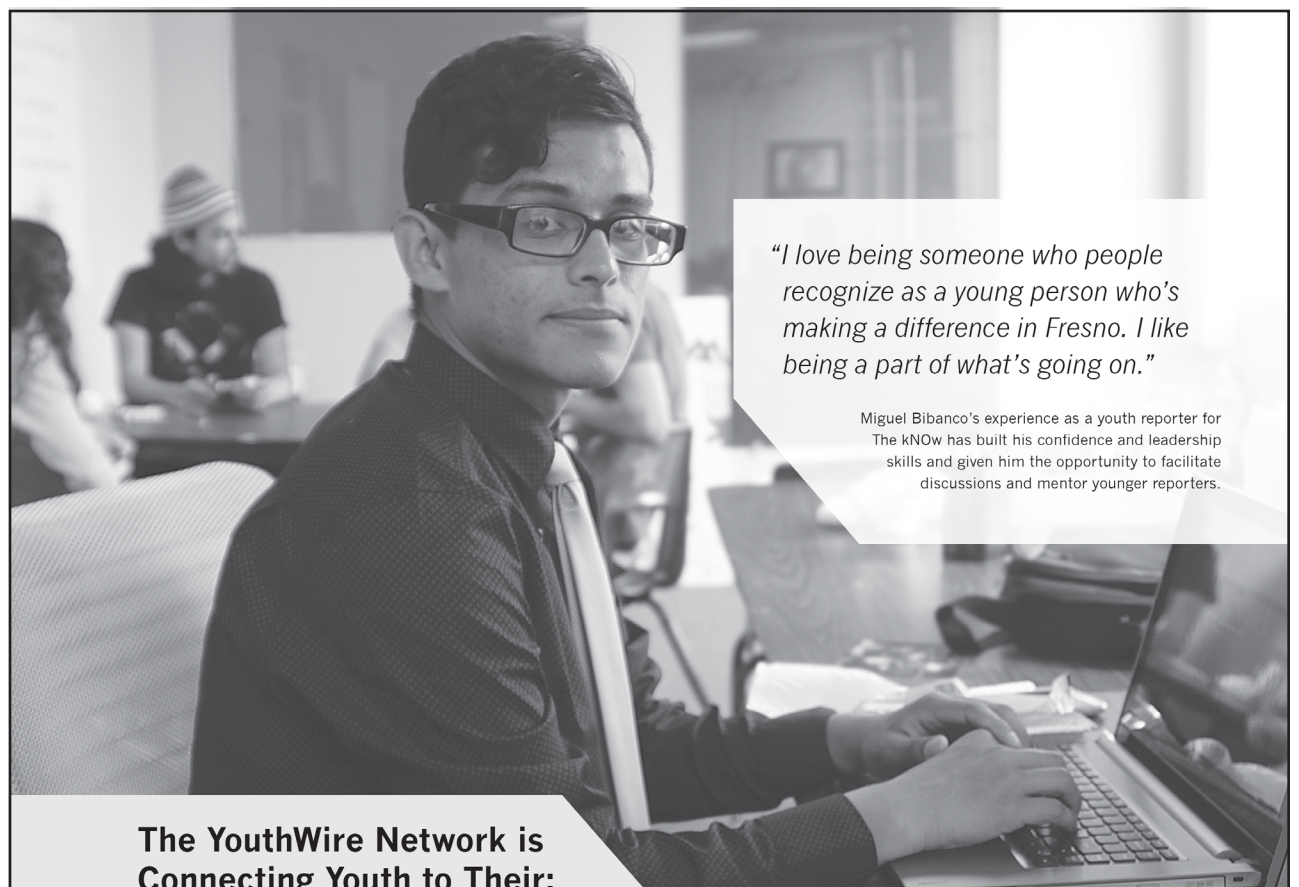
not many people know where it is located and our public transportation system does not serve some of the areas students live in. Many of the

kids from our school come from places outside

of Merced like El Nido, which is almost a two-hour school bus ride away.

Given all these things, the district cannot argue that continuation school students are treated the same and given equal opportunities when they are clearly not given access to the same resources.

It is hard for me to understand why students at continuation schools are treated differently than those who attend traditional high schools. After all, we are all students and we all go to school to learn.



"I love being someone who people recognize as a young person who's making a difference in Fresno. I like being a part of what's going on."






Miguel Bibanco's experience as a youth reporter for The kNOW has built his confidence and leadership skills and given him the opportunity to facilitate discussions and mentor younger reporters.

The YouthWire Network is Connecting Youth to Their:
Community
School
Careers
Government
Future

The YouthWire network uses journalism as a tool to train local youth in civic-engagement and leadership. YouthWire serves to broaden the collective reach of their content — beyond the local — to include a statewide audience of policymakers, advocacy groups, activists, educators and youth.

Learn more about California's next generation of community leaders at YouthWire.org

The YouthWire network is:

lis•ten /'lis(ə)n/

verb

1 to pay attention to someone or something.



Please give better education so kids can grow up to fix their own neighborhood.

-Quan Tran, Sacramento

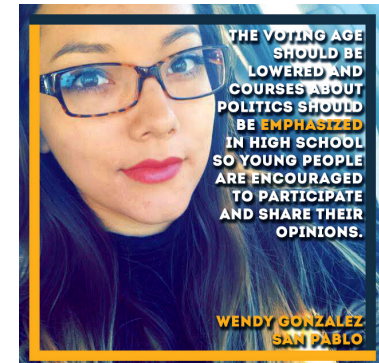


Supplementing the lack of school counselors with advocates and mentors could help keep students of color out of the system and get them into the workforce or college instead.

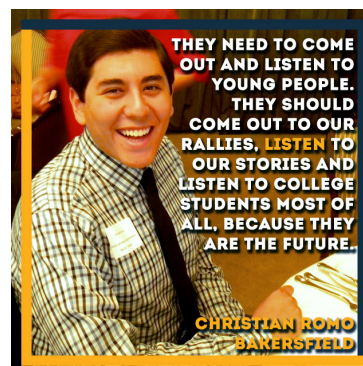
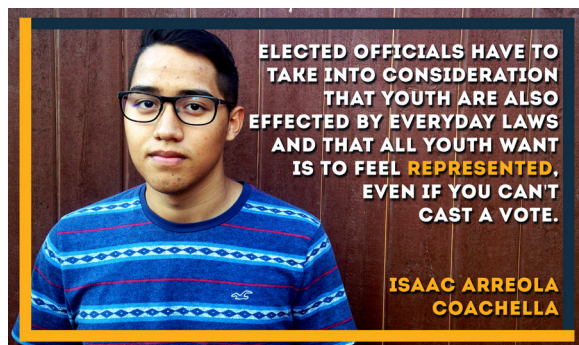
-Chelcee Bunkley, Long Beach

Many people, especially black people, have been killed without having a court trial. These people are not even given a chance to defend themselves, they are being silenced with bullets.

-Jessica Salgado, Long Beach



In Merced, an issue I feel that is overlooked and brushed under the rug a lot is the amount of homeless people in the city. We have a hospital that could be transformed and turned into a center to help them improve their current situations. -Angela Mata, Merced



This Is What Queer-friendly Sex-ed Should Look Like

Words and Images. Jacob Patterson
Art. Elena Scotti.
Fusion Media Network.

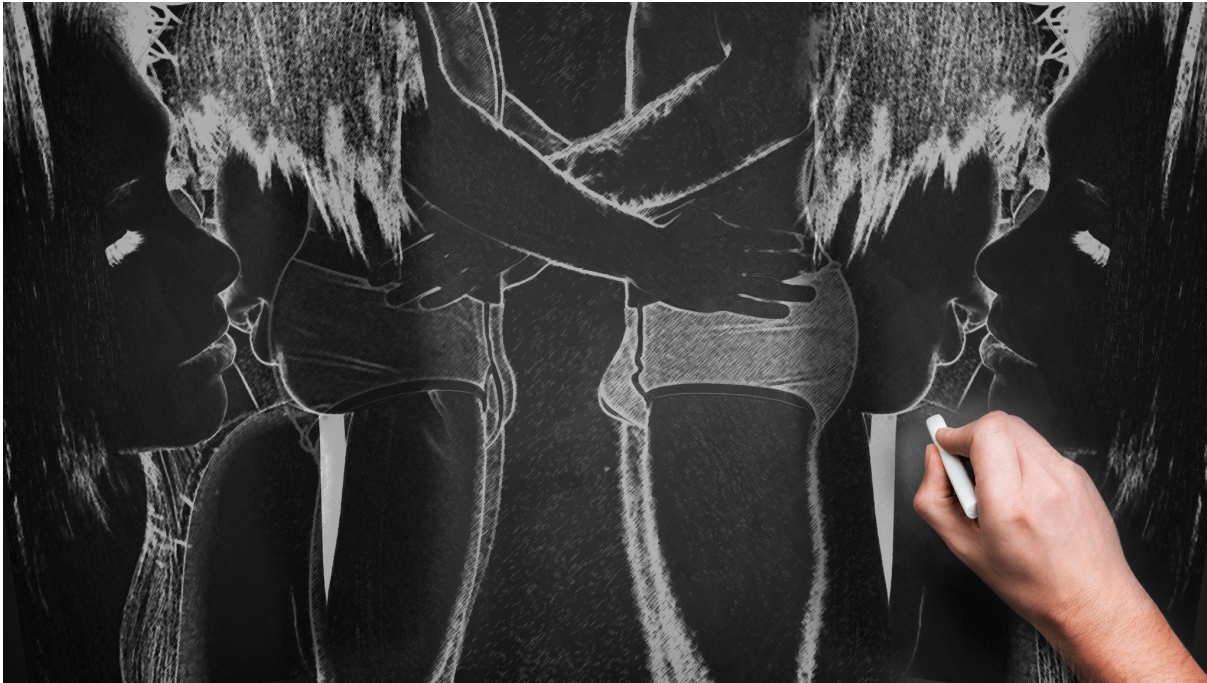
Growing up queer in a remote Northern California town of just 7,500 people, I experienced firsthand how a rural school can fail to meet the needs of LGBTQ students. It’s a failure with dire consequences.

I experienced abuse in a relationship for the first time at age 13, in part because I lacked any knowledge of what it means to consent. And without healthy queer relationships to model, I presumed my partner’s manipulations were normal.

Suffering abuse, dealing with intolerance in my community and lacking any institutional support to speak of, I developed some unhealthy coping mechanisms: I was self-medicating by age 14, and self-harming at 15. At the time, I hated myself and was feeling ashamed. In an attempt to leave Del Norte, I had my first experience in sex work at 16, with a man three times my age. Sadly, this ripple effect is not altogether uncommon among LGBTQ youth, especially for those of us living in geographically and culturally isolated areas. When we don’t see ourselves reflected in the world around us, when we are systematically marginalized and when our very identities are painted as deviant, we can become that self-fulfilling prophecy.

California took a positive step toward addressing the problem with the passage of AB 329, otherwise known as the California Healthy Youth Act, late last year. The bill expanded on existing law to ensure that students will receive “comprehensive” sex education, including “affirmative” examples of same-sex relationships and education about gender identity.

But how will it actually play out in the classroom? If taken seriously and applied thoughtfully, the new law could make a huge difference in the lives of queer youth, especially those living in rural communities. So, I went to my local high school, Del Norte High, to ask queer students: What would you like to see covered in your new, “comprehensive” sex-ed classes? This is what they told me:



- 1 Healthy relationships are learned, so teach us.
- 2 We need to talk about gender identity and preferred pronouns.
- 3 We need a truly LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.
- 4 Let’s talk about sexual identities. All of them.
- 5 Can we get some gender equality?

“I have a lot of friends who I’ve experienced abuse with and I haven’t always known how to get away from it or deal with it,” said Andria Algis, 14. “I just don’t think a lot of kids today understand [consent]. I think a lot of the kids today who are abusive don’t even realize it. They don’t see what they’re doing.”

An effective sex-ed curriculum, suggested Algis, would also include concrete tips and tools to empower students to feel more in control of their lives.

“[I want to] talk about manipulative relationships, come up with ways to eliminate [that], control the situation or end those friendships,” she said. “We need positive and different solutions as to how to remove toxic people from our lives.”



AndriaAlgis, 14

Roughly 50% of young adults now believe that gender should not be limited to the traditional categories of male and female, according to a recent Fusion poll, and more and more young people are choosing to identify themselves with pronouns that are gender neutral, or non-conforming.

“A big thing, in my opinion, would be that when [teachers] talk about a person with a uterus or with a vagina, that they wouldn’t say ‘girl’ or ‘woman,’” said Bennette Durkee, a 15-year-old transgender student. “They would say ‘person with’... whatever body part they were talking about.”

Durkee said he is routinely identified incorrectly by staff and students. “I’ll tell them on the first day to call me this name, these pronouns, and then they don’t,” said Durkee. “They might remember the name, but they don’t use the right pronouns.”



Bennette Durkee, 15

Willow Rodgers, 15



Nearly 8 in 10 queer students have experienced harassment at school, according to the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. And students who experience bullying are more likely to develop anxiety, depression and other mental health issues.

Willow Rodgers, 15, believes LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum can go a long way toward increasing awareness—and decreasing harassment—at schools, but only if it’s given the importance it deserves.

“In some towns and cities there are centers solely for [LGBTQ] counseling and education, but here [in Del Norte] the only thing we have might be one occasional line in sex ed class,” said Rodgers, who identifies as “gender fluid” but uses the pronouns “she” and “her” because she says it’s easier.

“Teachers are like our parents away from home... and they should teach inclusiveness,” she continued. “It could make the school a safer place for LGBTQ students. If you start talking with a child soon enough, I think the whole problem could just disappear.”

Shayla Austin, 15, identifies as asexual: a person who does not experience sexual attraction. Misinformation about asexuality, she said, contributes to the insecurities and stress that asexuals often experience around relationships.

“Sometimes asexual people feel like they need to have sex with their partner because they don’t want their partner to get tired of them and leave them. Especially because the asexual person can feel bad about that, so they’ll give in and do what their partner wants.”

Research suggests that validation of student sexual identities could help stem the tide of LGBTQ school push-out, a term used to describe queer students who feel pressured to leave school prematurely before graduation.

“When I’m not included it makes me feel wrong for who I am,” said Austin, “and that I’m not really who I am.”



Shayla Austin, 15

Zoe Critz, 15



Having sex educators who are informed and comfortable speaking about female experiences is of vital importance to 15-year-old Zoe Critz.

“I feel like they focused more on the male anatomy than female anatomy, and were almost squeamish in talking about female anatomy,” she said. “They showed the inside stuff and not actually what it looks like; then they’ll literally have a picture of a dick up.”

As a result, added Critz: “I can feel confused because when I’m in a relationship with a girl, I’ll be terrified that I don’t know anything about anything, and that makes me stressed out.”

Jacob Patterson is currently a member of Rise Up: Be Heard, a journalism fellowship at Fusion supported by The California Endowment.

Miles Away From the Next Stop

Words. Amber Amaya, Johnny Flores,
Christian Mendez, Paulina Rojas.
Images. Christian Mendez.
Coachella Unincorporated.



For residents of North Shore, getting around on public transportation can be tough. There is only one bus line serving the city, located about 20 miles south of Coachella, and it comes only once every three hours.

That means long waits in often searing temperatures for things like trips to the grocery store, community college, or the doctor's office.

North Shore, named for its location on the northeast shore of the Salton Sea, was once a popular tourist destination. Today, with all of the tourism gone, working-class Latinos account for an overwhelming majority of the town's 3,500 residents.

Many of these working-class families only have one car that they use to get to work. Because of

ago. She said community members of all ages rely heavily on the public transportation.

"I leave the community to go outside of North Shore to look for work because the internet here does not work well, and I need to find employment," Lopez said. "[The bus] is definitely used a lot, especially by students who go do homework after school in Indio." Including wait times, the bus trip to Indio, which is about 25 miles, can average around an hour to two hours.

Lopez said she waits for the bus across the street from Reyes Market in North Shore. She tries to arrive at the bus stop 10 minutes early because she is afraid of missing the bus to Coachella, where she does much of her shopping. On the

Until a few years ago, the SunLine Transit Agency, the public transit operator in the Coachella Valley, operated only one bus route in the easternmost part of the Coachella Valley, Line 91, which serviced the area from Indio to Mecca. But after pressure by North Shore residents and several community-based organizations, SunLine extended its service by adding an additional line, Line 95. It is currently the only bus route serving North Shore.

Karen Borja is the associate director of Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), a faith-based group that first began organizing for equitable transportation in North Shore in 2012. She says that before the extension, North Shore residents had to drive almost an hour to get anywhere, assuming they had access to a vehicle.

"When we first started our work ... the top concern was the inability to go to doctors appointments, college classes, grocery stores, churches and jobs," Borja said.

In response, North Shore residents began organizing protests in front of the SunLine headquarters located 40 miles north east in Thousand Palms. When the transit agency failed to act, ICUC took things a step further, holding meetings between local stakeholders, decision makers, funders and planners. They also reached out to residents directly, surveying more than 800 community members about their transportation needs.

The effort paid off, with SunLine agreeing to extend the line from Mecca to North Shore via Line 95. Still, the current schedule has the first westbound bus in North Shore at 5:20 am. The next bus doesn't pull in until 8:53 am, according to Sunline's online schedule.

Previously, Sunline has defended its sparse

"Boosting the disadvantage communities needs to be a top priority instead of just business as usual." – Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

this, the rest of the family is often stranded at home and must rely on public transportation to travel outside the city.

Violeta Lopez moved to North Shore 10 years

return trip, Lopez tries to be even earlier. More than once, she noted, she's been left waiting with bags of groceries wilting in the heat.

schedule by pointing to low ridership. But according to Norma Stevens, SunLine's Transit Planning Manager, that is beginning to change.

“Based on ridership data, we’ve observed an increase in ridership on [Line 95],” Stevens said, adding that Sunline recently created additional early and late trips to the weekday services from North Shore. Stevens also noted that since SunLine implemented weekend service to Line 95 in January, ridership on the line has increased by 41 percent, year to date.

“I met a gentleman at the Town Center transfer point ... he works in Rancho Mirage and struggled on Saturdays to get to his work place,” said Stevens in an email. “He stated that being able to take the bus to work on Saturdays has lifted a huge weight off his shoulders.”

elderly people and mothers with children doing those mile-long walks.

“If 119 people start calling SunLine to pick them up and drop them off, it’s going to get pricey,” said Borja. “We should be investing, as a community, in resources that look like sidewalks and walking paths for community members to access the bus.”

Eastern Coachella Valley students like Melissa Gonzalez, a freshman at College of the Desert, know firsthand the need for sidewalks and accessible bus stops. Gonzalez said she’s enrolled in classes at the COD Indio campus, located about 16 miles away from her home.

give their input on Garcia’s proposed Assembly Bill 2332, that would, among other things, prioritize projects like walkways and bikeways that connect residents to community-identified transit stops and community services.

Garcia’s proposed bill, part of a larger transportation equity package that included bills from Assemblymembers Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica) and Chris Holden, (D-Pasadena), was scheduled to be heard by the Assembly Transportation Commission in April, however, the hearing was canceled.

“When we began a dialogue about our bill, some people had concerns about the bill



Violeta Lopez waits for the bus.

Though the extended schedule and weekend service comes as welcomed news to residents in the east valley, community organizers say additional challenges remain, including accessibility.

Borja said infrastructure is desperately needed in the eastern Coachella Valley because many residents in North Shore walk a mile in the dirt and desert just to reach the nearest bus stop.

Even though Line 95 offers deviated service, meaning North Shore residents who live far from the closest bus stop can call SunLine to be picked up and dropped off, very few residents even know the service exists.

“I haven’t heard of anyone using the service,” said Borja. Last year, ICUC counted 119 homes near Vandeer Veer Road in North Shore that were located at least a mile away from the closest bus stop. Borja said she has seen mostly

“I take the bus to go to school when my parents are working and I don’t have transportation,” Gonzalez said. “There’s no bus stops near my home....We need to put more [bus] stops in the communities that really need them.”

Gonzalez said she has to walk 10 to 15 minutes from her home and cross train tracks near Grapefruit Blvd to reach the nearest bus stop in front of the Mecca library, then it’s a hour and a half bus ride to the Indio COD campus.

At the state level, there’s been a recent push for investment in infrastructure in rural disadvantaged communities, like the eastern Coachella Valley. Earlier this year, east valley residents, along with community organizations Lideres Campesinas, Konkuey Design Initiative The Leadership Council and ICUC organized a series of community meetings with Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella) to

because [they believed] we are doing too much for disadvantaged communities,” said Garcia during a phone interview. “For some people, that was a concern because it was taking away from the traditional funding course.”

Garcia said he is now working with Jim Frazier, chair of the Transportation Committee, to incorporate parts of AB 2332 into the chairman’s AB 1591 to address transportation needs throughout the state.

“We’re trying to focus on those transportation needs; boosting the disadvantage communities’ needs to be a top priority instead of just business as usual,” said Garcia. “We know first hand how important these issues are to people in our community and to others throughout the state.”

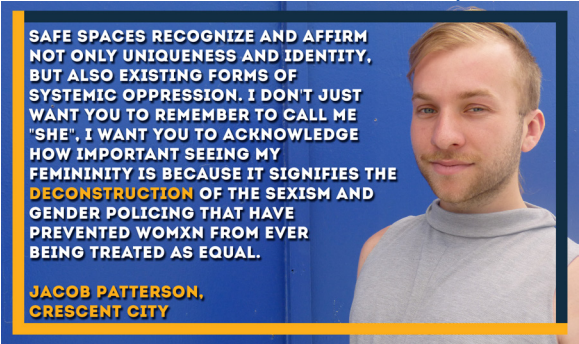
safe•ty /'säftē/

noun

1 the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury.



Being able to walk to a store or the park without fear of being harassed.
Alondra Jimenez,
Coachella



Their needs to be more after school programs so that kids can feel safe being part of a group enjoying sports, drama, art, etc. and not get involved with some gang. There should also be an effort to transform the local police department to represent the community that it serves.
Ben Novotny, Long Beach

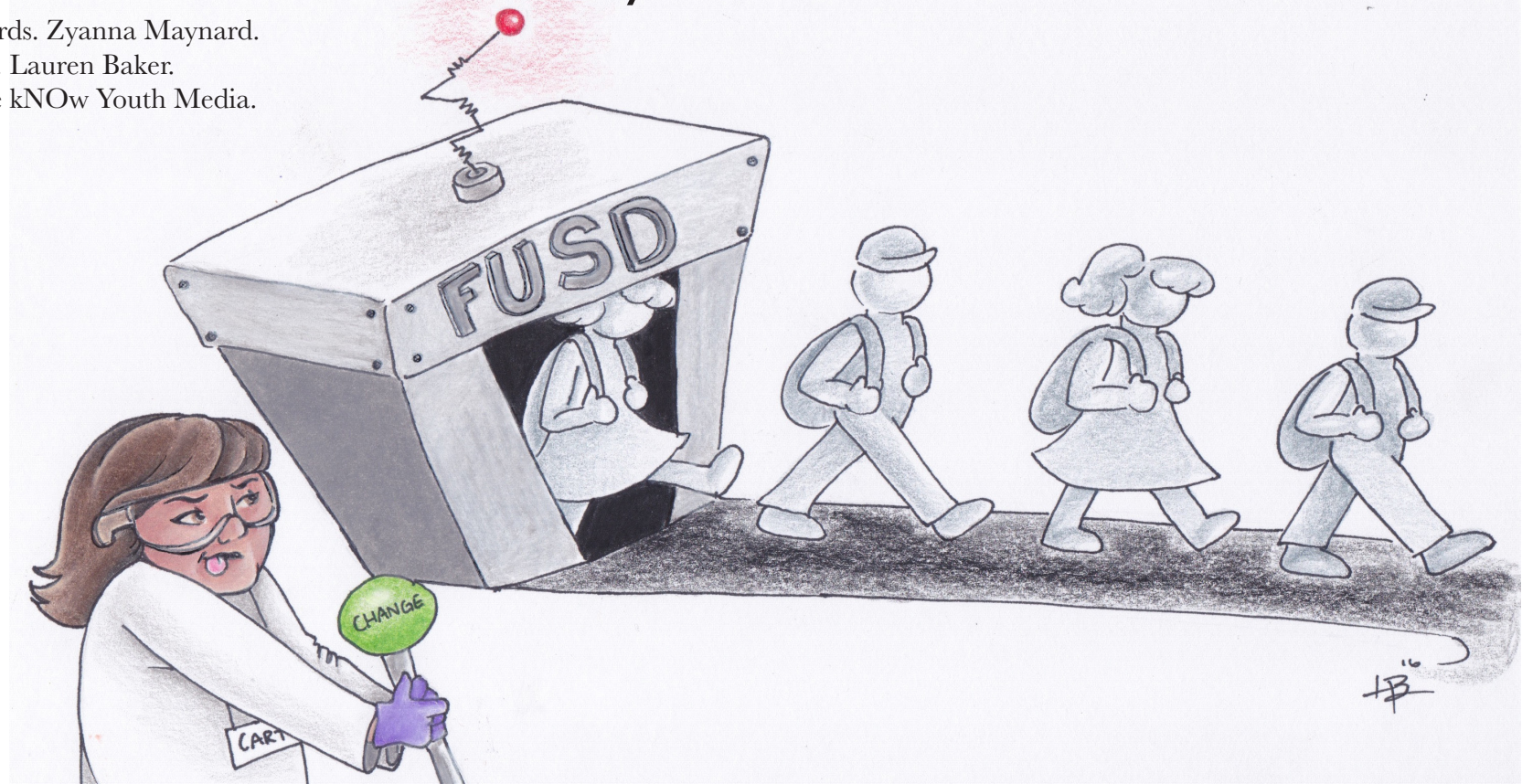


A Tale of Two Schools: My Time at CART and Edison

Words. Zyanna Maynard.

Art. Lauren Baker.

The kNOw Youth Media.



Since starting high school every year has been incredibly hectic, but none can measure up to what my junior year has been like. That's because this year I became a student at the Center of Advanced Research and Technology, or CART.

And even though going to CART has been hectic, I am absolutely in love with it.

CART combines rigorous academics with career and technical learning and is open to eleventh and twelfth grade students in Clovis Unified and Fresno Unified. Students who attend CART spend half their day there—in either the morning or afternoon session—and spend the other half at their home school. At CART when I have an idea, the teachers

school serves around 1,400 students a year from 15 different high schools in Clovis and

Fresno. It offers career oriented courses in four main clusters: professional sciences, engineering, advanced communication and global economics. Within these clusters, students can choose to focus on more specific career-oriented classes.

CART's success shows in the school's impressive graduation rates. Seventy-one percent of CART students enrolled in community college after their senior year, compared with 60 percent of other students in area high schools, according to a seven-year study released in 2011. CART students also had higher rates of university enrollment.

focused on creative thinking and innovation, have studied CART and plan to use it as a model for reform.

At my home school, students are more often than not treated like children, instead of like aspiring professionals. Because of that the students show less respect to teachers, and learning suffers. At CART not only do the students give the teachers respect, but the teachers give respect back. I know, crazy, right?!

Last year Fresno Unified's board approved a spending plan that puts almost \$10 million toward funding career programs. The plan was created after months of discussions with community members and parents. That money should go to expanding programs like CART in

All schools should make students feel welcome.

hear me out and encourage it, and when I need help, they listen and try to understand. And that's what works best about CART. It treats its students with respect, like the young adults and budding professionals that they are.

CART launched in the fall of 2000. The

This is a time when around the country people are looking for ways to improve our education system to make it more effective at preparing students for the real world. I think there are a lot of lessons that other schools can learn from CART. And I'm not the only one. IngenioMind, a California-based research collaborative

other schools.

When I'm at CART I don't just feel like a student, I feel important and needed. All schools should make students feel welcome. Everyone should feel like they're getting the education they deserve.

From the Rubble of Faith and Depression, An Act of Creation

Words. Ezekiel Benavides.

Image. Kody Stoebig

The kNOw Youth Media



Ezekiel Benavides in his home workshop.

I can't put a date on when I realized something was wrong.

I was raised middle class, with loving parents, and two older siblings. I attended a Christian homeschool group, and was well versed in scripture. But by the time I reached my teenage years I started to have questions about my faith.

The questions bombarded my mind with wild thoughts and ideas. I'd toss and turn, try to sleep any way that I could, but nothing worked. I began to fear nights and mornings, and lose focus during the day.

The burning question in my mind was this:

To cope with the turmoil I began to make things, and in that act of creation I found solace even as my own faith began to crumble.

I have always created. I remember playing at a park when I was 11, using a small pocketknife to cut down a branch that I crafted into a bow using my shoestring. I also wrote stories. In one I created an alien world with a family called the Oridans. I was in the depths of my own depression then and so I poured much of my grief into these characters.

I went to these imaginary characters for guidance, and protection. At some point I convinced myself that I was an Oridan, sent

to my friends, but I couldn't, at least not in any healthy way. There were many times that behaved irrationally. I couldn't think.

Eventually, I sought help. I told my parents that I wanted to speak to a therapist—prepared to force it, since they were biblical counselors, and didn't believe in secular psychology. Surprisingly, they allowed it, and I soon attended my first session.

Together with my therapist I learned to explore my own psyche and to examine some of the causes of my mental angst. We spoke about my fear of the Christian God, about the Oridans, and more.

Mental illness cannot be cured. Rather, I was equipped with an array of tools at my disposal that I could use to keep the creeping, inky darkness that is depression at bay.

If God was all-powerful and all-knowing and still created humans knowing that most of us would go to hell, then isn't God evil? I asked my parents, looked it up on the Internet and even asked my pastor. I never got a satisfactory answer and so concluded God was evil.

It was terrifying. I became emotionally volatile, earful and depressed.

to this world without magic, or recognition. I became simultaneously prideful and self-loathing. I was angry with myself and with the world around me.

As my depression deepened, I became more and more dysfunctional. I couldn't do anything during the day. I was awake all night, barely sleeping for weeks at a time. I wanted to call out

But a few therapy sessions and a prescription drug did not mean the problems disappeared. I still struggled with questions of faith and god. I felt hollow. Slowly, I was regaining sanity—but what was the point? If god was going to make the world how he wanted it, and knew everything that would ever happen,

then how could anything I do matter?

Now, there are many answers to that age-old question, primarily explained via different religious structures, but these purposes didn't work for me. I knew them and had tried them. Then, during a sleepless night on YouTube I came across a website, The Thinking Atheist.

Seth Andrews, the site's founder, is a former Christian radio broadcaster who discusses and explains religion and culture in America. For the first time I realized that being an atheist, or, at least, an agnostic, was completely okay. I was able to look ahead, instead of dwelling on a paralyzing fear of god. I was able to find my own purpose, instead of having someone else's purpose shoved onto me.



Benavides creating a sword for live action role playing (LARPing).

Still, despite the relief of having been freed from existential anxieties, I couldn't sleep and it was still insanely difficult to get through a day without relapsing into depression.

My psychiatrist prescribed a nighttime

medication that, he said, would lower my brain activity and bring on sleep. It did. And it was wonderful. I no longer tossed and turned at night, torturing myself. I woke up rested, and ready to face the day.

I revisited my desire to create anew. I have taken control of the Oridans. They are now just parts of my stories and not influencing my behavior. I also started a bow-making business, Praeclarus Workshop. I design and sell bows for archery out of PVC pipe. I wasn't cured. Mental illness cannot be cured. Rather, I was equipped with an array of tools at my disposal that I could use to keep the creeping, inky darkness that is depression at bay. It's a constant fight, and it's difficult, but I'm winning. And I feel alive. I feel awake, and aware. So much more than ever before.

Having Asperger's Does Not Make Me A Killer

Words and Images. Ben Novotny. VoiceWaves.

Evie May is a teen YouTube personality who was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a neurological condition often likened to a mild form of autism, when she was nine. On her many vlogs she discusses how she deals with the syndrome and how it affects her relationships with her family and everyone around her.

In one of her vlogs, Evie May reads aloud some of the many messages she's received from her followers. One in particular states, "don't go and shoot a bunch of kindergarteners."

A reference to the spate of school shootings that have struck communities across the country, the note points to a disturbing trend among those who see people on the autism spectrum as at best emotionally disconnected individuals, and at worst potential killers.

The note, says Evie May, made her "really mad, and kind of sad" that there are those who

think people with Asperger's "will go and do something violent."

I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome when I was 4 years old. And despite the notion that people with Asperger's are devoid of empathy, my own experience says otherwise.

I spent a year and a half taking care of my 90-year old grandmother – driving her to the doctors office, driving her to the hospital, feeding her right up to the day she died. When I saw her body being taken away I burst into tears, and when I saw her casket being put in the ground I cried some more.

The idea that people with Asperger's have no regard for human life is offensive to me, and should be offensive to any family with a child or



an

adult with the condition.

Asperger's Syndrome was recently dropped from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and experts continue to debate whether or not it belongs on the autism spectrum at all.

People with Asperger's often struggle in social settings. They find it hard to make eye contact or understand other forms of non-verbal communication, and can therefore seem aloof or indifferent.

continue reading on page 19

My Voice Matters

Words. David Macias.

Image. Claudia Gonzalez
We'Ced Youth Media



David Macias speaks at a City Council meeting in Merced.

Merced, Calif.— This spring, I attended a City Council town hall. Disturbed by the lack of opportunities for Merced's young people and the reluctance of my city to invest in its youth, I wanted to put these issues before the council.

I was nervous, and had to build up the courage to stand and speak.

When I did, I addressed the council with the utmost respect and conviction, determined to get my message across. But as I was speaking, I noticed that several council members were rolling their eyes, while others began to interrupt me.

Rather than let me speak, council members peppered me with questions, many of which they knew went beyond my expertise. Even the mayor, in his body language and the comments he made, conveyed disdain. I doubt he heard anything I said.

The message was clear: my opinion, my voice did not matter to the leadership of Merced. I felt disrespected and discouraged.

As an 18-year-old Latino male, I have grown accustomed to such treatment in public. But as a soon-to-be voter, I hold our elected officials to a higher standard and expect that they will at a

minimum show respect to the community they have been asked to represent.

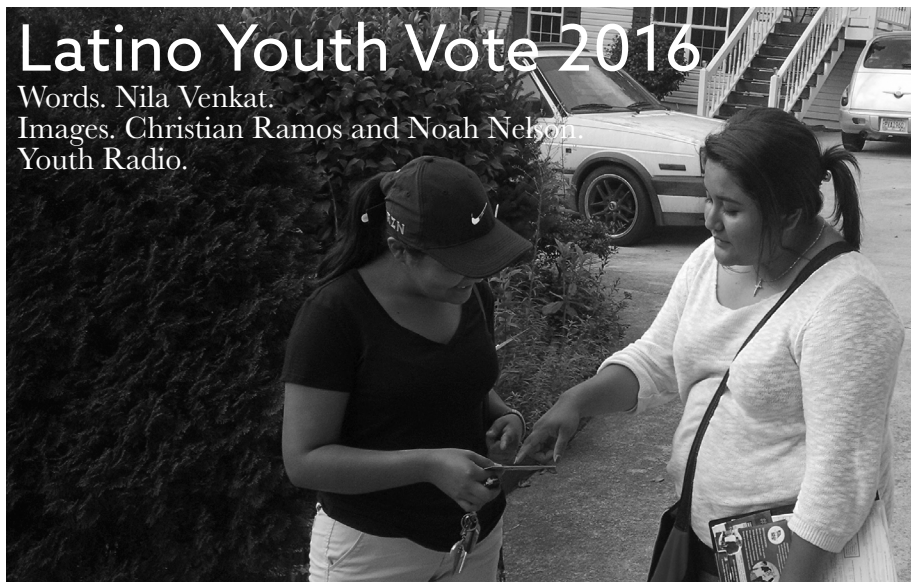
In order for our city to grow and prosper, we have to treat each other with respect and dignity. This includes calling for our City Council to behave professionally and holding them accountable when they don't.

My opinion matters, as do those of my peers in Merced, who make up almost half of the city's population. That is a lot of votes. Winning their support means providing them with greater opportunities than currently exist. It means listening to what they have to say.

Latino Youth Vote 2016

Words. Nila Venkat.

Images. Christian Ramos and Noah Nelson.
Youth Radio.



Diana Vela-Martinez (right) volunteers with the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials to encourage Latino involvement in politics.

We talk about the "Latino vote" as if it was a thing, but in fact Latino voters are not easy to pin down because of their diversity. This is especially the case as the demographic skews younger.

I come from cannot simply be solved through an electoral process," said Wendy Pacheco.

The 22-year old self-identified Democrat was born and raised in East Los Angeles. She calls

According to the Pew Research Center, almost half of the 27 million Latinos expected to vote this year are millennials, between the age 18 and 33.

That's why candidates need to appeal to young Latino voters, which isn't always easy.

"You know I tend to be disillusioned with electoral politics because a lot of the issues that affect the communities that

herself "a poor woman of color."

"My mother has suffered from a drug addiction," said Pacheco. "She was gone for a big portion of my life and was in and out of jail. My father is currently incarcerated. It's a strain on the family. It's very difficult."

For Pacheco, who says she'll vote for a Democrat this November, voting is about representing where she comes from — her family, neighborhood, and community.

"I am really disappointed in most of the Republican candidates," said 21-year-old Luis Reyes, who is a student at UC Irvine and a registered Republican. "I guess you can tie that into the idea of a Latino Republican ideology, that most of them don't really fit the Latino part of it."

A big influence on Reyes is his family. His parents came to the U.S. from Guatemala

and El Salvador, and that experience has made immigration his top issue. A path to citizenship is a priority that he doesn't see the party sharing with him.

"The problem is that the Republican Party itself is...very white."

In many ways, Reyes doesn't totally fit in as a Republican. He's pro-choice and supports same sex marriage. But in other ways, Reyes feels really at home in the party. He's wants lower taxes and less government intervention in business. He's also big on security and strengthening the military to challenge ISIS.

One poll from Univision found that 55 percent of most Latino voters don't identify as either



Luis Reyes (right) with his father, Will Reyes, share an interest in American politics.

strong Democrat or strong Republican – meaning that many are persuadable voters.

"Latinos don't so much respond to a particular party," said María Urbina of Voto Latino in Washington, D.C.

"Where we really see ourselves is through our families and our communities," said Urbina. "So if we hear messages that really demonstrate stewardship for our families, that's where we go."

Voto Latino encourages Latinos to register and get out the vote, regardless of party. On the day I talked to Urbina, volunteers were working the phones, reminding potential voters of upcoming contests.

In Gainesville, Georgia, 20-year-old Diana Vela-Martinez volunteers to register Latino voters near her home, even though Vela-Martinez isn't able to register herself because she's not a citizen.

"If our voices are silenced," said Vela-Martinez, "our way to being heard is encouraging those who are eligible to vote to pick people who



Wendy Pacheco (right) pictured with her mom and dad. Pacheco's family has had many run-ins with the criminal justice system, sparking her interest in politics. Photo courtesy of the Pacheco family.

support DACA and undocumented students."

Vela-Martinez got a work permit through President Obama's DACA program. It's for young people brought into the U.S. as children. But the program could be reversed by the next president meaning Vela-Martinez could face deportation.

With record numbers of Latinos voting in 2008 and again in 2012, wherever they are on the political spectrum, young Latinos could be the ones to watch.

Continued from page 17

The reality is many do want to engage, but don't know how.

Unfortunately, the tragic shootings at schools around the country have helped to draw a deeper link between Asperger's – and autism more generally – with a propensity for violence.

The 2012 shooting at Newtown Connecticut was one of the most high profile tragedies to cast a public glare on Asperger's. Adam Lanza, the 20-year old shooter who gunned down 20 six and seven-year olds, along with six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary reportedly was diagnosed with Asperger's. Then there is the case of Christopher Harper-Mercer, the 26-year-old gunman who in October shot and killed nine people at a community college in Oregon. Harper-Mercer reportedly had autism, according to his mother.

A Facebook group called "Families Against

Autistic Shooters" was created soon after the Oregon shooting. The page characterized autistic children as "cold, calculating killing machines with no regard for human life."

Facebook initially left the page up, but a flood of protest from families with autistic members quickly followed. Protestors argued the page's characterization of those with autism as killers is a form of hate speech and "further perpetuates harmful stereotypes of those on the autism spectrum."

Facebook ultimately removed the page, though there remains a chorus of political leaders and others who continue to try and drive the link between mental disorders like Asperger's with tragedies such as those at Newtown. For the growing number of Americans with Asperger's or autism, the effect can be chilling.

According to CNN, 1 in 68 children in the

United States are now on the autism spectrum, a 30 percent increase from just two years ago. While there are people with autism who go on to lead productive lives, there are others that are unable to live independently, with some unable even to speak.

I have dealt with the challenges that come with Asperger's. I've gotten angry countless times, and struggled in social settings. But unlike Lanza or Mercer, never once did I consider going out and shooting a bunch of strangers. Never crossed my mind. These two shooters should be seen as the anomaly and not the norm when it comes to the Autism community.

Evie May has not posted any new vlogs on her YouTube channel in over a year, but in her last video she spoke about how she won a modeling contract. It goes to show that people with Asperger's aren't soulless killers, but individuals with dreams and goals just like the rest of us.

'We Are Still Alive' – Native Youth Find Inspiration in Pow Wow Dance

Words and Image. Isabella Zizi.
Richmond Pulse.

Growing up, my family attended Native American powwows to stay rooted in our culture. As I got older, I realized why this was so important: We were preserving a culture that society and history books told us only lived on reservations, or didn't exist.

This year for Mother's Day, my family and I went to the 45th annual Stanford Powwow in Palo Alto. Indigenous peoples from all over came together to dance and drum or selling their handcrafted jewelry, paintings and other crafts. Like all powwows, it was family friendly, and those who weren't indigenous were more than welcome to come celebrate this rich culture that is still alive.

During the powwow, I asked friends and other young people why they chose to take part in the native dance and drumming.

"It is important [to dance] because it shows that I am into my culture and to let others know that Native Americans are still alive and we are not a dead race," said Alicia Scholfield, 19, who is a fancy-shawl dancer.

"This is not just a weekend gig to connect with my good friends; this is who I am," added Shiigo Yellow Horse, 21, who is one of the drummers of All Nations.

"When I go to a powwow I'm reminded of how strong, brave, and proud we are; it is what keeps the truth [of indigenous people] alive. Our ancestors fought so hard to preserve the cultures and languages and we owe it to them to keep them alive," said Charles Waddell, 19, a grass dancer.

I used to envy the men, women, and children

who would dance or drum at the powwows because I felt they knew more about the culture than I did. Then I learned myself.

Each dance has its origin in Native tradition.

I started fancy-shawl dancing about seven years ago, thanks to a generous woman who volunteered her time once a month to teach

me at the Intertribal Friendship House on

International in Oakland. I chose to fancy-shawl dance because of what it represents: Imagine a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, fluttering its wings through the open grass as it searches for the right flower to collect its pollen. The swift gentleness of the butterfly is the beautiful feeling I get when I dance.

The dancers dance to the beat of the drums, which is a central part of the powwow.

"The drum is sacred so all of the drummers in this circle are all drug and alcohol free and

this keeps me away from getting into those bad habits," explained Shiigo.

"The drum is the heartbeat of the powwow; without the drum there would be no powwow."

If you would like learn more about the Native American community in Richmond, check out the Native American Health Center located on 2566 Macdonald Ave, Richmond, CA 94804, Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. to learn more about Native culture and participate in other events and programs. <http://www.nativehealth.org/content/richmond-native-wellness-center>



"There are many ideas of the origin of grass dancing," Charles explained, "but I was taught that young men would dance and pray in the tall grasses which will make the arena for the powwow. While dancing and praying, the men would tuck grass in their belts and mimic the movement of the grass; that is why grass dancers regalia often consist of a lot of fringe."

Another kind of dance is called fancy-shawl dancing; the colorful embroidered shawls with elegant fringe hanging from the bottom that the women dancers wear inspired me to learn the dance.

free•dom /'frēdəm/

noun

1b liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another.

"Freedom! Freedom!
Where are you?
Cause I need freedom
too!"
-Beyoncé



Freedom to me is being the person I am and wish to be. Not the person built off the system that seeks to exploit and destroy me. It's being free to learn of other people, other cultures, other religions, without these things becoming burdens and walls separating me from other people. It's about loving people and protecting people and being unified in order for us to not have to worry about any harm. It's being free of the shackles of these capitalistic, right-winged systems, and being free to make good and healthy choices in regards to our body, our families, our communities, etc.

-Brianna Garcia, Coachella

Freedom for me means that I don't have to follow the stereotype of staying home and being a mother. I can choose what career I want to do, it doesn't have to be imposed on me. I should be able to do whatever I truly want to do. -Yesenia Aguilar, Lamont



Girl Skaters Break Barriers in Boyle Heights

Words. Samantha Silva.
Image. Ernesto Orozco.
Boyle Heights Beat.



Candice Avendaño performs an ollie.

Candice Avendaño began skateboarding to impress a boyfriend.

“He was a skater. I guess I wanted to have more in common, so I started skating,” says the 17-year-old Boyle Heights resident. “But after a while, I realized that skating is really fun, and I really wanted to get into it, so I started skating.”

She bought her first skateboard without her parents’ permission. “I told my parents I was

scene in Boyle Heights.

While girls are often expected to play with dolls, enjoy shopping and experiment with hairstyles, girls like Avendaño are changing the rules. The world of skating is evolving, and a sport that used to attract mostly boys is taking a turn, as more girls are developing their skating skills. In Boyle Heights, with a Latino dominant culture, some girls, like Avendaño, are challenging traditions by going against the norm.

father is very supportive. The 15-year-old loves skating and constantly reminds her peers on social media by sharing videos of her tricks. She already has her mind set on going pro.

Usually dressed in oversized Dickies and wearing Vans shoes, Barrera says her old-school skater style gets different reactions from the boys with whom she skates. “Some guys think it’s cool and stuff, but then some only think it’s for guys, and they call me stuff like tomboy,” she says.

“I don’t want to be like everyone else. So I just kept skating.” - Candice Avendaño

going to buy shoes online, but I ended up buying shoes and a skateboard. They were pissed,” she recalls.

Petite, with bright, fire-red hair and dressed in pop-punk style, Avendaño can frequently be seen at Mariachi Plaza and other spots in Boyle Heights, landing an ollie or doing more of the tricks she has mastered. She is one of just a few girls who are part of a growing skateboarding

“My dad would tell me, ‘You’re a girl. What are you doing? You’re not supposed to be skating. You’re supposed to be riding a bike or walking,’” says Avendaño. “I was like, ‘No, I don’t want to do that. That’s so dumb. I don’t want to be like everyone else.’ So I just kept skating.”

In Kimberly Barrera’s case, the negative reaction came from her mother, while her

Skating is growing in popularity in Boyle Heights, a community with skating facilities at two of its city-run parks, Hazard and Hollenbeck, as well as in nearby Belvedere in East Los Angeles. Retailers like the Mainline Skate Shop and The Garage, which recently opened near Mariachi Plaza, provide local skaters with gear, information and other resources. But males dominate the scene.

"I just keep skating and I don't care what people think." - Kimberly Berrera

That doesn't deter Ilse Gutiérrez, a 20-year old Long Beach resident who loves to return to her old Boyle Heights neighborhood to skate at Hollenbeck Park.

"I like to skate here because it's calm, and the guys treat me well," she says.

Some males are still surprised when they see female skaters. "When they see a girl skating, it's like they've never seen it before they go crazy," says Avendaño. "Guys really dig girls that skate, too," she says. "They will hit you up. It's nice. You gain confidence, and you have more friends."

common. No beef, no fighting. It's cool."

Avendaño has perfected tricks like the ollie, which involves lifting the board up with just her feet as a tool, and a shove-it, which is spinning the board at 180 degrees without the board ever touching the ground. She is now working on mastering a kickflip, which is even harder because it requires spinning the board 360 degrees.

All of these tricks involve a lot of practice and could result in injuries. But Avedano is extra careful so as not to break any bones, since she plays several musical instruments, including

women to go out and do something they love. And girl skaters also get plenty of support from The Garage, which helps locals do well in school and follow their dreams of going pro. The retailer funds a program called "Sk8 4 Educate," modeled after high school athletic programs. It allows any local skater to join the team and take skating lessons, as long as he or she keeps a 2.5 minimum GPA.

"It's an extreme sport, but it shouldn't just be for males," says Eric Díaz, an employee at The Garage. "It could be for anyone of all ages. Gender doesn't matter."



Sixteen-year old skater Joe Guillen agrees. He says girl skaters are "awesome," and he doesn't feel he has to give his female peers any special preference. "No, why would I?" he asks. "If you're gonna skate, you're going to get the same respect as everyone else."

Another local skater, 15-year-old Junior Durán, was raised to respect women. "Girls who skate, to me, it's attractive. It's pretty cool that you have both sexes doing stuff that they have in

piano, drums, guitar and bass trumpet.

"Music is first always," she says.

Skaters like Avendaño and Barrera now have role models like professional skateboarder Leticia Bufoni, a Brazilian superstar who has ranked as the world's number one female skateboarder for four years in a row and was nominated for an Espy award. Bufoni, who started skating at age 9, empowers young

Ilse Gutiérrez skates a halfpipe.

Díaz believes that anyone should be allowed to do anything they have a passion for. "There really isn't a difference. We all ride the same type of boards," he says.

And that's alright by Barrera, who says she has a passion for skating and is determined to go farther in the sport.

"I just keep skating, and I don't care what people think," she says. "I love skateboarding."

#SchoolsNotPrisons

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