

Spring 2021

Que Ondee Sola - Spring-Summer 2021

Maria Vasquez

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QUE ONDEE SOLA

THE OLDEST LATINX UNIVERSITY STUDENT PUBLICATION IN
THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1972



SPRING/SUMMER EDITION 2021

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As many of our readers know, Que Ondee Sola (QOS) stands as the oldest student-run Latino publication in the United States dating back to 1972 and Northeastern Illinois University's (NEIU) only Puerto Rican/Latinx publication. During these unprecedented times we had the challenge of printing the magazine. Nonetheless, like many people around the world, we adapted and created a newly designed QOS website. Through our website we have been able to publish monthly and share our magazine with many more readers!

However, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the historic richness that QOS brings, we decided to also have a printed publication this time around. For those who do not know, QOS was founded during a time when a lot of people of color were going to school and were not seeing representation in their school, especially the Puerto Rican community. They got together and rallied with other student organizations, like ChiMexLA, to have their voices be heard on campus and in the community. For many years a printed copy of QOS has been part of our identity, thus, we believe it is important to continue printing our magazine, as a way to honor and preserve this history.

Additionally, prior to the pandemic, QOS had a challenging time bringing new issues to our NEIU family. However, we have continued, and will continue, fighting to keep QOS alive and strong. QOS continues to be a platform where many students can bring awareness to accomplishments and challenges they face within NEIU and their community. Students use their voices to call out injustices and to document their part in history. Our goal with this printed publication is not only to bring awareness and to preserve our history, but to also encourage others to be part of QOS, to help us make it stronger than ever. Our goal is to also encourage others to bring different topics, perspectives, and opinions to QOS.

We hope that as you flip through our magazine, you will notice the different voices and the concepts captured in this publication. When I think about this publication and this past year, resilience and adaptability come to mind. There is no doubt that this past year has brought many challenges to everyone around the world, but regardless of these challenges people have adapted and have remained resilient. We have had communities come together to fight for justice. We have had to adapt our learning, teaching, and work modalities to keep each other safe. We have lost people, lost jobs, and some of us have lost a part of ourselves, but with this publication we hope to remind others that we cannot give up and to remind others that they are not alone— we will get through this. We hope that our publication will ignite other's to stand up and use their voices against injustices.

Best,
Maria Vazquez

QOS STAFF



Editor in Chief

María **Vazquez** obtained her Masters in Social Work at Northeastern Illinois University this past month, May 2021. Her passion for writing developed in middle school and since then she has continued writing poetry, short stories, etc. She joined QOS to continue advocating for underrepresented populations through her writing, as well as, to share others' voices through the magazine. She hopes to inspire her students to continue sharing their stories.



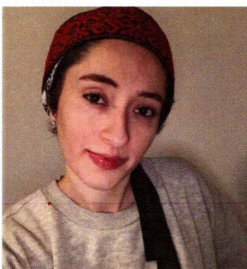
Managing Editor

Izar **Olivares** graduated NEIU with a Bachelor's degree in English with a focus in Creative Writing. She has been an editor for QOS for 2 years and wishes to pursue a career as a book editor upon graduating. She joined QOS to not only expand her experience as an editor, but in attempt to stay connected to her Hispanic roots while inspiring others with those similar roots.



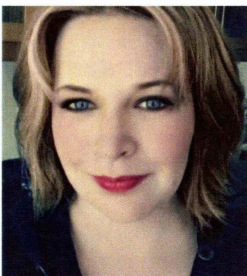
Writer

Angelica **Sanchez** obtained her Master's in Communication, Media, and Theatre at Northeastern Illinois University this month, May 2021. She wishes to pursue a career in film making, poetry, and photography while also working hard to give her cat Scamp the amazing life he deserves. Angelica joined QOS to be able to help bring hope within her writing and be able to connect to her Puerto Rican heritage.



Writer

Crystal **Pérez** is pursuing an English major and Linguistics minor and her main focus is poetry. She is excited to be part of the QOS team because of her belief that LatinX voices are essential towards the decolonization of Latin America or as the Native American Panamanian/Colombian Guna tribe calls it: 'Abya Yala' meaning 'Land of full maturity'. The reclaiming of our continent begins with the renaming of our continent.



Graphic Designer

Jennifer **Kaporis** obtained her Bachelor's in Art with Concentration in Graphic Design from Northeastern Illinois University in May 2021. Not only does she have a well-rounded background in Graphic Design, but she also is an Illustrator, 3-D Artist and Painter. She engages in Art as a way to be expressive through all mediums, particularly in Design, to share ideas creatively. In her spare time, she enjoys Letterpress works, reading and writing poetry.



Video Artist

Emily **Diaz** is a freshman at Northeastern planning on majoring in Psychology. She joined QOS to spread her wisdom and positive energy to remind us, "We are not our thoughts." How our thoughts can shape our reality and who we are. She will be creating videos to share her love for videography and editing. Emily wants people to feel empowered and most importantly feel less alone.



Contributing Writer

Flor Esquivel **Benitez** is an alumni of Northeastern Illinois University. She is currently the Administrative Director of Higher Ed in Prison at Adler University.



Media Advisor

Dennis **Sagel** has an extensive media and community organizing background in areas including journalism, arts, events programming and social advocacy. Dennis has been working for over twenty years in event programming, journalism, mentoring students, volunteer management, theatre and community organizing within multiple media outlets and several arts organizations in the Chicago community and several universities including Northeastern Illinois University.



Faculty Advisor

Elizabeth **Villarreal** is very passionate about Education, and particularly wants to play a role to ensure that Latino/a students have access to Higher Education. She is a proud mother and feels that having her son; Miguel is one of her greatest accomplishments! Elizabeth has a Masters in Arts Educational Leadership in Higher Education from Northeastern Illinois University. She has over fourteen years' experience in working with Latino/a students through Bridge and Learning Community Programs in Higher Education and is currently a Program Specialist/Academic Advisor for the Proyecto Pa'Lante Program at Northeastern Illinois University. She lives by Cesar Chavez's words, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Letter from the Editor

5 COVID-19 and Its Effects
on the Latinx Community

9 Black Lives Matter

14 Identity

20 Chicago Creatives



COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECT ON THE LATINX COMMUNITY

by Izar Olivares

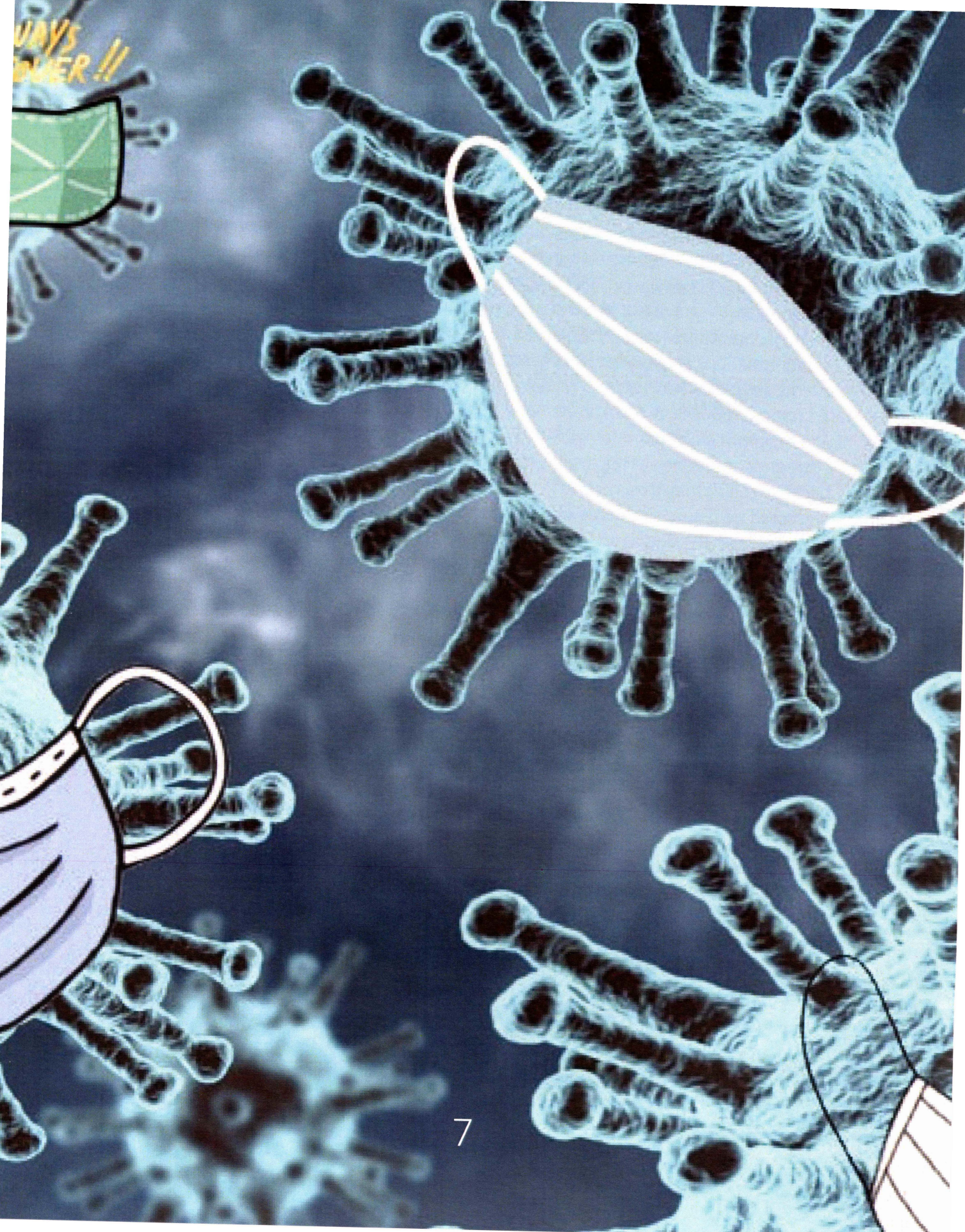
Many students and individuals have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because of the sacrifices they have had to make to not only stay above their schoolwork, but to also maintain their jobs amidst the country's current situation. Although everyone is struggling to make ends meet, currently it is DACA recipients and undocumented communities that have suffered the most. With their lack of social security numbers and paperwork to prove they are hard-working individuals, they aren't able to get the necessary resources and aid that is provided by the government because that is only available to U.S. citizens. Due to this, these communities are struggling more than ever to provide for themselves, whether they are students or parents, as well as their families. This is why it is important for communities to come together and provide the necessary aides to those who need it but are not able to receive as much help as they should be.

During these difficult times, I had the pleasure of talking to Karina Solano, a current junior at NEIU who is also a DACA recipient. Being a full time student and having to take four classes, Karina finds it difficult to manage all of the assignments, even if three of her classes are in-person. Because of COVID-19, the U.S. has had to enforce social distancing in which many individuals have had to work from home, causing schools to turn to online learning as their main source of education for all grades, including Universities. This has caused a mix of emotions for students because even though many are grateful to be in the comfort of their own home, the resources that had been available to some students throughout the year are unable to be accessed from home, limiting their abilities to learn at full extent. Being a DACA student, Karina has already had to face many challenges, such as the struggle of getting accepted to universities or receiving financial aid to pay for school. Now the resources she often uses on campus are limited because of the stay-at-home order, therefore, her challenges to continue to manage her classes significantly increased. As Karina states, her classes became more difficult as professors would not accommodate to the new online situation and were not making class online-friendly for students. She expressed her concern over other students who might not have the resources to take the classes online or that their situation and "I believe that my classes are more stressful than they were before.. It's hard to have my household accommodate my schedule of having tests and assignments to do at certain times. Since I am always home, they think I have free time and give me chores to do but they don't realize that I have still have class and deadlines for assignments". Since her family has also been affected, the household has been harder to manage due the sudden shift in schedules.

In addition to her school being affected, Karina was also affected by COVID-19 when it closed down due to the restaurant/bar closure. According to her, “losing my job affected me more than I thought because the money I was earning from work is supposed to be going towards paying for tuition and now I won’t be getting that money”. This puts her in a difficult situation not only when looking for a job during this pandemic, but also when figuring out how she will be paying the rest of her tuition since her main source of income was suddenly cut off.

Despite the amount that COVID-19 has impacted all communities, individuals utilized this situation to grow stronger and become closer together than before, especially in the Latinx community. When asked if she had seen any type of growth in the communities around her, Karina stated, “there is a lot more support for local businesses instead of support for big corporations. Especially in Little Village, people are starting to buy food from street vendors and small restaurants because they know it’s a tough time for them”. Whether it is a small restaurant on the corner of the main street or someone selling street food it’s important to support those businesses because the money they receive from working all day and making homemade food, could be their only source of income and what they use to provide for their households. In the end, if our community wasn’t brought together by the fact that we all believe that the government should have taken COVID-19 precautionary measures now, as well as before this grew into a pandemic, it was brought together by supporting local businesses and providing resources to those who we know aren’t able to receive as much as they should be.





How to build a tough game/strong mindset during COVID?

I recently asked to write an article of encouragement about building/regrowing resilience during COVID times. I then automatically thought about my attitude in life, and the sportsmanship/character I show in the soccer field and in my everyday actions.

As a defensive soccer player, your opponent will kick the soccer ball, sometimes landing straight in your face and feeling like a sucker punch, or even worse, leaving your face feeling numb. Thus, the ability to quickly turn your body around and recover quickly kicking the ball back like if nothing had ever happened is what to me means RESILIENCE.

It really is up to you how you perceive your COVID/LIFE experience. You might have lost a friend, family member, or your home during these last few weeks and your CHARACTER will never be the same. It will grow and flourish in strength as time passes by. Similar to lost soccer games, you gain momentum, experience and build on your strategy and inner strength.

More so, what has truly impacted my curiosity during our COVID stay is to further dive into character development. Jim, Kouzes, and Barry Posner delineate the importance of why Character matters in leadership (Source 1):

- Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words;
- Be careful of your words, for your words become your deeds;
- Be careful of your deeds, for your deeds become your habits;
- Be careful of your habits; for your habits become you character;
- Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny.


In addition, while studies have shown that sports do enhance character development and further emphasizes sportsmanship and character to act symbiotically (Source 2), what do you do when sports and your favorite sport players are on pause during COVID 19? You become your own player, you take control of your life and run with it until you hit that goal.

Staying FOCUSED is presumably more important than anything during these times, and enhancing your global mindset is a key in your overarching success during post-COVID times. Who have you connected or networked with during these COVID times? With your neighbor? Or with someone who is educationally competent across the world or in a different state? If you haven't, it is not too late. Remember that as we shift into a new normal, a digital normal -like an Herculean/Athena character , globalization might be your best friend. With this, my fellow readers, I leave you with this quote "The philosophy of pandemic is truly a philosophy for all peoples" (Source 3). It is not about YOU, but about WE, and WE wins games!



Sincerely,
Flor Esquivel-Benitez

1. Kouzes, J. and Posner, B.A.R.R.Y., 2005. Leadership development is character development. Leadership Excellence, 22(2), pp.6-7. Economopoulos, K.P., Sun, R., Garvey, E., Hogan, J. and Bazzarelli, A., 2014. Coaching and mentoring modern surgeons. The American College of Surgeons.
2. Omar-Fauzee, M.S., Nazarudin, M.N., Saputra, Y.M., Sutresna, N., Taweasuk, D., Chansem, W., Latif, R.A. and Geok, S.K., 2012. The strategies for character building through sports participation. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 2(3), p.48.
3. Michael A. Peters (2020) Love and social distancing in the time of Covid-19: The philosophy and literature of pandemics, Educational Philosophy and Theory, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2020.1750091



BLACK LIVES MATTER

Dear QOS Community,

During this past year, there has been a significant increase in police brutality against the Black community to which we do not condone. These injustices were and still are being committed by the individuals we should trust to keep us safe and are supposed to assist us whenever we need help. We stand and will continue to stand in solidarity with activists, organizers, and the entire Black community until these injustices stop and those who have committed such inhumane acts are prosecuted. We will continue to amplify the voices of those who have lived in fear, anger, and frustration and create an environment where they are able to live in peace.

o

The Fight Continues

By Maria Vazquez

Almost a year and the fight for justice continues.
More people taken because of the injustices created in this country.
A country whose propaganda is “for the people”
But neglect those that look different.
The unfortunate reality is
This has been going on for longer than a year.

For decades, we’ve ignored the importance of accountability.
Stating what the victim did wrong
But not holding the perpetrators accountable.
Elongating “justice” through our “justice” system.

Establishing that those who are white commit crimes
“Because they were bullied”—
Always giving them the benefit of the doubt.
Whereas those who are not white commit “terrorist attacks”—
Belittling their humanity and
Targeting them because “they fit the profile”.

We fail to acknowledge the effects of these injustices.
George Floyd murdered while he begged for his mother.
Breonna Taylor murdered at home— her place of refuge.
Adam Toledo murdered while complying for his safety.
Daunte Wright murdered leaving his two-year-old behind.
This is just naming a few.
There are many more we have lost and need to keep fighting for.

We must continue to use our platforms to bring awareness
Stand up for others regardless of their skin color
Show compassion for everyone even if they look different than us
Continue supporting those who are still healing
Use our voices to call out injustices.
The fight continues.

George Floyd’s murderer has been found guilty and although “justice has been served”, we still have a long way to go. My prayers go out to George Floyd’s family and to other families of those who’ve been killed by the hands of police officers.

Crystal Pérez
¡Manos Arriba, No Dispares!

*Adam Toledo,
Te Queremos.*

*Cielos Azules,
Soles Brillantes,*

*Entre Las Olas Del Mar ~ ~ ~
Y El Viento Del Sal ~ ~ ~*

*Tú Alma Está,
Y Jamás Terminará.*

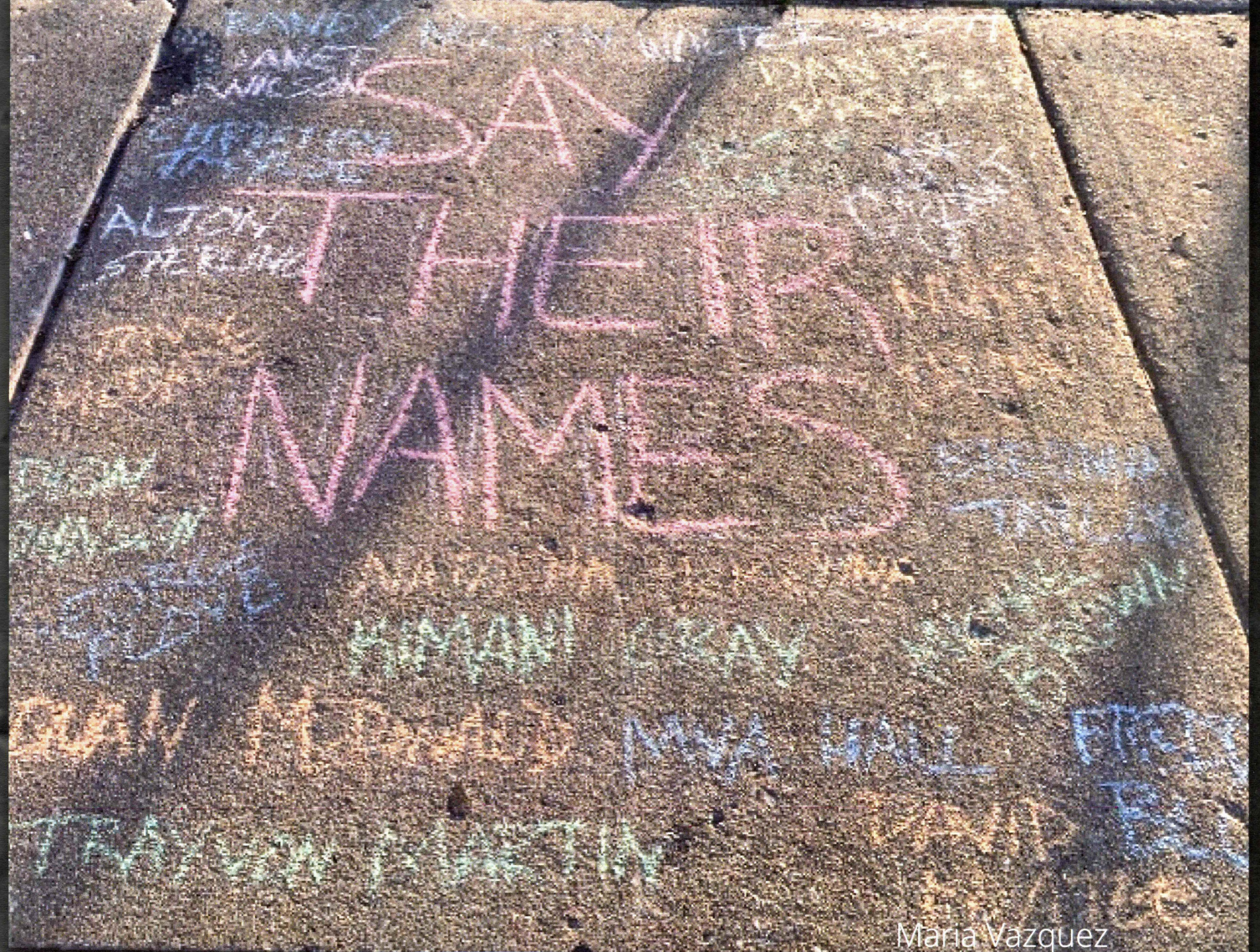
*El Pueblo Latino, Jamás Seremos Vencidos,
El Pueblo Unido, Jamás Seremos Vendidos.*



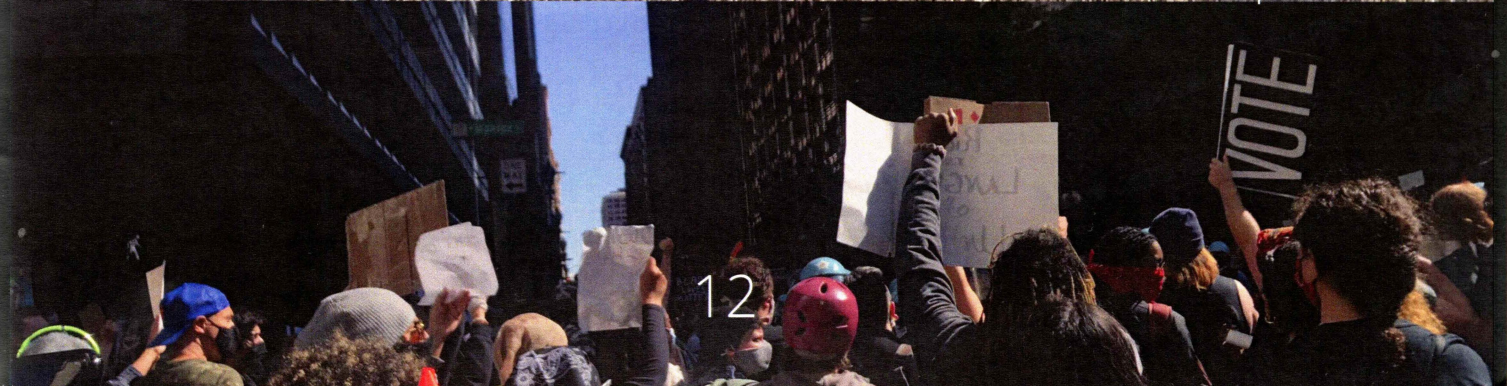
(Evan Garcia / WTTW News)



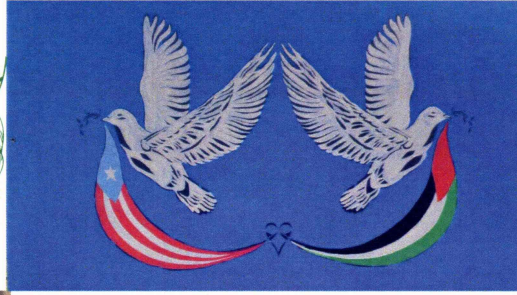
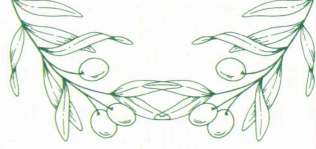
(Evan Garcia / WTTW News)



Maria Vazquez



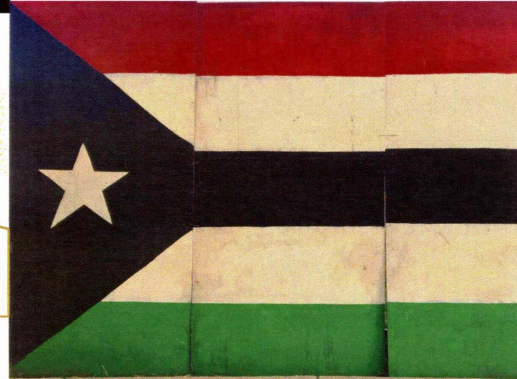
(All Photos Courtesy
of Jihad Broderick)



(Piece/Design by
Crystal Pérez)



In dedication to the 248
Palestinians killed, including
66 children, by Israeli air
strikes in Gaza. The LatinX
community stands in
solidarity with the Palestinian
community for freedom,
justice, and equality.



إخلاصا ل ٢٤٨ فلسطينيا
قتلوا، من بينهم ٦٦ طفلا،
من جراء الغارات الجوية
الإسرائيلية على غزة.
يتضامن المجتمع اللاتيني
مع الشعب الفلسطيني من
أجل الحرية والعدالة
والمساواة

"Each generation
must, out of
relative obscurity,
discover its mission,
fulfill it, or betray
it."

- Frantz Fanon

IDENTITY

Am I Latina Enough?

By Angelica Sanchez

Soy suficiente Latina?

I'm alone in my car,
as flashbacks start clouding,
my thoughts as I feel
separated from my heritage while,
not belonging on American soil.

Getting told constantly,
that I am not Puerto Rican enough
because of my lack of Spanish fluency,
making me feel like I do not belong,
to my own community.

I saw their eyes flashed,
from curiosity
to judgement,
the second I started struggling with
pronunciation of the letter "r."

I tried to mimic my parents words
at night in front of the mirror,
yet I felt like a fraud hiding,
behind a mask of false
i d e n t i t y.

¿Por qué tus padres no te enseñaron
español?

I tried to speak,
but I was m u t e,
afraid that I brought
s h a m e
to my last name.

A big insecurity,
the fear of butchering the language,
being called a "gringa"
making me think that my i d e n t i t y
is on trial.

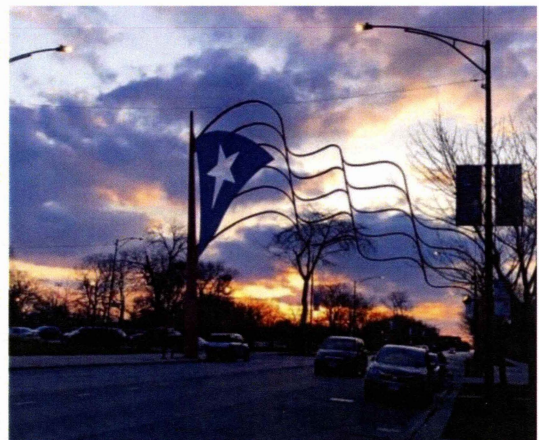
My hands on the steering wheel,
insecurities ruling my brain,
afraid of letting down,
my ancestors whose blood and lessons
are instilled in my body and soul.

I scream the lyrics of
Frankie Ruiz, Daddy Yankee, & Ivy
Queen,
I cannot tell you what all those words
mean,
but I feel their songs take over
my fragmented soul.

Yo soy suficiente Latina

I am
p r o u d
of the Latin blood,
I hail from,
that runs through my veins.

I am
p r o u d
of the little Spanish
that I do know & will
continue to learn.



¡Sí Se Puede!
By Maria E. Vazquez

She takes joy being a first generation Latina college student.
Showing her familia que sí se puede.
Creating a college-bound culture within her familia.
Developing honor and confidence.

Being a first generation Latina college student
Is about making our familia proud—
letting them know their hard work para darnos un futuro mejor is paying off.
It's showing the world that we can do it.

¡Si se puede!
Just keep going.

She also knows the pressure that comes with it.
The expectation to create a path for those who follow.
Feeling as though her familia's future lies on her shoulders.

Being a first generation Latina college student
Isn't just about beating the odds
and being the first to go to college—
Es más que eso.

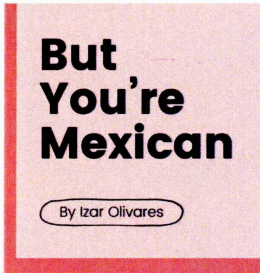
It's navigating a system that wasn't created for us.
It's the challenge of finding Latino mentors.
It's advocating for ourselves and our education.
It's educating ourselves about financial aid and scholarship opportunities.
It's learning the difference between a major and a minor.
Es rompiendo barreras.

¡Si se puede!
Just keep going.

Being a first generation Latina college student
comes with a lot of responsibilities,
but it also comes with a lot of pride.

¡Si se puede!
You're not alone.





But You're Mexican

They stare at me.

Looking for a hint of dark skin,
in my barely ivory complexion

Vigorously searching
for their definition of Mexican.

For the sombrero infused on top of
my head
And the burrito glued to my hand.

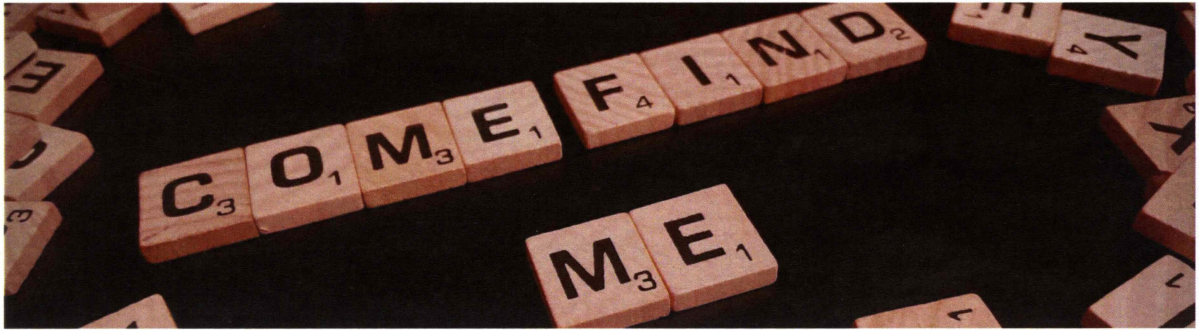
Questioning the presence of culture
In a white-looking young woman.

I must have my citizenship papers
With me at all times.

Just in case.

They hear me speak in English,
“...but you're Mexican”.

As if I'm only allowed to speak
Spanish,
Or would broken English suffice?



Come Find Me

by Angelica Sanchez

Dejame vivir de nuevo,
deja que la vida venga y me
encuentre deficiente...

F R E E D O M

I've become a spirit d e s i r i n g...
a response back,
suffering in animosity &
abandonment,
fighting for survival.

My soul counting the hours & days,
wishing to be set free to swim
with the stars,
to break apart from these invisible
chains.

Déjame vivir de nuevo,
deja que la vida venga y me
encuentre deficiente...

F R E E D O M

Writing words on the wall,
over & over again
to fill in the void,
leaving behind my mark,
for someone to find.

Cold air freezing my lungs,
fire inside my soul
s l o w l y
dying out, losing its spark,
praying for the sun's beam
to set me free.

Dejame vivir de nuevo,
deja que la vida venga y me
encuentre deficiente...

F R E E D O M

An hour glass appears to me,
its majestic golden sand mocks me,
reminding me that time is
r u n n i n g o u t,
life will be taken once the final grain
drops.

F R E E D O M

An hour glass appears to me,
its majestic golden sand mocks me,
reminding me that time is
r u n n i n g o u t,
life will be taken once the final grain
drops

My lungs filled with knots,
as slowly I am having trouble
breathing,
twists & turns,
trying to break free of this
imprisonment &
manipulation.

Dejame vivir de nuevo,
deja que la vida venga y me
encuentre deficiente...

F R E E D O M

Wishing I can be heard
without making a sound,
struggling to stand,
but only falling onto my knees...
desperate to escape.

With every ounce of strength,
before I disappear into the
never ending abyss,
I s c r e a m my hollow echoes,
begging you to
search for me,
follow my cries...

"C o m e f i n d m e."

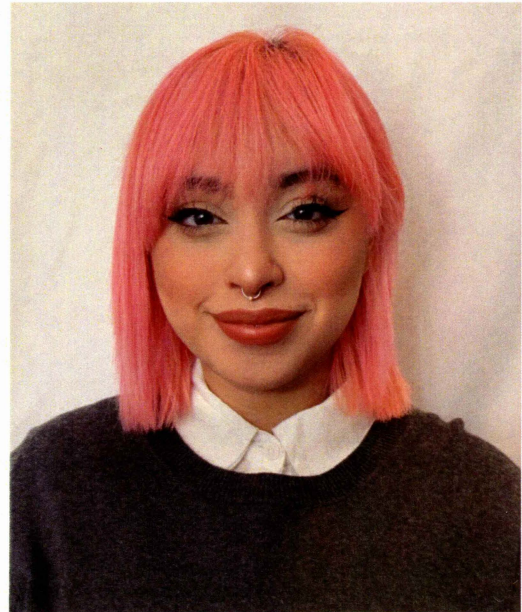
Refusing to be another Latinx statistic

By Luz Miranda

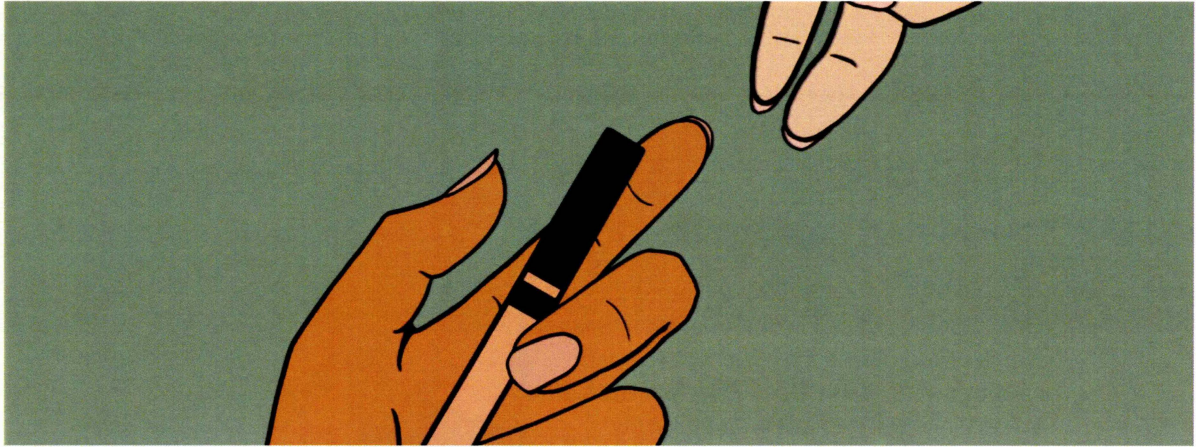
Picture this: A Mexicanita walking down Northwestern University's Evanston campus. Being excited about orientation and meeting her classmates. Upon arriving and opening the door to the classroom she'll have more than half of her classes in; she sees a room full of predominantly white students. It was a culture shock I was not expecting, but that I should've been prepared for.

I never get tired of writing about my Latinidad or about where I come from. However, it is exhausting having to talk about minority struggles in a classroom that's made up of 90% Caucasians students. I am one of four Latinx individuals in my classroom and one of less than ten people of color in my cohort. As a Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) alumni, I haven't felt like home at Northwestern University (NU), and I probably never will. My experience thus far pursuing a master's degree in Counseling at NU hasn't been easy. At NEIU, I was drowning in cultural celebrations and in diversity, whereas a predominantly white institution lacks it. I am happy to say I am a Harris Scholarship recipient in my program and that has been the greatest motivation to keep going. Scholarships that make a scholar commit to working with underrepresented populations are the easiest to apply for because I tend to do that regardless.

I experienced imposter syndrome in my first quarter of graduate school. Imposter syndrome is when you doubt all of your accomplishments and feel like you're a fraud. However, it was a bit different for me. I would hear my white classmates saying they were feeling imposter syndrome but couldn't help to think they will never feel the level of imposter syndrome I was feeling. I was refreshed to know another NEIU alumni and McNair colleague was also in the same program. We would go back and forth about the levels of acculturation we had and how we didn't feel like we at all belonged to the culture and environment in our classroom. Teaming up with another person of color felt great and it made it easier to get through that first quarter.



Now, I want to focus on myself and remind myself of what I went through and how hard I worked to get there. There were times I wanted to go back to NEIU, my second home. I even reached out to several faculty members to help me either validate what I was feeling and push me to keep going or tell me that it was okay to come back and not take one for the team. My decision to stay has brought me even larger opportunities. I became a research assistant in my second quarter and was an awardee of the National Board for Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship. I refused to be another statistic saying that a person of color couldn't make it in a prestigious and rigorous program—And I still refuse. If anything, graduate school has taught me the importance of self-love and pride in being Mexican. I will be that token of diversity and that token of representing the Latinx community because that is the sacrifice I have to make to pave the way and influence others to do the same. That is how you start to close the gap and legitimize the presence of minority scholars in higher education. We need to take our space and not apologize for it. We worked twice as hard, so we deserve twice as much.



That Time Concealer Gave Me An Identity Crisis

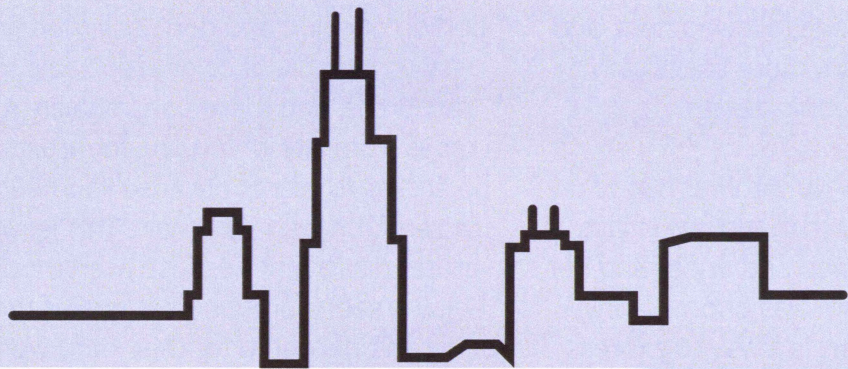
by Sarai Segura

Gym class during my junior year of high school was one of the better periods I had. I managed to be in a class with a bunch of my friends, and most of the time, we goofed off. One day after gym class, an older girl complained to us about a mark she had. I offered her my concealer, and when she saw it, she told me that she couldn't wear it. I asked her why, and she jokingly responded that we didn't match shades. I was a bit embarrassed, but I laughed with her. Then in the next second, I felt shame. I didn't like how I couldn't immediately separate myself from a white person.

Describing what it's like to be a Latina in America has been a question I had always dismissed because I never felt qualified to answer that question. When I was younger, my life resembled something like a Mexican immigration movie (without the threat of deportation). Small apartment, lived nearby many family members who also moved out to Illinois, helping my parents with English documents, living within our means, etc. Around middle school is where I dropped using Spanish. My parents also stopped taking my sister and me to see our family during holidays and birthdays around that time as well.

These are the most apparent factors that lead me to feel like I had failed to retain anything that came from my parent's culture and, therefore, half of my identity. This is funny because I also didn't associate myself well being 'American' either. I understood a lot of differences between my life and most kids who went to my high school. But not relating to my identity as an American doesn't feel as wrong. It's not an expectation that my family and other Latinos have. It was this expectation that had caused me to feel separated from my ethnicity. This memory always resurfaces every year to remind me of that separation.

CHICAGO CREATIVES



Brian Herrera

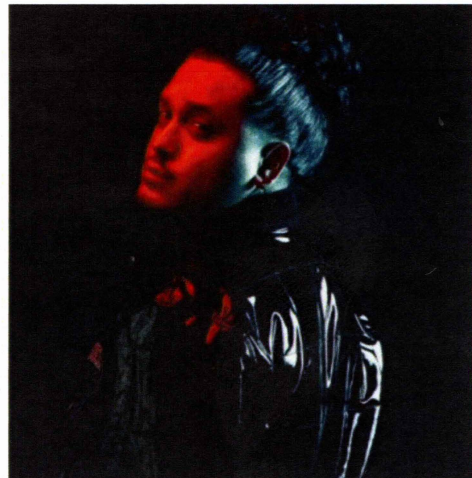
By Izar Olivares

Brian Herrera is a Venezuelan-born artist/illustrator and activist who often advocates for Latinx communities and on behalf of LGBTQ+ communities as well. Before moving to Chicago at the age of 11, Brian lived in Venezuela with his mother and grandparents. With his mother being his biggest influence, he chose to follow his dreams, as she followed hers, and pursue art, more specifically graphic design.

Brian: I grew up with her half of my life in Veracruz and she is also undocumented and queer and her art medium was photography. To many, art is a way to express emotions and connect with individuals who prefer a more creative medium than the typical words on a paper or screen. Art can often convey emotions that words cannot, explaining the phrase, "a picture is worth a thousand words".

Brian: Art is a medium of self-care and therapy. I like to mix what I do as a way of uplifting communities of color and undocumented communities. I also feel like art for me is not just a medium of creating and presenting, but it's a way of expressing what I currently feel or about current topics. It's also the best tool to communicate.

However, there is a growing issue in the art community. Although artists make beautiful murals and illustrations for cities and businesses, it is often for free, which is not fair for the artists as they end up using most of their own material for the work that they do and having to pay for new material out of their own pockets. In addition to this, many institutions and businesses often take advantage of artists, especially if the artist is a person of color, and don't pay them. As Brian states, "People of color aren't able to have resources, and there's an imbalance, which comes from lack of funding for artists. There's no access to grants because you need to be a citizen for most resources". This leaves most artists distraught because even though they enjoy creating artwork that moves the public, being compensated for their hard work is even more rewarding. In addition to creating controversial pieces, Brian also enjoys giving back to his community, whether it is donating his proceeds or simply advocating for many that do not have as much of a powerful voice as Brian does. (Continued on page 24)



However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing regulations being enforced and businesses being closed, many artists have found it difficult to find work, one of those artists being Brian. According to him, "it's been tough because I've had commissions fall through that I was depending on but I find it positive because this is the first time I've had to fully focus on my art and come up with new art that has opened new opportunities".

Being an artist takes a lot of focus and creativity. This means crossing many lines that others don't dare cross in fear of stirring the public. For instance, immigration and LGBTQ+ related topics are very 'sensitive' in society. Many artists, like Brian, create their art in correlation with these topics, thus, often receive praise and/or backlash from the public. Even if there are negative views on his art, it's worth it because it means the work provoked many that would have stayed quiet otherwise.

Brian: I always pursue queer and provocative artwork, inspirational artwork that liberates people with current topics. I believe our role in society is to push people to say beyond what they are surrounded by. If an art piece provokes someone to speak up about something, then it's good.

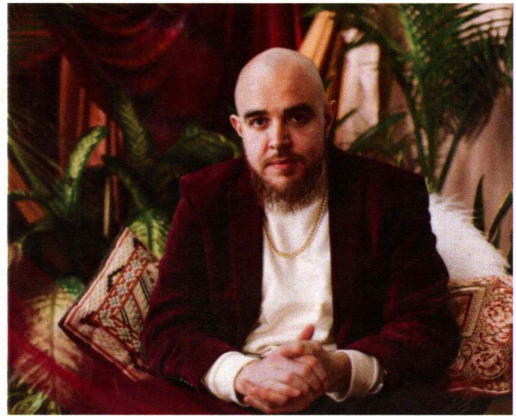
Despite his ability to be able to advocate for others now, Brian was not always able to. Being an immigrant and queer, Brian has had to face many obstacles, the most difficult one being having to cross the border and beginning a new life in the U.S. Additionally, staying true to your roots is also integral to an artists' work. Being able to create work that defines who you are while also speaking to the individuals that experience the same is far more inspirational than creating work that only adheres to the public but has no personal connection. As Brian states, "Immigration is the core of my work because a lot of work that I do has a lot of what I feel about it and I use it to advocate for undocumented/queer people who come first". To him, this work not only connects him to these communities, but it strengthens those individuals because there is someone that can express their feelings through a medium that society often prefers to look at.

Brian: I hope that in a way they could relate to it and open a window to what it could be. Hope to inspire people who are in my current situation to overcome obstacles because it's possible.

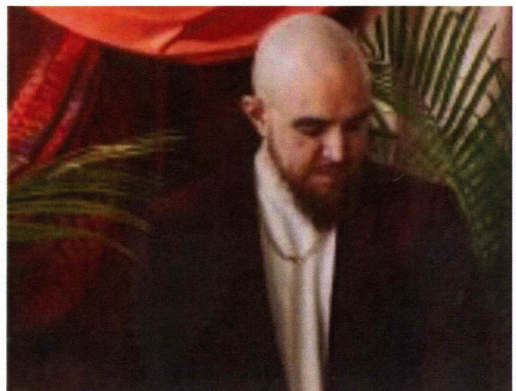
Interview with José Olivarez

By Maria Vazquez

José Guadalupe Olivarez is a writer and teaching artist from Chicago. His family is from Jalisco, Mexico from a small town called Cañadas de Obregón— about 90 minutes outside of Guadalajara. His biggest influences are his three younger brothers because of “their jokes and their style of humor”. He also loves the poetry of Sandra Cisneros, Natalie Diaz and Ada Limón. He looks up to many of his peers, whose work has been “hugely influential to [him]”, such as, Nate Marshall, Eve Ewing, Britteney Black Rose Kapri, Eloisa Amezcua, Joseph Rios, Javier Zamora. “Those are some of the people that come to mind”. At a young age, José “always accepted other people’s answers for what [he] should be doing with [his] life”. For instance, he mentioned that he never wondered about going to college, but it was something that was engraved in him because his parents “made a sacrificio coming to the United States” and so, José saw this as his and his siblings “job to take advantage of that sacrifice”. However, when he was in high school and he listened to his peers read their own poems, which motivated José to start writing. At that point, he realized that he “didn’t just have to accept the blueprints that other people gave [him]”. Poetry made him excited about asking questions about himself, his family and the world. So, at the age of 15, José began writing poetry. Now, he continues writing poetry because he loves the work and he loves writing poems and stories as well as challenging himself to “think about the world in a slightly different way”. He writes to continue telling his story. (Continued on page 24



José: “I think it’s important that Latinx people, Latinos, Latinas tell our own stories and not just head our story second hand from people who may have other motives. You, know, I think for a long time, I was pretty upset with this idea of like Latinx invisibility and the fact that there weren’t a ton of stories that kind of resonated with me. The stories that were being told we oftentimes sad stories that portrayed Latinx people as humorless, or as only sad or only pitiful for— you know only victims. And when I think about, you know, being Latino, I think it’s a beautiful experience.”



When I asked why he chose poetry, he mentioned that he loves writing poetry for two reasons. One, because “it’s related to one of [his] favorite things from growing up, which is Chisme” and two, because for him “poetry is also related to [his] love of hip hop”. He also mentioned that “poems can be small, but they can be powerful”. Through his poems José tries to write about masculinity in a way that “subverts kind of standard stories about masculinity and how it functions”. He also writes about immigration, he “writes stories and poems that challenge the kind of standard story about immigration”. The standard story typically creates “a start and a finish to immigration”, “it is often told during moments of disaster” and it often focuses on the migrating aspect— people dying on the way to the United States. However, José also wants to write about the aftermath of migration, “good and bad”. These are some of the things he tries to say through his poems, but he also acknowledges that poems are unique and can be interpreted differently.

José: “The other thing is, poems are a collaborative experience, right? So there’s what I mean to say when I write the poem, but if a person interprets it a particular way, then I think that’s also correct, right? Like a poem really is two people reading and listening together. I think that’s when the poem is creative. Otherwise, you know, it might be a journal entry, you know, if it’s not shared that way.”

It is clear through José’s writing that he writes about his culture and background— he makes sure to tell his story. For instance, he mentioned that in one of his poems, he wrote about “vaporu” (VapoRub) because that “was one of the earliest medicines [he] can remember. And yet [he] never saw books talk about ‘vaporu’”. So given the chance, he took it and wrote about it. He does want us to realize though, that “artists are not mythical people and [they] don’t have necessarily any more answers than anyone else”. He acknowledges that there are poets who can help us imagine a different future for ourselves, but that their role in society “is the role of every person, which is that all of us have a piece of the struggles to take on. It’s to continue to fight our battles collectively to the best of our ability”.

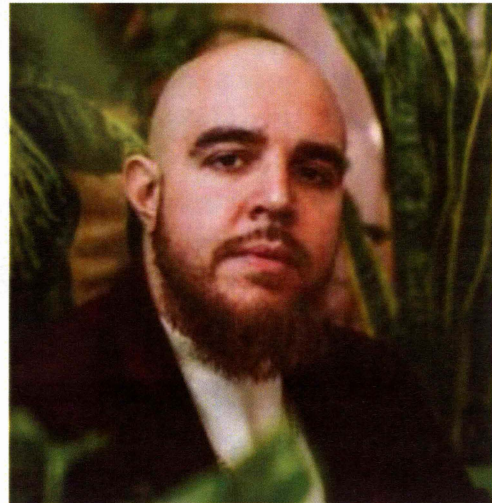
Taking part in our society looks different for everybody, whether it’s by showing up to protests or organizing in our communities
(Continued on page 25)

José: “I’m not just a poet, I’m a person. And so I try to think about how I can continue to show up in the fights, you know, to abolish the police and to abolish ice, to bring awareness. You know what I mean? Like, I don’t just have to use my art to fight these battles. I can also vote and call my representatives and be a part of mutual aid networks and get involved in a bunch of other ways.”

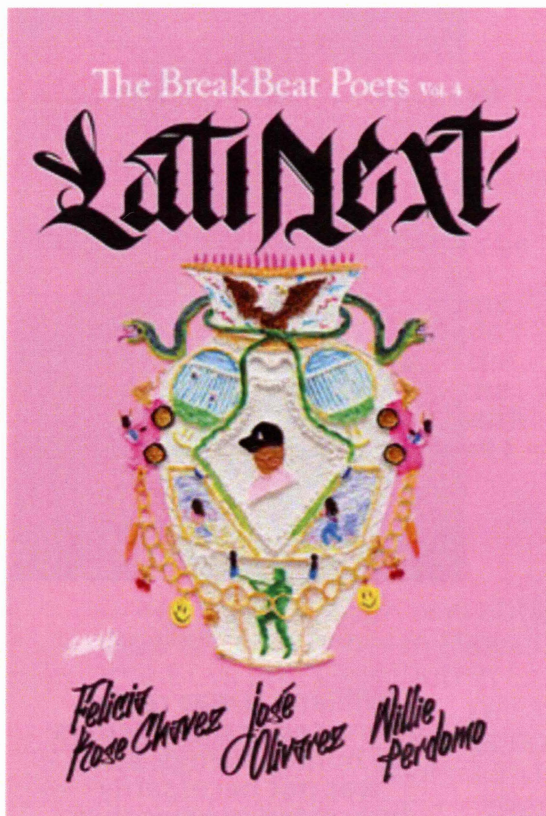
In addition to being a writer, José is a performer and a teaching artist, as mentioned previously. As a performer, he enjoys the fact that poetry can be shared in an auditorium full of people or it can be shared with one other person. For him, the spoken word is “what happens when you read a poem out loud”. As a teaching artist, he gets asked to teach different things, like a writing workshop or to teach about literature, both of which he enjoys.

What he enjoys the most about teaching is that “[he] gets to kind of pay it forward to newer writers” and it reminds him of why he started writing in the first place. Thus, he believes that young people are drawn to the arts because it gives them the opportunity to tell whatever stories they want to tell, whether it’s their own stories or made up stories, silly or serious. He also believes that the arts are “the only space in a young person’s academic life where they’re not graded so harshly and the stakes aren’t high”. He mentioned that oftentimes adults treat young people not as people, we spend a lot of time telling them “what they should do, who they should be, what they should love”— we just tell them things. Sometimes we’re over-protective, “we don’t want our teenagers to experience pain or make mistakes or mess up”. Nonetheless, with art they “can play a little bit” and for José, “play is important to our development as people”.

This, however, does not take away from the hard work of educators. In fact, José wants educators to know that “they’re not alone and that [he] is not the only artist willing to support educators”. He values the work that educators do and he acknowledges that in moments like these, they are caretakers and we “don’t talk enough about who takes care of the caretakers”, so he would like to remind them “to ask for help when they need it and to think about who’s taking care of them”. To students he would like to tell them what he normally tells himself when he “fail[s] at writing something new and that is to be gentle with yourself”. (Continued on page 26)



José: “We’re in the middle of a pandemic and you know, sometimes people make it seem like if you’re not using this time to write your masterpiece, then you’re doing it wrong. But you know, the most important thing that we can do is just take care of ourselves and our family and try to stay healthy. Because we don’t know how long this is going to last. But we know we’re in it. And so you just have to try and, you know, you can’t expect yourself to function the same way that you would on a day like this two years ago, three years ago or whatever.”

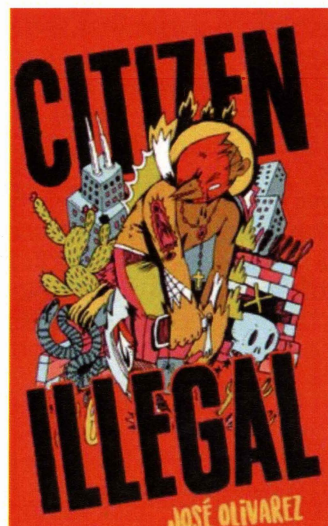


Something I learned from my conversation with José is that this pandemic won't stop the work that he is doing. Currently, he is working on two projects. One project is a short story about immigration in reverse, where the character is "going to find out that identity and belonging are a lot more complicated than maybe he imagined". The second project is a book of poems that he is writing in collaboration with a photographer from Phoenix— Tony Salazar (his IG is @santossincara). However, aside from these two projects, José plans to continue writing other things and hopes to one day write for TV. He is "taking it one project at a time". It was a pleasure getting to know José more and getting the opportunity to chat over the phone. He was very honest about his work and clear about why he writes, which makes his writing even more powerful than he knows. It is without a doubt that José's passion for writing will continue to show in all his work and will continue influencing many newer and current writers. Please make sure to check out his two books. One is his debut book of poems called, *Citizen Illegal*. The other book is an anthology that he helped work on and it's called *The Breakbeat Poets Vol. 4: LatiNext*. Both are available on Haymarket Books.

Enjoyed this interview? Learn more about José at <https://joseolivarez.com>

Special thank you to José Guadalupe Olivarez for allowing this student publication to interview him and for continuing to advocate for many people through his work.

Due to COVID-19, José, like many others, has been impacted by it. Before the pandemic José primarily made his living by being a touring artist, but now, he is unable to do that. It has been a big change for him to adjust to this new reality. Another way it has impacted him has been creatively-thinking to himself, "oh, I won't be traveling as much. I have so much more time to read and write", yet he mentions that "so much of that time gets eaten up by anxiety and fear that it's been really hard to concentrate on reading and writing". He also talked about underestimating "how much time it takes to be in the house all day", from cooking and washing dishes, to doing laundry and many other things, where before, he would go to coffee shops and not worry about washing the dishes. Although he feels like he , been very productive, he does appreciate that he is "able to stay healthy through it all".



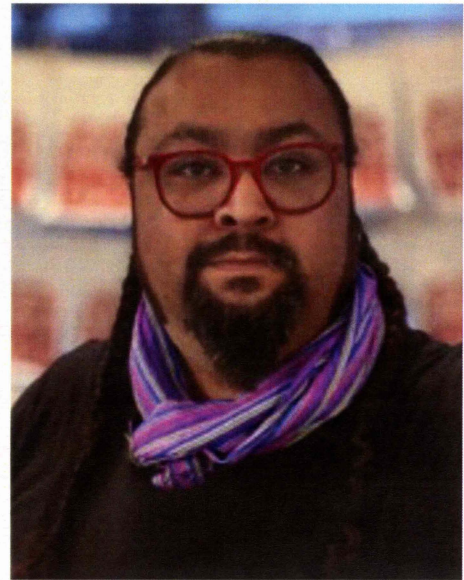
Interview with William Estrada

By Maria Vazquez

William Estrada is an educator and an artist, who was born in the city of Escondido, Southern California. Before living in Chicago, he and his family moved to Guadalajara, Mexico and then to small town called Francisco De Rivas, as well as, San Jose De Las Moras. His parents, sisters and him, moved to the South-West of Chicago in the late eighties.

Now, William, continues to advocate for his community through education and art. In high school, William was not interested in school and he was not one of the best students. In fact, he stated, "I had not had a great relationship with high school and high school had not had a great relationship with me." Art, however, was something he was really good at. He enjoyed art because it gave him a sense of permission.

William's interest in art was something he saw as a hobby, and as many beginning artists, he did not know that he could make a career out of it. However, that changed when one of his teachers told him about colleges that focused on art making. William began to see college as an option. In addition to that, his parents gave him a choice, "you either go to college or you work in the factory with us" and although William is "very proud of them and for all the work that they did" he did not want to do the same thing as his parents, so he decided he wanted to go to college. Just like many first generation college students, he had to learn and understand how to navigate the college journey on his own. He stated, "college was something that was instilled in us, but we didn't necessarily know anyone that had gone through college that was close to us. But when push came to shove, you know, like my parents giving me that kind of ultimatum, I was like, I'm going to go to school. I'm going to go to college." With college being his choice, William decided he wanted to pursue a career in art which led him to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for his Bachelors Degree. Although he enjoyed being there, it was still a "culture shock." (Continued on page28)



William: "I was really interested in my teachers as human beings, but I was not necessarily interested in what they were teaching me and how they were teaching, you know. But art, art gave me this opportunity to make and to like break rules and not get in trouble for it. It gave me the opportunity to explore my culture and not be ashamed of it."



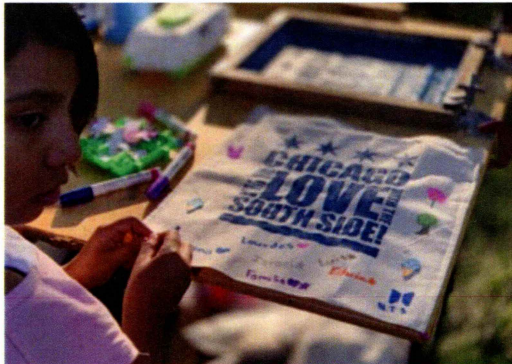
William: “I went from an all predominantly, you know, Mexican block and high school to a predominantly white institution. It was extremely, extremely hard. You know, to be in a space where I thought I didn’t belong and because my high school experience, I hadn’t taken advantage of it. Like the reading, the writing, all of the academic pieces that come with college, I felt inadequate and I struggled a lot.”



Yet, when William was about 19 years old, his friend Star Padilla, now an art teacher in Hawaii, invited William to “teach with her at the Boys and Girls Club in Little Village” and with that experience, he “fell in love with it”. William stated, “I had no idea what I was doing, you know, and I was not that great, but I completely loved it. Working with students. I love talking to them. I love the curiosity and my own curiosity”. He then decided to go into the art education program at his school. Through art education, William began to experience a “sense of belonging that [he] had not experienced before.” William recalled that in elementary school, he would get in trouble, like detentions and extra work, for speaking Spanish. These experiences led him to reject his culture for many years and attempt to assimilate into the American culture.

However, going into art education, it gave him the opportunity to reclaim his Spanish, relearn about his Mexican culture, and “question power structures. [He] could question teaching. [He] could question the role of art in society, the role of culture, like whose stories are told, whose stories aren’t told.” Now, William is a Visual Arts teacher at Telpochcalli Elementary. There he teaches “in Spanish, do[es] art programming around culture, around social justice” and is also faculty at the School of Art and Art History at the University of Illinois in Chicago where he does teacher training for any undergraduate students interested in becoming high school art teachers. Through teaching, William, gets his students to start thinking beyond what is expected of them and start exploring their curiosities, this includes the “little pequeñitos” and those “a lot older than [him].” (Continued on page29)

William: How do you want to be represented and what stories do you want to be? Do you want to tell about yourself? You know, how do we use art to explore how to heal our trauma? How do we use art as a way to organize and get to know each other? Get to know ourselves. How do we tell our own stories and the stories of our neighborhood to people that look like us, but then also that might not necessarily understand our own experience, you know? And what does it mean for us to explore between the binaries that we've been told exist between good and bad and really look at the whole of the complexities, you know, so, as a teacher that's what I teach.



William has been teaching for about 21-22 years and what he enjoys the most about teaching is talking, learning, sharing and collaborating “with so many amazing people of all ages.” One advice he has for other educators is, “listen to your students, listen to the students, know the communities that you’re teaching. Then the other one is don’t be afraid of sharing your own story and being vulnerable.” In addition to being an educator, as mentioned before, he is also an artist. William has various projects, such as, the Mobile Street Art Cart which is “styled like a paleta cart”. Through this, he provides free art projects for different community members in different neighborhoods. Through this project people do not only have the opportunity to do art, but to also have conversations and address issues that each community faces, as well as, talk about the impact of art in the community— “it’s meant to kind of interrupt our daily lives.” He decided to have it styled like a paleta cart because paleteros, tamaleras, eloteros, etc. “bring people together from different ethnicities, from different parts of the city. I see them like our cultural ambassadors. They represent our costumbres, our culture. I want it to do that tambien. I want it to bring people together. I wanted to emulate that through the carrito.” William also has the Mobile Photo Studio which he uses to photograph families. Through a conversation with his mother, he acknowledge the expense of having a professional family portrait, so he wanted to provide that opportunity to his community. He started in 2014 in Little Village and North Lawndale after applying for funding to the Austin Foundation, this resulted in 40 portraits that summer. Then last year, he applied for more funding for more family portraits, which resulted in him photographing between 600-800 families. Through this project, he is not only taking pictures of families, but he is also giving them the opportunity to share “their stories. To claim their space and time, and to say like ‘Hey, aqui estamos’ or we’re here and we’re part of this story and you can’t tell the story without telling it about us tambien.” (Continued on page 30)

William: “Thinking about what can we do together, not only to survive pero tambien when we go back to ‘normal’, so things aren’t normal otra vez. We can’t go back to what existed. We have to think about what can we change? What do we have the power to change in order to make sure that we don’t go back to what existed before. And re-imagine what world we want for ourselves and what world we want for others. Power doesn’t come from taking the power from others.”



Due to COVID-19, William has not been able to continue these projects because all of his “work happens outside, so it had to stop.” Right now he continues working with the Chicago Arts Collective to plan for the summer. However, when William found out that Pritzker was announcing that schools were going to be closed for the rest of the school year, he reflected that the work that he does, he loves, but that it is the interactions with people that make it better. “It’s the people I get to work with that I get to learn from, that I get to talk to and share my story.” Although this has been a challenging time for him, he expressed to his students to “be patient, be patient with yourself, be patient with others.” He also emphasized the importance of self-care, whether that is binge-watching a show on Netflix or Hulu. He suggested figuring out what self-care looks like for you. He also suggested reaching out to people during this difficult time— “just letting them know, like, I’m thinking about you, like, you’re important to me and I’m reaching out to tell you.” William referenced this as our collective power.



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