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Ghosts101: A study of spirits on campus

Natalie Lapsley

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

From paint brushes moving on their own in the studio to haunting apparitions in the theater at night, UTRGV has had its fair share of ghost stories, a student and professor say.

The historic area where the Brownsville campus and Texas Southmost College sit was once home to Fort Brown, an 1846 construction that housed troops during the Mexican-American War.

Art graduate student Kimberly Sandoval has been at the university since 2014 and said she has "a little bit of a list of paranormal experiences" at Rusteberg Hall, a building UTRGV leases from Texas Southmost College.

"Whether or not there are ghosts is up for debate, but I can't deny that there are things that happen that can't necessarily be explained by professionals on the regular," Sandoval told *The Rider* last Tuesday.

The graduate student said there are stories of two ghosts, a girl that haunts the photography, painting and drawing studios, and a boy that haunts the sculpture and ceramics studios.

"They'll stay in those areas," Sandoval said. "There has been a sighting of that little boy in the [ceramics] studio. ... Some years ago he was standing in a corner of where, typically, like, assistants tend to work for ceramics. So he was just standing there in the early hours of the morning."

As for the 2D studios, Sandoval said she and others have often heard "creaks and groans" and "little footsteps."

"I've witnessed things being moved, like, easels being moved by themselves," Sandoval said. "The canvas is being adjusted or, like, if somebody has a sketch taped up, it'll be taken down. ... It's fresh tape. Like, it's ripped off the walls."

She has also witnessed brushes being "smacked off" off easels.

"Some theories that students throw around is, like, because we do happen to be in possession of a female cadaver or skeleton, like, and it's real," Sandoval said, adding that the cadaver was donated to the art department as a reference for sketching before she came to the university in 2014. "... They think maybe that's just how she presents herself because she's in the studios."

Other theories reference the location's historic connection

to the Mexican-American War.

Theatre professor Brian Warren said he had an "incident" in the Albert L. Jeffers Theatre in Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus.

"It may be my own late-night feeling, but I saw something, you know?" Warren said. "If you wanna know, it was ... a person. I was all alone. It was, like, 2 a.m. I was, you know, cleaning up the stage or whatever and I looked in the stands or the seats, and I saw a person in full theatrical makeup and some kind of costume. ... I looked away quickly and then I looked back. It was gone."

Warren said his first thought when he saw the figure was, "that can't be."

"There was something," he said. "This phantasm. This image that quickly went away, but I can't say I didn't see something."

Warren said some of the janitorial staff do not go into the theater after a certain time and

that faculty and staff have told him they have seen and heard things at night.

The professor said ghost stories can be a source of inspiration and creativity, such as during the department's most recent production of "The Hauntings of Hill House." Other productions Warren has directed in the spirit of Halloween include "The Evil Dead: The Musical," "Diner of the Dead," "Night of the Living Dead" and "Frankenstein."

"I personally enjoy giving the audience something to do for Halloween," he said.

A self-proclaimed skeptic, Warren said the theater is a site of intense emotion.

"Theatre is a very passionate art form," Warren said. "Therefore, we've had crying and anger and laughter, everything, in there. So, I'm no expert. I can't say what attracts the spirit world, perhaps. They like places where a lot of human activity has occurred. I can only speculate."



Christina Vasquez/THE RIDER ILLUSTRATION

COSTUME CONTEST WINNER



PHOTO COURTESY SOFIA L. MARTINEZ GUILLÉN

The winner of the pet costume contest is Coco Whiskey Martinez as a friendly cowboy. Coco belongs to environmental science junior Sofia L. Martinez Guillen.

THE RIDER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today Why Physical Activity?

The **Exercise Science Club** will host a tabling event to promote physical activity from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the University Library on the Edinburg campus.

Sex Education

Access for Sex-Education will host **educational sessions** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. today and Wednesday in the Student Union on the Edinburg campus. **Goodies will be provided.**

Brownsville Bible Study

Christians at RGV will host a **Bible study** from 12:20 to 1:30 p.m. in Life and Health Sciences Building Room 1.312 on the Brownsville campus.

K.I.S.S. Fundraiser

The **Korean International Student Society** will sell **ramen, Asian snacks, stickers and shoe charms** today and Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:15 p.m. in the University Library on the Edinburg campus.

Boxing Workout

University Recreation will host a **group training workout** that sculpts the body and burns calories while practicing boxing from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. today and Wednesday in University Recreation Center Studio 2 on the Edinburg campus.

Tuesday Free Coffee

The **Center for Student Involvement** will serve **free coffee** from 9 to 10 a.m. in the Student Union on the Brownsville campus. Students must bring their ID.

Popcorn Sale

The **Student Accessibility**

Council will sell **Deanan popcorn** from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the University Library on the Edinburg campus.

Holy Mass

The **Catholic Student Association** will **celebrate Mass** from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in the University Chapel on the Edinburg campus.

German Club

RGV German Club members will **meet** from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. in Main Building Room 2.502 on the Brownsville campus.

Spanish Bible Study

The **Baptist Student Ministry** will host **Spanish Bible study** from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Student Academic Center Room 1.205 on the Edinburg campus.

Wednesday Free Lunch

The **Catholic Student Association** will provide **free lunch** to UTRGV students, faculty and staff from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in the Newman Student Catholic Center on the Edinburg campus. The event will take place every Wednesday until the end of the semester.

Environmental Awareness

The **Environmental Awareness Club** will meet from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in Student Union Room 2.418 on the Edinburg campus to discuss **fundraisers, field trips and symposiums.**

Pre-Dental Society Meeting

The **Pre-Dental Society** will host a **meeting** to inform

about volunteer opportunities, dental school panels and to discuss dental problems from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in Health Affairs Building West Room 2.212 on the Edinburg campus. **Food will be provided.**

Anthropology Club Meeting

All majors are welcome to attend the **Anthropology Club** meeting from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Liberal Arts Building North Room 106 on the Edinburg campus. Students will learn about linguistics, medicine, biology, evolution and archaeology.

Thursday Free Lunch

The **Baptist Student Ministry Brownsville** will serve a **free lunch** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Main Building Room 1.003 (Patio Plumeria) on the Brownsville campus.

UREC Barbell

University Recreation will host **barbell classes** that incorporate functional strength training from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. in the University Recreation Center on the Edinburg campus.

Accounting Association

The **Brownsville Accounting Association** will conduct a general meeting from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. in Main Building Room 1.502 on the Brownsville campus. **Snacks will be provided.**

German Classes

The **RGV German Club** will offer **German lessons** from 5 to 6:15 p.m. in Main Building Room 1.502 on the Brownsville campus.



POLICE REPORTS

The following are among the incidents reported to University Police between Oct. 17 and 23.

Oct. 17

8:59 a.m.: A student reported a concern when a male student she had a prior incident with showed up to a workshop at the Music, Science & Learning Center on the Brownsville campus. After further investigation, it was determined no crime occurred.

11:32 a.m.: A student reported that an unknown man used vulgar language toward her after she refused to lend him her cell phone in the Visual Arts Building on the Edinburg campus. The area was checked, but the subject was not located. The case is under investigation.

12:47 p.m.: A student reported being struck and injured by a vehicle while crossing the horseshoe exit near the Main Building on the Brownsville campus. The driver did not provide the student with any information and the student declined emergency medical services. The case is under investigation.

2:40 p.m.: A student reported a suspicious man at Performing Arts Complex A on the Edinburg campus. An officer approached the man when he observed the individual drop a small container on the ground. After further investigation, the officer determined the subject was in possession of marijuana. University Police issued the man a citation for a class C misdemeanor and served him with a criminal trespass warning.

8:50 p.m.: An officer responded to a report via the Campus Shield app regarding a suspicious man near the Education Complex on the Edinburg campus. The officer checked the area but did not locate a man matching the description.

11:21 p.m.: University Police were alerted of a vehicle pursuit heading south on Expressway 77 toward the Brownsville campus. Police communications then reported the pursuit ended at International Boulevard and Ringgold Street. The two subjects involved were apprehended by officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Oct. 18

8:18 a.m.: A facilities employee reported that a cordless blower had been stolen from a janitorial

closet inside the Academic Support Facilities building on the Brownsville campus. The case is under investigation.

3:23 p.m.: An officer responded to a minor two-vehicle collision involving two university shuttle buses at the bus stop near the Main Building on the Brownsville campus. No injuries were reported from either driver or the student passengers.

3:54 p.m.: A faculty member reported that a student questioned an assignment in an aggressive manner after receiving a failing grade while in Sabal Hall on the Brownsville campus.

After further investigation, it was determined no crime occurred.

Oct. 19

10:44 a.m.: A student on the Edinburg campus reported that she was sexually assaulted at an off-campus location by a non-affiliated man. The student said she filed a criminal report with the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office which is investigating the incident.

11:08 a.m.: An officer on the Edinburg campus responded to an auto-cyclist collision on the 1000 block of West University Drive. The cyclist, who is a current student, was riding on the bike lane of West University Drive when a student exited the university without exercising due care. The cyclist sustained minor injuries and declined emergency medical services.

4:21 p.m.: An employee on the Brownsville campus reported having work-related issues with her supervisor. No crime occurred. The employee was referred to Human Resources and a report was taken for documentation purposes.

5:02 p.m.: A two-vehicle collision occurred between a non-affiliated individual and an employee at the intersection east of the Academic Support Facility. No injuries were reported from either driver.

6:20 p.m.: An officer responded to a welfare concern from a university housing supervisor regarding a student who had not been staying at Heritage Hall on the Edinburg

campus. The officer contacted the student's mother who advised that the student was fine and at their family residence.

7:01 p.m.: A student reported injuring his leg while exiting an inflatable bouncer at a Halloween event at the Duckhead in Brownsville. Emergency medical services arrived on location and evaluated the student. The student declined transportation to a hospital.

Oct. 20

7:37 a.m.: An officer responded to a fire alarm caused by condensation inside a mechanical room in the Science Complex on the Edinburg campus. The Edinburg Fire Department cleared the building for reentry. The building was placed on fire watch pending repairs.

11:48 a.m.: A faculty member on the Edinburg campus reported being unable to contact a student after he had missed a final exam. An officer contacted the student at his residence and confirmed that the student was fine and had missed class because he overslept.

2:56 p.m.: An officer responded to a faculty member in Health Affairs Building West who reported that while conducting a Zoom presentation, an unknown and unauthorized person entered the Zoom link and posted an alarming video. The case is under investigation.

3:06 p.m.: An officer on the Edinburg campus assisted U.S. Homeland Security in locating a student who was wanted for questioning regarding a criminal matter.

Oct. 21

1:27 a.m.: An officer observed a student at the Casa Bella parking lot on the Brownsville campus who was experiencing itching on her left arm from touching a cat. The officer provided the student with first aid antiseptic wipes after she declined emergency medical services.

9:14 a.m.: An officer observed minor damage to a wall near the sally port at the Police Department at the Academic Support Facility complex.

Friday SGA Senate Meeting

The **Student Government Association** will meet from 2 to 3 p.m. in Music, Science and Learning Center Room 1.111 on the Brownsville campus and via Zoom. The meeting ID is 8053474337. Students will have the opportunity to raise their concerns to the senate.

Sunday

Mass Celebration

The **Catholic Student Association** will **celebrate Mass** from 3 to 4 p.m. in the St. Newman University Chapel, located at 1615 W. Kuhn St. in Edinburg.

Latin Jazz Orchestra

Tito Puente Jr. and his **Latin Jazz Ensemble** will perform in concert at 7 p.m. in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus. Admission is free for students and tickets are available on showpass.com. The concert is part of the **College of Fine Arts Distinguished Artist Series.**

Nov. 6

Distinguished Speaker Series Nirupama Rao, India's former ambassador to the U.S. and other countries, will be the guest at the **Distinguished Speaker Series**, scheduled at 7 p.m. in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus. Doors open at 6 p.m. The event, hosted by the **Office of Student Activities**, is free to the UTRGV community.

--Compiled by Alfredo Garcia

8:52 p.m.: An officer responded to a student who was feeling ill in Heritage Hall on the Edinburg campus. Emergency medical services were contacted and the student was transported to a hospital for further evaluation.

9:21 p.m.: An officer on the Edinburg campus responded to the Dining & Ballroom Complex regarding a damaged window located near the south-side entrance of the complex. It is unknown how the damage occurred. The case is under review.

Oct. 22

10:29 a.m.: An officer met with a supervisor who reported a student had accidentally broken a window while moving a table in the Dining & Ballroom Complex on the Edinburg campus. No injuries were reported.

11:16 a.m.: An officer responded to the maintenance parking lot near the Liberal Arts Building South on the Edinburg campus in reference to a tree branch that fell on a staff member's vehicle while the person was inside. No injuries were reported.

4:10 p.m.: University Police responded to a fire alarm in the Casa Bella apartments on the Brownsville campus. Upon arrival, officers observed smoke in one of the conference rooms. The Brownsville Fire Department arrived and determined that the cause was lint inside the air conditioner and deemed the building safe for reentry.

Oct. 23

1:57 p.m.: An employee reported finding droplets of blood inside the men's restroom in Health Affairs Building East on the Edinburg campus. The area was checked for an injured person, but no one was located. The blood was cleaned up by custodial staff.

7:14 p.m.: A student on the Brownsville campus reported receiving multiple phone calls, text messages and messages through social media while off-campus. The case is under investigation.

8:08 p.m.: A student reported losing his earbud pouch while at the Academic Support Facility on the Edinburg campus.

--Compiled by Rebeca Salinas

Donald Trump's legal quagmire

Eduardo Escamilla
THE RIDER

Five UTRGV political science faculty unpacked Donald Trump's legal entanglements during a recent panel discussion on the Edinburg campus.

"This is unprecedented; we are witnesses to history," political science Lecturer Robert Velez told the 50 attendees gathered Oct. 20 in the Health Affairs Building East on the Edinburg campus and via Zoom in Brownsville.

The panel, which was sponsored by the Political Science Department and Political Science Association, consisted of five professors who discussed the:

--New York business records case

--Florida classified document case

--Washington, D.C., case related to the Jan. 6, 2021, protest in the Capitol

--Fulton County, Georgia, Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations case.

"Part of what makes people particularly interested in this specific indictment is because it deals with a sex worker," said political science Lecturer Maylin M. Hernandez, referring to the case in New York.

Trump was charged in New York State Supreme Court with 34 counts of falsifying business records in the first degree, for alleged "hush money" payments to former lawyer Michael Cohen, according to Hernandez.

"They were claimed by the Trump Organization on their



Jose Medina/THE RIDER

Maylin M. Hernandez, a political science lecturer, breaks down New York State's indictments against former President Donald Trump during an Oct. 20 panel discussion in Health Affairs Building East on the Edinburg campus. Over 50 people attended the discussion.

official business ledger as being part of payments for a legal retainer with Michael Cohen," she said. "[But] there is no known retainer contract that proves there was a retainer in place."

The payments were to keep adult film star Stormy Daniels silent about alleged sexual encounters with Trump, and to conceal damaging information and unlawful activity from American voters before and after the 2016 election, according to Hernandez.

"They're claiming, and I think based on the information we have so far, that it's absolutely probable that Donald Trump

committed falsifying business records," she said, referring to the New York case.

Velez broke down the Florida federal indictment case in which classified documents were confiscated from the Mar-a-Lago Club, which is owned by Trump.

"One of the laws that has been mentioned ... by the former president himself ... is that all of these documents are under the rubric of the Presidential Records Act, which basically means he can do whatever he wants, but that's not the case," the lecturer said.

The indictment states that Trump risked national security

by removing hundreds of classified documents from the White House and storing them in a haphazard manner at Mar-a-Lago, according to Velez.

"The Presidential Records Act, basically, says any records that are generated due to what the president does in his job are public records," he said. "They're not private, so once the president leaves office ... those records are yours ... the American taxpayer."

Alvaro J. Corral, a political science assistant professor, said he read U.S. Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith's 45-page indictment regarding the events of Jan. 6, 2021, in

the U.S. Capitol and would provide the audience with a "CliffsNotes" version.

In the indictment, Trump was charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States, witness tampering, conspiracy against the rights of citizens and an attempt to obstruct an official proceeding, according to Corral.

"As of this week, there's been a gag order by the federal judge, essentially saying [Trump is] not allowed to go on social media ... and disparage members of the DOJ, or the opposing counsel," Corral said.

The trial is set for March 4, 2024, which Corral pointed out is one day before the Texas primary, saying that Texans will be casting their vote in the midst of the trial.

"So what is the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations or RICO statute," said political science Associate Professor Natasha Altema-McNeely.

"Well, it was developed by the federal government, and it was developed in the context of dealing with and trying to pursue charges against organized crime, which many might recognize as the mafia," Altema-McNeely said.

In Georgia, Trump is facing 13 racketeering charges, which include making false statements, forgery and soliciting a public officer to violate their oath, according to Altema-McNeely.

"Back in August of this year, former President Trump and

See PANEL, Page 6

Professors add context to Israel-Hamas War

Ali Halloum
THE RIDER

Editor's Note: The Rider asked UTRGV political science professors to explain the significance of the proposed constitutional amendments. This is the second of two articles.

The decision has been made. All university-sponsored travel to Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has been canceled by UTRGV. But why? The Rider reached out to political science Professor Nicholas Kiersey and history Professor Emeritus Anthony Knopp to provide crucial context to an ongoing situation.

The Rider previously reported that on Oct. 7, Hamas, which is the political party and paramilitary organization that has controlled Gaza since 2006, launched an attack on southern Israel, killing 1,403 people and taking hostage over 200 individuals.

So far, four hostages have been released by the group. Qatar and Egypt continue to act as mediators between Hamas and the countries whose citizens are being held.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was warned ahead of time by multiple intelligence agencies that an attack was going to take place. However, it took over eight hours for the Israeli military to respond to the attack, according to the New York Times.

"This was a major significant failure of Israeli intelligence," Kiersey said. "They did not see this coming. Thousands of Hamas operatives were involved in this very complex operation that involves simultaneous use of airpower, drones [and] infantry. They literally stormed security

buildings in the actual state of Israel."

After the attack, Israel immediately ordered a full blockade of Gaza, and immediately began a campaign of aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip. They are also preparing for a ground assault on Gaza.

Asked about the immediate response within Israel, Knopp replied that the country rallied right away.

"Israel has prepared in the past to deal with the possibility of some kind of attack or invasion, and they rallied behind the Prime Minister [Netanyahu]," he said. "In order to defend the country, the military has been called up and they're doing their best to defend Israel."

The overwhelming consensus in Israel is that for the time being, Netanyahu and his newly formed unity government should be allowed to conduct the war. However, it should face accountability for the intelligence failure the minute it is over.

Netanyahu, who was in the midst of a corruption and bribery scandal before the onset of this crisis, continues to remain unpopular among Israelis, many of whom blame him for the intelligence failure.

According to a poll in the Ma'ariv, an Israeli daily newspaper, 80% of Israelis say Netanyahu should be held accountable, including 69% of voters from Netanyahu's Likud party.

In a separate poll published last Friday, the newspaper asked "if the military should escalate to a large-scale ground offensive." Twenty-nine percent of Israelis agreed, 49% said "it would be better to wait" and 22% were undecided.

The death toll in Gaza continues



THE RIDER FILE GRAPHIC

to rise dramatically. As of last Tuesday, 5,087 Palestinians had been killed, including 2,055 children, and over 15,273 had been injured, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The Rider asked Kiersey about the humanitarian impact on civilians in Gaza.

"You couldn't imagine a greater impact," Kiersey said. "They've lost water, they've lost

electricity. They've had their hospitals attacked and blown up. They had their schools destroyed. They're literally leveling the entire northern half of Gaza right now."

The crisis has become a major point of geopolitical tension, with both the United States and China sending their navies into the Mediterranean Sea, casting doubt on the

possibility of a solution.

Kiersey and Knopp were asked about potential solutions to the conflict.

"I don't, unfortunately, see a solution," Kiersey replied. "I think the United States is making a lot of mistakes here. The United States is making a lot of mistakes. It's refusing to criticize Israel. And people are noticing."

"If there is a solution, it will require the United States making a very difficult decision to revisit its relationship with Israel, because the Israeli government has become more and more right wing over the decades. They now have an extremely right-wing nationalist government, borderline fascist, I would argue, if not outright fascist, for what they've done now."

"I have to be honest with you. I'm not optimistic."

Knopp replied: "If I had a solution, I would be calling the president right now and telling him what to do. I don't know, at this juncture, about the best you can hope for is that somehow there will be a development that will stop the killing."

"Are we going to see tit-for-tat attacks and then the other side essentially has to get back to get even? Both sides, of course, are trying to assert a position of power in that area of the world in order to discourage their enemies. Are we gonna have to see that going on back and forth? That's the concern. Israel's almost certainly going to make an attack on Gaza. Where do we go from there?"

Kiersey said one thing gives him a sliver of hope.

"I think that the world is finally paying attention to this," he said. "It's long overdue. Should have

See TRAVEL, Page 6



What's your favorite Halloween costume and why?



"I think my favorite Halloween costume is either like an FBI agent or a spy because you can just wear all black, and it is something everyone has. So, it's like a five-minute costume idea."

Fernanda Alonso
accounting sophomore



"I think this year I like the Kiss, Marry, Kill, like the tarot costume, because I think it's creative and it's a game we all played as a kid. So, I like that one."

Diana Cardenas
accounting sophomore



"Pues, mi disfraz favorito puede ser uno de pirata por que, pues, me gustan las peliculas de piratas".

Juan Salazar
estudiante de último año de ingeniería civil



"My favorite Halloween costume is a banana suit, because I'm a big fruit advocate and I like bananas."

Juan Ulloa
agriculture freshman

--Compiled and photos by Sofia Cantú Saucedo, Aura Velasquez and Daniela Martinez Salazar.

The art of complaining



Aura Velasquez
PHOTOGRAPHER

One thing about me is that I like to complain. Even my family makes it clear to me.

Of course, not to the point where it inconveniences those around me, like workers in the service industry. I'm just saying what I'm thinking.

I can admit that it's almost second nature for me, but why settle, when there's better.

When I wrote my first column last year, I wasn't sure of what I wanted to write, so, naturally, I ended up complaining.

I complained about having to go back and forth from Brownsville to the main campus in Edinburg, to the Visual Arts Building and how unfair some classes were to Brownsville students. The professors did not consider the students who had to come all the way from Brownsville just to join a Zoom meeting in an in-person class.

When I turned in my column to the copy editors, I thought to myself, "what did I just submit?" and started overthinking it.

I thought I was going to get in trouble or sound too whiny for complaining about something that everyone does on a day-to-day basis. I even thought the people

who cross the bridge from Mexico every day have it worse than I do and they don't complain, so, why should I?

Once the column was out, I was extremely nervous and tried to think that no one was going to read it.

Then, one of my friends sent me a photo of my column pinned up on a wall with highlighted sentences in the very building I complained about. And, they told me that a lot of people agree with my complaints, which made me feel a little better.

Another friend texted me that her professor pulled up my column in front of the class and said they agreed that the campus transportation is unorganized and not fit for class times.

My boyfriend also told me that

which UTRGV leases from Texas Southmost College in Brownsville.

During the commentary section at the end of the meeting, students started rapid-firing their complaints.

It was beautiful. Everyone said what everyone was thinking. Some brought up their personal experiences with the building's state, the rodent infestation in Rusteberg Hall, Edinburg classes and how it has affected them throughout their academic career.

A couple of weeks later, there was a second town hall meeting pertaining to Rusteberg. In the meeting, it was brought up that UTRGV is going to buy a building in downtown Brownsville.

As of now, the proposal of a new building has been sent to UTRGV central administration.

Earlier this semester, the students and faculty from the School of Art and Design had a meeting in the Edinburg Visual Arts Building. Students raised concerns about the limited food choices in the vending machines. Then, faculty and students

were coming up with solutions, suggesting partnering with food trucks and vendors to set up more food options inside the building.

This revolution of students asking why they cannot have a decent place to work, study or even to breathe the clean air has motivated me to speak up more and to be OK with "complaining."

Do not settle for "at least there's a roof" when you can have a decent building.

You deserve more than the bare minimum. If you don't like something, complain.

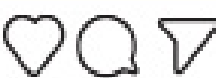
You deserve more than the bare minimum. If you don't like something, complain.

people were talking about my column in a group chat with all the art major students and how they all agree on how tiring the transportation is.

There are even comments of long paragraphs under my column online adding on to the list of complaints, such as how people had to leave their classes early to catch the shuttle back to Brownsville and how some do not even have time to eat because of it.

Last semester, there was a town hall meeting where art students voiced their complaints to university officials about the condition of Rusteberg Hall,

"Work has been ruined due to the leaks that have been ongoing even after the "new roof" was built. It has only gotten worse. There are several trash cans holding gross yellow dirty filthy nasty water scattered on half the room. The trash cans and water cover the tables making it an unworkable environment. Students are forced to work in ceramics with clay and dust on the tables and floors. This is not okay. @tscscorpions @utrgv do better we need solutions for NOW "



Studio art senior Yental Marquez about Rusteberg Hall, via Instagram Oct. 19.



Visit us online at utgrvrider.com to participate →

El arte de la frontera



Nombre: Zelica Avila
Carrera: Finanzas
Clasificación: Estudiante de último año
Fecha de graduación: Primavera 2024



Eduardo Cortez / FOTO RIDER

Ciudad natal: Matamoros, Tamaulipas, México

Actividades extracurriculares: “Empecé a ir al gimnasio hace poco y desde hace varios años practico el piano. Cuando empecé a ir al gimnasio, empecé a aprender a cocinar otras cosas para comer más saludable. Entonces, yo diría que esa es otra actividad”.

¿Cuáles son las diferencias entre tu ciudad natal y los Estados Unidos?

“Las personas son diferentes, porque las culturas son diferentes, aunque estamos en la frontera. Es diferente la cultura en cuanto a la educación. Es diferente el método de aprendizaje de educación y también cómo son las personas. Cuando vine para acá sí me acoplé muy bien, aunque a lo mejor hablan español de este lado [de la frontera], hay gente que solo habla inglés. Entonces, también tengo que adaptarme. Si alguien no sabe español, tengo que hablarles en inglés y todo eso. Pero yo diría que esa es la diferencia que yo he notado”.

Si solo pudieras comer un alimento por el resto de tu vida, ¿cuál sería y por qué?

“Tamales. Nunca me canso de los tamales. Me gustan mucho los de pollo y las rajitas con queso. Entonces, yo creo que a lo mejor podría comer eso siempre”.

¿Qué hay en tu lista de deseos?

“Viajar. Recientemente viajé a Jamaica. Nunca había viajado a otro país que no fuera México o Estados Unidos. Entonces, me gustó mucho la experiencia, simplemente estar en otra cultura, conocer a otras personas de otra parte y cómo hablan, cómo se relacionan, todo eso. Quisiera viajar a otros países y conocer otras culturas. Eso es lo que quisiera hacer en los siguientes años con mi familia. Por ejemplo, quisiera ir a Europa, quisiera ir a Edimburgo, que está en Scotland. Quisiera ir a *Switzerland*, a esos lugares, por los paisajes y todo eso. Quisiera ir a Corea del Sur, porque una amiga y yo hemos estado planeando a ver cuándo vamos, entonces quisiera ir allá también”.

¿Quién es tu ejemplo a seguir?

“Yo diría que mi papá, porque él vino de una familia de pocos recursos. A lo mejor no las mismas oportunidades que yo tengo ahorita. Entonces, él es mi ejemplo a seguir por eso. Siempre me está motivando a ser mejor. A siempre dar la mejor versión de mí. Nunca rendirme, no poner excusas, que todo está en mi mente, que yo puedo si me lo propongo”.

¿Qué consejo le darías a otros estudiantes internacionales?

“Que traten de salir de su zona de confort. Eso es lo que he estado tratando de hacer. Salir de su zona de confort, involucrarse en más cosas, ya sea en la universidad o en la comunidad aquí. Entrar a clubs, todo eso y tratar de conocer más personas e involucrarse de cualquier manera”.

--Recopilado por Fatima Gamez Lopez



Angel Ballesteros/FOTO RIDER

La estudiante de UTRGV Natalie Barreiro (desde la izquierda), la asistente Ciria Tavizón, la asistente Kimberly Grimaldo, el estudiante de segundo año de ciencias políticas Eric Garcia, el asistente Manuel Gámez, la estudiante graduada de arte de estudio Michel Flores Tavizón y el coordinador de comunicaciones de LUPE, Ramiro Gonzalez, crean un folleto sobre cuestiones fronterizas y lo que se puede hacer para resolverlos durante un taller de LUPE el 21 de octubre en la sede de la organización en San Juan.

Fatima Gamez Lopez EDITORA DE ESPAÑOL

Una estudiante de posgrado de UTRGV ha creado Resistencia Fronteriza, una serie de eventos enfocados en el activismo fronterizo a través del arte con la ayuda de la Beca de Investigación Presidencial de la universidad.

Michel Flores Tavizón, estudiante de posgrado en estudio de arte y la ex editora gráfica de la revista Pulse en UTRGV, es la creadora del proyecto.

“Resistencia Fronteriza es un proyecto que comencé como parte de la Beca de Investigación Presidencial [en UTRGV]”, Flores Tavizón dijo. “Estoy haciendo una serie de eventos y talleres. Así que, este semestre estoy haciendo esto que está abierto al público”.

De acuerdo al Programa de Apoyo a Estudiantes de Posgrado, se espera que los estudiantes que reciben los premios mantengan un alto nivel de desempeño en sus cursos y en el proyecto de investigación realizado bajo la dirección del profesorado. Los programas requieren que el premiado defienda una tesis en el caso de una maestría, o una disertación en el caso de un doctorado.

Los destinatarios reciben un año de apoyo de un ayudante de docencia y un año de apoyo de un ayudante de investigación, con un estipendio de hasta \$15,000 por año, de acuerdo a su sitio web.

Para calificar, los estudiantes primero deben ser aceptados en uno de los programas de posgrado de la Facultad de Ciencias y haber demostrado logros sobresalientes en su solicitud. Esto se puede documentar a través de experiencia previa en investigación que conduzca a resultados académicos, como publicaciones, premios, presentaciones o un desempeño académico previo.

Para más información, visite el sitio web de la Facultad de Ciencias en UTRGV.

La Unión del Pueblo Entero y Resistencia Fronteriza organizaron una sesión informativa sobre la situación actual de la frontera y colonias, seguido de un taller de zines el 21 de octubre en LUPE Headquarters en San Juan.

Flores Tavizón dijo que Ramiro Gonzalez, coordinador de comunicaciones de LUPE, la ayudó a organizar el evento.

“Así que estaba como, ‘Oye, quiero organizar este evento. No quiero hacer solo talleres. Me gustaría hacer algo como una sesión informativa”, dijo. “Siento que están pasando muchas cosas en la frontera. Y siento que mucha gente no se da cuenta”.

Flores Tavizón dijo que al ser de Matamoros, Tamaulipas, México, la frontera está presente en su vida al cruzar constantemente pero no para muchas personas.

“E incluso si soy de Matamoros [...] sabía que había un problema, pero no sabía la magnitud de la situación”, dijo. “Así que, esto está fusionando mis dos pasiones, que es el arte y el activismo fronterizo”.

Sergio Treviño, gerente de comunicaciones en LUPE, comenzó la sesión informativa, diciendo que el arte es una manera de compartir la historia de una persona.

“A veces puede decir cosas que simplemente no podemos expresar con

“Hace tres años, los comisionados dijeron, ‘No, solo podemos alumbrar dos colonias. No tenemos suficiente dinero’”, dijo. “Y este año, están alumbrando más de 10 colonias. Y una de las colonias que alumbraron este año [...] es el Flaco Chiquito que está en Alton”.

Treviño dijo que Flaco Chiquito es una de las colonias más grandes que existen en el Condado de Hidalgo. Los residentes pelearon por más de 20 años para poder alumbrar esa colonia.

Dijo que LUPE siguió trabajando con residentes de colonias como Iowa Gardens, Flaco Chiquito y Eduardo 2, para mejorar su calidad de vida.

“No podían seguir viviendo en esas condiciones y se unieron aquí en LUPE y se unieron con otros miembros de otras organizaciones”, Treviño dijo. “Todo este trabajo fue porque ellos decidieron que no se [iban a dar] por vencidos”.

Al final de la sesión informativa con LUPE, cada asistente creó un pequeño libro exhibiendo un tema relacionado con alguna cuestión fronteriza.

“Esta actividad permite que todos contribuyan con su perspectiva, como qué les afecta inmediatamente y cómo pueden comunicar sus inquietudes”, Cabrera dijo. “Es una oportunidad para que aíslen sus preocupaciones y digan, ‘Esto es lo que creo que es importante’ o pueden ir un paso más allá y decir, ‘¿Cuál es la preocupación más importante a la que puedo contribuir?’”

Resistencia Fronteriza organizará un evento abierto a la comunidad de poesía y un taller de serigrafía de 10 a.m. a 3 p.m. el sábado en Cactus Valley Art & Supply Co. en Harlingen.

Durante una entrevista con The Rider, Flores Tavizón dijo que la disponibilidad del evento ya está agotada. El límite era de 10 personas.

“El taller de serigrafía y poesía ya está lleno”, dijo. “Estoy planeando hacer otro taller el próximo semestre, y luego una exposición que muestre los resultados de esos talleres”.

Unfolded Poetry Project, un proyecto de poesía sin fines de lucro centrado en la voz individual, estará facilitando la poesía durante el evento y Cecilia Sierra, exalumna de arte de UTRGV, guiará el taller de serigrafía.

Los participantes aprenderán los conceptos básicos de la serigrafía y crearán sus propias impresiones inspiradas en la poesía.

“Es un recordatorio de que todos tenemos algo que decir cuando se trata del mundo en el que vivimos. A menudo, tenemos que ser los héroes de nuestra propia historia”.

-- Sergio Treviño, gerente de comunicaciones en La Unión del Pueblo Entero

palabras”, Treviño dijo. “Es un recordatorio de que todos tenemos algo que decir cuando se trata del mundo en el que vivimos. A menudo, tenemos que ser los héroes de nuestra propia historia”.

Los asistentes tuvieron la oportunidad de participar en diferentes discusiones durante la sesión informativa.

Treviño les preguntó a los asistentes que es una colonia.

Lilia Cabrera, profesora de educación artística en UTRGV, dijo que las colonias son más allá de un área de ingresos bajos.

Treviño dijo que él creció en una colonia y vio los problemas que las personas tenían.

“Una de las cosas que recuerdo más que nada es no tener acceso a calles pavimentadas y tener que a veces ir hasta el fin de la colonia porque el bus no podía entrar”, dijo. “Había pozos y estaba bien feo”.

Treviño dijo que desde el 2016, LUPE comenzó a trabajar con el Condado de Hidalgo para alumbrar las calles de las colonias que tienen más de 30 años de existir.

¿Tienes una historia que contar?
Cuéntanos que te gustaría ver en **THE RIDER**
882-5143 or 665-2541

Vaqueros get in form

Spirit Program's drill team debut set Dec. 2

Yamilet Galvez
THE RIDER

Although UTRGV will launch a drill team through the Spirit Program in 2025, the group will make its debut performance Dec. 2 at the McAllen Holiday Parade.

The team will promote Vaquero spirit at football games, parades and community events.

"These dance teams perform precision routines during halftime that have gained popularity due to their high-kick lines, showcasing intricate formation changes and visual effects on the football field," according to UTRGV's Spirit Program webpage.

The official name of the drill team has not been announced.

Sel Gomez, head coach of the Spirit Program, described the team's primary purpose and mission.

"The drill team is to help encourage school spirit and to promote ... and be an ambassador for the university, to help encourage the crowd to get excited at athletic events, community events and campus events, and give overall support to other departments like athletics and organizations for UTRGV ... and to promote halftime entertainment at football games," Gomez said.

Rudy Mata, program coordinator and cheer coach, said "the seed had already been planted for the expansion."

"They played with some ideas and landed on a drill team," Mata said. "Based on the [November 2021 Athletics Fee] referendum that was approved, voted on by the students, it was to also promote student involvement on both campuses, primarily to expand the Spirit Program into the Brownsville area."

Dean of Students Rebecca Gadson said the university looked at different opportunities to expand the program.

"And, our development occurred last academic year to narrow down opportunities for expansion and to propose different options for consideration," Gadson said. "About last spring, about January or February, we started moving forward and making a plan for how we would roll out the program, recruitment, advertising, tryouts to build up towards the full team in 2025."

To join the drill team, students must be in good academic standing, have a minimum term and institutional GPA of 2.25, and be enrolled in a minimum of 12 semester credit hours (undergraduate) or at least nine semester credit hours (graduate students), according to the



PHOTO COURTESY UTRGV SPIRIT PROGRAM

Spirit Program webpage.

"You do have to have dance experience and or previous drill team experience because it is a specific style and technique," Gomez said.

Men and women can join the drill team.

The head coach said there is no specific number of members on the drill team yet.

"We're hoping to start with about 15 to 20 and grow gradually as each tryout comes along," Gomez said. "There isn't really a set number. We're not defining it by a number; we're just hoping to get as much talent to the university as we can."

She described the role of line leaders in the drill team.

"There will be a line of leaders within that leadership role you will normally see in a drill team," Gomez said. "Each leader will have a line or a section that they are assigned, so, to communicate more effectively and just to be more responsible for a smaller group within a larger group. There will be line members, officers or captains."

The head coach also described what audiences can expect in terms of the performance format and style.

"For the halftime shows, we are going to try to keep the drill team style traditional, but maybe with a modern twist here and there," she said. "And, hopefully, we can incorporate some cultural elements of the [Rio Grande] Valley, but we do want to maintain the traditional boots and hats for that kind of style of performance. We also hope to incorporate kick lines and precision type of movement."

Gomez said during tryouts students will learn a routine that includes intermediate and advanced techniques, such as calypsos, surprise leaps, turning disks and a kickline sequence.

"They will have to learn a number of choreographies," she said. "It will consist of straight kicks, fan kicks and just specialized types of kicks that you will do in a line that we would do on the field. There's a technique

section, which will also incorporate the types of skills that they will do in the actual routine, and the standline routines that they will do."

Gadson said she is excited about the opportunity and learning the history of the different types of drill team programs across Texas.

"And, now I've been paying more attention to our local community and the talent that we have," she said. "I'm actually really excited about this addition to our university experience for students."

Current and future Vaqueros interested in joining the drill team may attend a workshop from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in the Student Union PlainsCapital Bank El Gran Salón on the Brownsville campus.

PANEL

Continued from Page 3

18 other individuals were charged. ... Every single one of them is counted with a charge of RICO," she said. "Because ... the foundation of RICO is establishing the idea that these groups of people are a part of a criminal enterprise and then broadly speaking, and a little bit indirectly, that they are all involved with a conspiracy."

Political science Professor Nicholas Kiersey presented a counterpoint and proposed that this is a case of "Trump derangement system," a concept which he explained meant that the former president sat outside of the political norm, and thus had to be rejected by the political system.

Allegations on his behavior grew into obsessions because he did not behave as a president should, according to Kiersey.

"Other U.S. presidents have done infinitely worse things and do not trigger this visceral response, where ... media institutions and political institutions just felt compelled to reject this guy from office," he said.

Kiersey said he is not defending Trump.

"I'm just here to argue the point that obsessing with Trump's legal violations, you have to keep them in perspective," he said.

A factor that everyone should keep in perspective, Kiersey



Jose Medina/THE RIDER

Álvaro Corral, a political science assistant professor, presents during the panel discussion Oct. 20 in Health Affairs Building East on the Edinburg campus.

said, is who really benefits from this theatrical representation of Trump.

"What I want to suggest ... is that this is kind of a spectacle to make you afraid and to keep you obedient," he said. "It's not that Trump did not do anything wrong. ... What I want to suggest to you is that he did, more or less, the same amount of bad stuff that any other U.S.

president has ever done."

The Rider asked the panel if Trump wins the presidency, can he pardon himself.

"He can only pardon [himself] for federal crimes, so those state charges, like the ones in New York or in Georgia, if he's convicted on those counts, he wouldn't be able to pardon himself," Velez replied. "Only a state governor could pardon

someone convicted of state convictions."

Altema-McNeely added, "In Georgia, the governor can't do it, either. It's actually a panel that handles all the pardons and paroles. So, if they try to staff the membership in their favor, it's still going to be very hard because those members on the panel have staggered terms."

TRAVEL

Continued from Page 3

been paying attention years ago. It fails to do that.

"We have to remember the humanity of the Palestinian people. We have to remember the humanity of the Israeli people. But let's be real. Israel has all the power here."

Knopp said he knows a number of Jewish people in the United States and in the Valley.

"It's very troubling to have to think about their counterparts being attacked," he said. "On the other hand, who am I to criticize the Arabs?"

"It's sad that this situation in ... that part of the world is leading to so much death and destruction and I don't have a solution for that. Both sides are going to fight it out and there doesn't seem to be any way of stopping it."

Those wishing to help civilians impacted by the conflict may consider donating to one of the following charities:

- United Nations Relief and Works Agency (<https://www.unrwa.org/>)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (<https://www.icrc.org/en>)
- Palestine Children's Relief Fund (<https://www.pcrf.net/>)
- American Near East Refugee Aid (<https://www.nera.org/>)
- Medical Aid for Palestinians (<https://www.map.org.uk/>)
- World Food Programme (<https://www.wfp.org/>)

Women's soccer closes out season

Jose Medina

SPORTS REPORTER

The Vaqueros ended their soccer season with a 1-1 tie against Stephen F. Austin State University Oct. 22 at the Soccer and Track & Field Complex on the Edinburg campus.

They concluded the season with a 3-10-4 overall and 1-6-2 conference record. Last year, their record was 3-12-3 overall and 2-6-3 in conference.

UTRGV placed eighth in the Western Athletic Conference, falling short for the WAC Tournament along with Abilene Christian University, Stephen F. Austin State University and Tarleton State University.

Head coach Mark Foster said it was an enjoyable season and feels comfortable at UTRGV.

"[It's my] second season at UTRGV," Foster said. "For me it was very enjoyable. Starting to feel more settled in at UTRGV and more comfortable here. Really enjoyed it. Although, we didn't get as many wins as we would have liked. I sure would have liked a little bit more success. It was still, definitely, a fun season for me."

He said if the staff and the players keep up their hard work, then the future of the program will look bright.

Foster said something important for him and the team is their chemistry and culture.

"I took a big step forward this year," he said. "I think the team is much more together and much more committed. I think we grew in our understanding of style, of play. ... The one big thing is we have to find a way to convert more of our opportunities, you know. Goals win games."

"We've been able to play well in a lot of games this season, but we weren't able to get the ball in the net enough, so we'll be certainly looking to keep building our



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Junior midfielder Shentatious Knox dribbles past an Island defender in a 2021 game against Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi at the UTRGV Soccer and Track & Field Complex. Knox scored late in the game to lead the Vaqueros to a 2-0 victory.

chemistry and understand our style of play."

Asked what is next for the team, Foster replied the first thing is a week off for the players.

"But we're back in training next week," he said. "We'll be having meetings as our players and staff try and reflect on the season and look at ways to get better. The coaches will be on the road recruiting. ... We'll be playing five games in the spring. We'll be trying to do our community service. We'll be trying to, again, do well in the classroom."

Foster said the team hopes to have the locker rooms ready by January, as it will take the soccer program at UTRGV to the next level.

UTRGV is working on building a new athletics facility. The new

addition will house the locker rooms for the soccer, track and field, and cross-country teams. They will also include office space and a sports medicine space.

Junior midfielder Molly Reynosa said, out of her four years at UTRGV, this was the year with the biggest growth for the team.

Reynosa said the team hopes to get more wins next year and qualify for the WAC Tournament as the team has the talent.

"Small mistakes cost us," she said. "So, I think that our attacking play is what we need to work on the most and how to just finish the game a full-90-minutes, instead of taking a few breaks here and there."

The midfielder said the coaching staff created a great environment for the players.



THE RIDER FILE PHOTO

Junior forward Emily Zapata prepares to take a shot on goal during a match against Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi during the 2021 South Texas Showdown.

"It's an environment that everyone feels safe to be in," she said. "I think that creates a better team atmosphere and a better love for the game. Me, personally, I fell in love with the game more once Foster came because there was such uncertainty before he was there."

Freshman goalkeeper Emilia Compian said she thinks the team improved playing together throughout the season.

"I think ... a big part of soccer is chemistry in the way that we play with each other, the way that we pass with each other," Compian said. "I think it's something that we keep wanting to improve and maybe even lead to [scoring] more goals next season and being very defensively playing on the backs, stuff like that."

She said the team will continue working for next season.

"We're going to have some spring games, but not too many," Compian said. "We're really going to be getting in shape, getting stronger physically and mentally."

She said the players look forward to the construction of the lockers to be finished.

"Yeah, I think it's something that we all, kind of, look forward to, because we see it being built for a while now and, so, we're really looking forward to having more of a stable, like, training room and locker room with each other," Compian said. "It'll be really nice."

For more information on UTRGV Athletics, visit goutrgv.com.

Un grito for the Mariachi at UTRGV

Silvana Villarreal

A&E REPORTER

On Oct. 20, Anthony Flores became the first UTRGV student to complete a required senior recital for the bachelor's in music education with a concentration in mariachi.

Flores' recital took place in the Performing Arts Center on the Edinburg campus.

Under the classical music portion of the recital, he performed the pieces "Melodie," by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky; "Melodie," by Christoph Willibald Gluck; "3 Old Viennese Dances," "Liebesfreud," "Liebesleid" and "Schön Rosmarin" by Fritz Kreisler.

For the Mariachi portion of the evening, Flores performed "La Rabia," by Jose Isaias Salmeron Pastenes; "El Gustito," by Elpidio Ramirez; "La Que Se Fue," by Jose Alfredo Jimenez; and "Tango Bolero," by Juan Llossas, among others.

Flores, a violinist, said it was always a dream of his to come to UTRGV and join the mariachi since it played a significant role in his family life.

"I didn't think it would be me, you know, so it's kind of surreal," he said about being the first string student to complete the recital.

After starting his journey at the bottom of the group, he now stands as a first chair violinist.

"Little by little, I kept going up in terms of what part I was playing," Flores said. "And then, right now, I'm on the first violin, which means you're progressing."

Joel Pagán, a strings professor in the School of Music at UTRGV, said Flores set the bar high for future students by performing both classical and mariachi portions of the program at a high musical level.

"It's something to look at, so, [students]

can prepare to that standard, or even better," Pagán said.

He said this accomplishment is historic within the School of Music because even though the degree is fairly new, it has already brought students from different parts of the country and it is expected to bring more.

"It's maintaining that national and international recognition but also teaching and creating new generations of new mariachis and musicians," Pagán said.

The mariachi program began in 1989 and was founded by Dahlia Guerra, special assistant to the dean for Outreach and Partnerships. However, the mariachi concentration was established two years ago.

Guerra, who accompanied Flores on the piano on stage, said the mariachi major and program's main goal is to continue

"The fact that they travel to venues that they would have never dreamed of going ... they performed in Washington, D.C., for the president. ... The opportunities that have been presented to these students have been transforming."

--Dahlia Guerra, special assistant to the dean for Outreach and Partnerships

to grow and prepare students by not only getting them to be successful musicians, but also educators.

The mariachi ensembles at UTRGV have opened doors for students throughout the

U.S., Mexico and Canada to play alongside groups and musicians, such as Mariachi *Sol de México*, Mariachi *Los Camperos* and Mexican singer Aida Cuevas.

"The fact that they travel to venues that they would have never dreamed of going ... they performed in Washington, D.C., for the president," Guerra said. "... The opportunities that have been presented to these students have been transforming."

Performing alongside Flores were other faculty and students, including Mellanie Olivares, Joel Sanchez and Charlie Garcia on violin; Rodolfo De Santiago, guitarrón; Austin Rosalez, viruela; Luisfelipe Ornelas, guitar; Jesus Villegas and Eduardo Martinez, trumpet; and Jacob Contador, harp.



Abigail Ollave/THE RIDER

Violinist Anthony Flores embraces his now-retired high school orchestra director, Tomas Aguilar, Oct. 20 after the Violin Senior Recital in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.



Abigail Ollave/THE RIDER

Music education junior Joel Sanchez (from left), music education junior with a concentration in mariachi Charlie Garcia and music education with a concentration in mariachi senior Anthony Flores perform "Tango Bolero," by Juan Llossas, during the Violin Senior Recital, held Oct. 20 in the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus.

Cleaning up the Border By: Sophia Villarreal

As a resident of the Rio Grande Valley, a region of Texas that borders Mexico, I always thought I understood the disparity that came with the border. This thought I had was proven wrong on September 8th, 2023. That day, I volunteered for an event called the Great American Cleanup. When I arrived at 9 a.m., I and others met at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Brownsville campus, minutes away from the Mexican-American border. The volunteers there greeted my friends and me and gave us the supplies to clean up the trash. They gave us hand sanitizing wipes, sunscreen, water, gloves, and, most importantly, a trash picker. After that, we hopped onto a shuttle that took us directly to the border. This is when I was proven wrong. Upon arriving at the border, I saw many clothes in the barbed wire crevices, separating the U.S. from Mexico. I then saw piles of garbage on the ground. When people crossed through the barbed wire, they sometimes left behind their belongings, such as their I.D.s, clothes, and even pets. This caused the trash to accumulate and take over the entire area.

While picking up trash, my friends and I noticed a young man from across the border trying to get our attention. "Hello," he said, waving. I gestured back at him. He then picked up a trash bag, threw it into the river between the U.S. and Mexico, and yelled, "Vamos a recoger más basura." This translates, "Come pick up more trash." I stood there baffled. "How could someone mindlessly litter like that?" I thought to myself. My friends were also shocked, but we decided this meant we had to work twice as hard now. The rest of that morning, we worked together to get as much garbage picked up as possible. Before we knew it, the afternoon approached, and our shift from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. ended. Sweaty and exhausted, we exited the shuttle and returned to the university. That day, I left the university happy, knowing I could help the environment and make a difference. People need to understand how significant the littering problem is at the border, and I hope I can participate in another cleanup in the future.



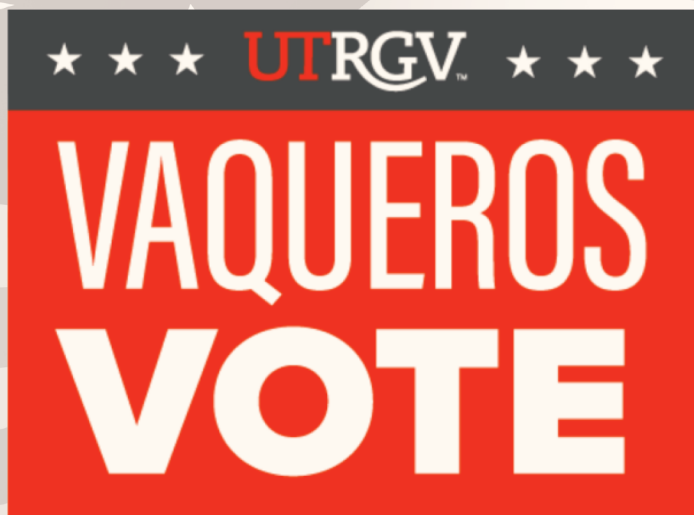
The Great American Clean-up By: Trisha Bhakta

My experience at the Great American Clean-up was one to remember. My shift on Saturday morning was from nine to twelve. When I first arrived, I did not know what to expect. They provided supplies, such as gloves, sunscreen, antibacterial wipes, bug spray, trash bags, and most importantly a grabber used to pick up trash. I, along with other volunteers, rode in a van to the designated area where all the trash was. Once I got

down, I walked around the corner and saw tons of trash, barbed wire, and the Rio Grande River. Across the barbed wire, I saw multiple people in Matamoros, Mexico, surrounded by pitched tents made of bed sheets.

We all got right to work! The individuals, who hosted the Great American Clean-up in Brownsville, thanked us for showing up and then gave us instructions on what to do with the trash. They told us to gather everything in the middle so the bobcat tractor they had could pick it up. The sun's rays were beaming directly on us, making moving the trash into the middle significantly more difficult. When picking up the trash, I communicated with many individuals who were hosting the cleanup. I saw a wallet, picked it up, and found a receipt for money debited. I asked the people hosting this event, and they informed me that the cartels across the border made undocumented individuals pay a certain amount every day in order to cross the border, or they would take their lives. When they informed me what happened, my heart dropped for the individuals, who wanted to come to the United States for a greater life for their families. In addition, I saw contraceptives that had already been used. When the host told us these contraceptives were used for inhumane, terrible purposes, it broke my heart. Women coming across were raped and sexually assaulted right where I was standing.

While at the event, we also encountered rude individuals from Mexico. There was one adult male, who said in Spanish, "Ven aquí y recoge la basura ya que nos amas tanto," which means, "Come here and pick up the trash since you love us so much," as he and others dumped bags of trash into the Rio Grande River while I stood by silently watching them. They were directly mocking and taunting us while we were simply trying to clean an area. I learned many lessons from this experience, such as how they cross the border, what they do after they cross, and much more. I believe others should know how the situation right by the border is occurring in our community today.



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