

DATELINE:



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DOWNTOWN



WHAT'S INSIDE:

UHD President	UHD Daycare
Poet Moody	Fine Arts Fair
Fitzgerald's	Zika Virus
ISIL & Social Media	Metro Changes
Prison Pipeline	NAACP Awards
Black History Parade	Trump Phenomenon
GOP Nomination	Slut-Shaming
Pro-Rape Rally	Formation
Color Me Happy	JooYoung Choi Exhibit
Houston Rodeo	Suffers
UHD Calendar and Campus Events	

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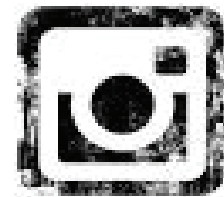
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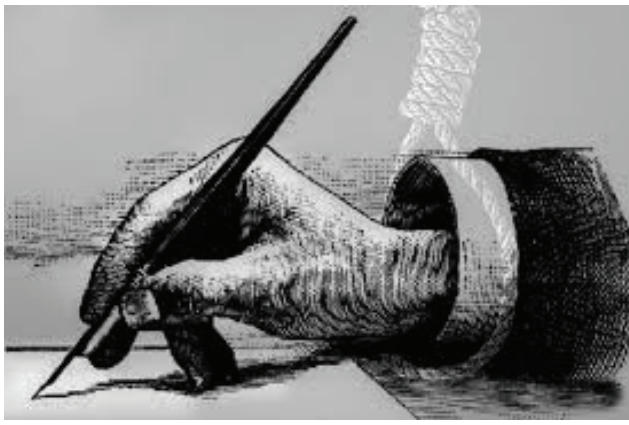


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Unanswered Questions in the Face of Change

by Darci McFerran

Change is an undeniable aspect of the workings of any organization, and the University of Houston-Downtown is no exception to that rule. Often unwelcomed, change can also be the harbinger of positive and beneficial things for the bearer of those changes. When you consider the students at the University of Houston-Downtown, our unique make-up consists of a widely varying demographic that is largely considered unconventional. That fact can mean many things, but what is seemingly escaping representatives of the University of Houston System, is that students are stakeholders in the school. Far more so, in fact, than at any conventional university where students are not paying for their education. I paid out-of-pocket for my first two and half years here, which is not an easy thing to do and, like many other students, I juggle work while also enrolled. Therefore, what you are doing with my money is of extreme importance to me, as are the decisions made that affect my education and experience at the University. Making the decision to attend UHD is based on academic programs, cost, and an overall trust that the leaders will make decisions with student's best interest at heart.

Recently, President William Flores was removed from his position and reassigned to another within the school system. Flores's new position was stated in a message from the new interim president, published on the UHD website, "Dr. Flores will serve as a research fellow in the Policy Research and Assessment Center in the College of Education at the University of Houston before returning to UHD as a tenured faculty member." This sudden change was announced via an email from UHS Chancellor Renu Khator. No explanation — or further information regarding why this change was necessary — was given. Due to privacy concerns, it is to be expected that information, especially regarding personal matters, would be made available on a limited basis. More concerning, is the fact that they have made no public statement regarding their choices, and as I set out to write this article, the breadth of that choice became increasingly clear. Khater's email informed students of the decision and her choice for our new interim president, Michael A. Olivas Ph.D. Notably absent from the entire text was a reason as to why the change was occurring.

Dr. Flores was a beloved mentor to many students at UHD, and the lack of compassion that the chancellor's omission showed, was jarring and disrespectful, for many of them. Student Government Association President John Locke granted an interview to Dateline, stating, "Dr. Flores was a deftly inspirational leader, and I really believe, and the students really believe, in his message of community engagement and redefining UHD to give us a reason to be proud." (Please see right-hand side of page for more quotes about Dr. Flores from other students and former SGA Presidents who worked closely with him.) During his time as President, there were many positive changes, which resulted in the advancement of new programs and academic achievement.

Through social media, I was able to determine that Flores suffered two minor coronary events on Friday, Feb. 6, 2016 and another on Monday, February 8, for which he was hospitalized to receive medical treatment. During this time, the decision was made by Chancellor Khator to act swiftly and have him removed from the position of President of the University of Houston-Downtown. So, from the very beginning, her actions were suspicious. I had to ask myself why, as did many of the students and faculty that spoke with Dateline. It is not absurd to think that there is a justifiable reason for these actions, but hiding them from your primary stakeholders, and deliberately burying information, will not go undetected. Furthermore, disregarding the necessity to explain these choices to students left many feeling as though their right to know had been ignored.

Seeking answers to these burning questions, I tried to go directly to the source and contacted a few people at the university. What I quickly discovered was that there is a blanket response in place regarding Dr. Flores and his departure: "don't ask, don't tell." The most people could tell me was that this was an order that came directly from the chancellor. Why? Do the students who bear the burden of rising debt for their tuition, which funds the school, not deserve to know what happened?

Fortunately, I was granted access to interview the interim president, Michael Olivas, who was surprisingly forthcoming with information. According to Olivas, the decision for him to replace Flores was made over breakfast with the Chancellor, after which, he

very quickly took over the position. An interim president is intended to maintain the university until a replacement can be found and introduced to the position. Olivas could potentially be overseeing the office of President for the next year, while they continue the national search for a permanent replacement and there are a lot of responsibilities already upon him. Having been with UHS since 1982, he carries an impressive history of achievements from that time; he seems to be more than competent to fill the role of interim. Having experience in, "student affairs, legal issues, financial aid, and convocation," arguably, the choice made for who should fill the interim position was a sound one. It is not a coincidence that the new interim has a background that will better position the university to tackle ongoing matters such as a budget deficit, the re-accreditation of UHD, tuition increases, and legislation regarding each. However, it seems to be a risky gamble to make those changes right in the middle of a semester, while so many significant things are already happening. During the meeting with Olivas, his only mention as to why the change was imminent alluded to the average length of time an individual serves as President, which according to him is five years. If this is true, why does the chancellor remain in her position? According to this principal, she should have been replaced three years ago, considering she officially took her dual position as president and chancellor in 2008.

Rumors have spread furiously around the campus, primarily due to the deliberate attempt to restrict the information. Handling the situation in this manner fosters feelings of suspicion. Transparency should be the standard when important decisions that affect the future of university are made. In any other profession, where stakeholders invest tens of thousands of dollars, this information would not be withheld.

Many students, including myself, are very proud to be Gators and want to see the school continue to grow and achieve success. Hopefully, the decisions that will be made in the coming year will better reflect student interests. Dateline wishes Dr. Flores all of the best in his new endeavors and thanks him for his years of service; your absence does not go unnoticed by the students of UHD.

3

Editor's Desk

Quote from UHD alum Mario Salinas:

As a proud UHD alumni, I am thankful for Dr. Flores' vision and leadership, especially in the areas of Latino leadership development in Houston and increasing civic engagement. It's my hope that UHD can continue to develop in these areas and continue Dr. Flores' legacy.

Quote from former SGA President Ivan Sanchez:

Former UHD President Dr. William V. Flores is one of the most effective, influential, and hard-working individuals I know. I served as the 2012 Student Body President of UHD, and I personally witnessed, with great respect and appreciation, the openness and time Dr. Flores willingly provided, out of his busy schedule, to meet with students. Dr. Flores would regularly meet with students to discuss, plan, and take action on student concerns to create solutions.

Under Dr. Flores' empowering leadership, he provided real "Major Opportunities" to one of the most diverse student bodies the world has ever seen. He oversaw the growth of the largest and best valued Houston MBA Program in Houston; helped UHD receive recognition, nationally, for its community service and civic engagement; and advocated for student high impact practices that personally empowered me to go from pushing carts at Krogers to pushing legislation in Congress now.

I am one student, among thousands, who thanks Dr. Flores for his endearing service to education he provided. On behalf of Houston Millennials, thank you for your service!

Quote from former SGA President Isaac Valdez:

During my tenure as UHD-SGA President (2012-2013), Dr. Flores was a devoted and inspirational mentor to our group. He collaborated, supported, and exposed us to major opportunities that shaped us into the people that we are today. Dr. Flores became more than just a university president as he pushed for strong citywide initiatives that improved the Greater Houston area. Dr. Flores took the time to get to know me personally and helped me with my struggles. I can say that Dr. Flores was not just my president or mentor — he was and continues to be my friend.

ATTENTION STUDENTS:
If you would like to send Dr. Flores a message in the next issue please email us-
datelinedowntownnhtx@gmail.com

4

Gator News



Get Ready, Gator-Babies! UHD's First Daycare Set to Open This Semester

By Kara Moore

It's no big secret that being a college student is hard. College is a challenging environment that requires the time and effort similar to a high-profile full-time job. It entails countless hours in class, studying, test taking, and being involved in internships and/or community service projects. With the rising cost of college, though, many students are taking on full-time credit hours and part- or full-time jobs. Students with children are at an even bigger disadvantage. Imagine trying to get a degree, work a job to support your family, and take care of your children; it sounds impossible.

Yet, according to The Institute for Women's Policy Research study in 2014, 26 percent of all undergraduate students are raising dependent children; a majority of these students are single, and an even bigger majority of them are women. Considering that 1 in every 4 students has one or more dependent children, it is easy to see why UHD has decided to utilize the raise in tuition — not only towards building a new welcome center, but to develop a daycare for UHD students.

When I sat down with UHD's Assistant Dean in Student Affairs, Tommy Thomason, he first assured me that the raise in tuition would be well worth it. "There was a demand for it, but it is one of those things that we will have to see how well it goes." As of right now, the daycare is still in the process of settling a contract with a vendor (most likely the YMCA) who will take on the task of running the actual daycare, which is going to be situated on the second floor by the SGA office. Having a vendor run the daycare means that people hired will be employees, not of UHD, but of the vendor. These employees will be subject to the training and background checks of that vendor, but Mr. Thomason said that the vendor will be looking for students to work there.

The goal right now for the administration is to have it open sometime this spring semester, but there will be limitations to the center itself. It will be open only Monday-Thursday, from 8am to 8:30pm. It will not be open in the summer semesters, but if there is demand for summer care, that is something the administration might look into. Only children aged 3-9 years old will be accepted to the daycare, and a limit of 12 hours per week will be set. The idea is that a parent can come in, leave their child for about two classes, and go pick them back up.

While the daycare is somewhat limited, it will hopefully improve the lives of the many students with young children. At \$5 an hour, it's an affordable option for parents in need. If you have any questions about the daycare, feel free to contact Mr. Tommy Thomason in the Student Affairs Office (S380), by phone at (713) 221-8056 or by email, thomasont@uhd.edu.



Poet Jonathan Moody Visits UHD

by Karen Reyes

On the evening of February 10, University of Houston-Downtown had the honor of receiving poet Jonathan Moody. Among a small, enthusiastic audience, Moody shared his journey as a poet and presented his newly published book, *Olympic Butter Gold*.

Growing up in a military family, he often moved from country to country before finally settling in the United States. Moody lived a few years in Germany and it was there, at a young age, that he discovered hip-hop, as he watched a group of B-boys and B-girls dancing to the ever increasing widespread music phenomenon.

His latest published book, *Olympic Butter Gold*, winner of the 2014 Cave Canem Northwestern University



Press Poetry Prize, is a unique response to Chuck D's claims that, "if there was a Hip-Hop or Rap Olympics, I really don't think the United States would get Gold, Silver, or Brass." Growing up during the Golden Age of hip-hop and listening to a variety of old and current rap artists, Moody takes inspiration from the music. As he recited his poetry during the reading, you could clearly hear the musical undertones his poems displayed. Especially in his poem called "Dear 2pac," a personal recollection of his teachings of Tupac Shakur's poetry to engage his students in literature.

Jonathan Moody currently resides in Fresno, Texas with his wife and son, and where he teaches high school students. He dedicated his new poetry book as a legacy to his son, something to look back on when remembering his father.

UHD Fine Arts Festival

by Jason J. Rivas

As we march towards the midpoint of the semester, UHD's Arts and Humanities Department is preparing for its annual Fine Arts Festival. This year's edition is set to incorporate an assortment of activities for all students, as well as offer new programs for interested attendees.

The festival is billed as, "A Week Long Celebration of Art, Music, Dance and Performance," with an array of enticing activities for participants. The week will begin with a rally, called "Shout-up!" According to Fine Arts Lecturer Beth Secor, "students will be able to compete in activities involving, among other things: Lego building, musical instruments, and challenging word games. Students will also have an opportunity to join scavenger hunt teams and receive instructions." Later in the day, an African Dance workshop will take place. Led by UHD staff member Jovanni Lota, the session offers dancers of all backgrounds the opportunity to partake in a unique style of rhythmic culture.

New to this year's events are activities that include a recorder choir concert, led by UHD Faculty Member Julie Wilson. Occurring Wednesday night, the engagement offers students a chance to delve into the magic and splendor of woodwind theatre. As well, an open-mic night of original storytelling will provide UHD student-raconteurs with the possibility to explore their imaginative minds and craft a tantalizing story for the masses.

A cornucopia of other engagements will return as well, including: UHD Lecturer Dr. Robert Wilson's Civic Jazz Orchestra and Sounds of Houston Jazz Orchestra, an evening social at the new O'Kane Gallery featuring St. Arnold's root beer, a piano recital, and finally the Fine Arts and Communications Studies Internship Fair. The week-long celebration culminates with the O'Kane Theatre's production of the Agatha Christie classic, *The Unexpected Guest*.

The fine arts program hopes to showcase the amazing talent that the department cultivates. Students from across many platforms immerse their imaginative minds at UHD, through a concentration of skills such as research, critical thinking, public-speaking and writing. The festival serves as a stage for students to showcase their gifts and extraordinary talents. "We are very excited about this year's lineup of events and what they have to offer," Secor proudly wrote in a press release. The Fine Arts Festival will run from March 28 through April 1 and is open to all seekers and lovers of the arts. Most of the events are free, with a complete listing provided below. Fine Arts Festival Event calendar for the week of March 28–April 1.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday March 28th

11am–1pm: BAFA Rally, ShoutUP! Competition, Scavenger Hunt start, Mural area 3rd Floor.
6–7pm African Dance Workshop, Location TBA
The Lehrer showing Monday–Friday in O'Kane Gallery, 10am–5pm

Tuesday March 29th

10am Gator sidewalk chalk until the chalk runs out: Chalk sidewalk drawings at North Deck
5pm–6pm: Root beer and Piano Reception by the O'Kane Art Gallery, newly located in the UHD Welcome Center.
6:30pm–8:30pm: UHD Jazz Students from Dr. Robert Wilson's jazz ensemble classes to perform in Robertson Auditorium

Wednesday March 30th

11:30am–1pm: Fine Arts and Communication Studies Internship Fair A300
6pm–6:30pm: Recorder Choir Concert, Mural area 3rd Floor
6:30pm–7:30pm: UHD Storytellers – Our Story, open mic, Mural area 3rd Floor

Thursday March 31st

12–2pm: Open Mic – Warm Ups to Talent Show, location TBA.
6:30pm–8pm: UHD Talent Show (hosted w/ UHD Student Government)

Friday April 1st

8pm: Opening to "Unexpected Guest" by Agatha Christie, O'Kane Theatre

images from the 2015 UHD Fine Arts Fair Pictured: Chalk Drawings done on the North Deck



5

Gator News



Destruction at Fitzgerald's

By Kara Moore

If Houston is known for anything other than traffic and potholes, it's probably music. It's not just that Houston is home to big names like ZZ Top, Chamillionaire, Hilary Duff, or Beyoncé; it's that Houston cultivates a highly varied and interesting creative scene that, while sometimes overlooked, is undeniable.

One place that is known as a staple of Houston's music scene is Fitzgerald's, which has hosted some amazing live shows since its opening in 1977. It recently went under renovation, closing briefly in August 2015. Reopening only a month or so after, it promised to be better than ever. What was unexpected was at the start of February 2016, vandalism occurred on the premises. The first leaked story was that the previous tenants decided to trash the place before their lease was up.

One such tenant, who was revealed to be David Huddleson, posted statuses on his personal Facebook profile taking credit for the original damage which showed toilet paper thrown about and a room in disarray. Later, Huddleson posted that the previous status was posted by a different, disgruntled ex-employee. Reiterated by another now-former tenant, Joshua Merritt, is the same story: the three men involved were moving out of Fitzgerald's and decided to throw a little goodbye party on the way out. The party supposedly got out of hand, with people taking leftover toilet paper and straws and throwing them about. The people responsible for spray-painting satanic symbols like "666" were apparently kicked out upon discovery. Joshua's exact words in his public Facebook post were, "We did not feel like cleaning it up last night and were going to do it in the morning; however, our landlord stormed the building, breaking down the door and forcing us out."

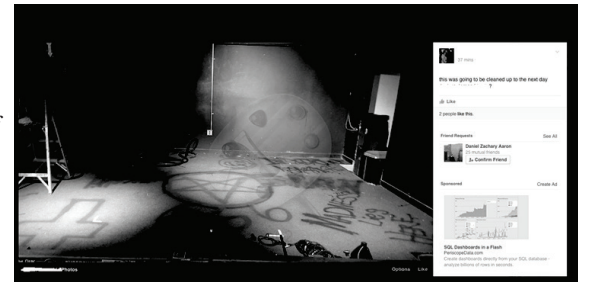
There are a lot of conflicting accounts on how and why the damage really occurred. While a party seems to be the general consensus, some are claiming that Joshua Merritt, David Huddleson and the club's most recent tenant, Dacondo Casey did the damage in response to eviction. Merritt and Casey continue to state that they were choosing to leave due to unfair rent charged by longtime club owner, Sara Fitzgerald. Merritt claimed to the Houston Press that they paid for the spray paint damage to the downstairs carpet and said that no other real damage was done. Fitzgerald stated, regarding the incident: "They (the previous tenants) kind of had a farewell party last night and kind of trashed it, but we'll get it back together." All in all, it seems no major damage was really done, and Fitzgerald stated that she plans to reapply for a liquor license and resume running the club.



Images courtesy of HoustonPress.com

Pictured: Left-Fitzgeralds

Right-images posted to aocial media of the destruction inside the club.



Zika Virus Cases Hitting US

By Miguel Nunez

Zika virus, a disease spread by mosquitoes, is becoming a growing concern for the health community and for expecting mothers. Recently, at least fifty cases of Zika-infected people have been reported in more than 15 states. All of these cases have been the result of travel outside of the United States. People traveling to South America and the Caribbean get infected there through mosquito bites, re-enter the U.S. and start to become ill when they return home. So far there have been no cases of mosquitoes infecting people here in the U.S., but health experts fear that will change soon.

Luckily for most people, the Zika virus poses no real threat. Health experts say that 4 in 5 people will not even experience any symptoms of the disease. Even if a person starts to feel sick because of the virus, it will not be life-threatening; it will be no more severe than the flu. Most people will just experience mild pain, headaches, and sometimes rashes.

The only people that should have any concern for the Zika virus for now, are women who are expecting or women who might become pregnant soon. The Zika virus has led to pregnant women giving birth to babies with microcephaly, a disease that leads to improper brain development and an irregular, smaller head. This, in turn, leads to babies with developmental delays, hearing loss, vision problems, and possible seizures.

So far, the major cause of infections has been mosquito bites, but the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has confirmed that the possibility of passing the Zika virus through sex is possible. There has been one confirmed case of the Zika virus being sexually transmitted in Texas.

Fortunately, once a woman gets over being ill from the Zika virus it takes only about one week for her blood system to be clear of the disease; once this happens, she can become pregnant without fear of her child being born with microcephaly. For men, it works much the same way. Once they get over the Zika virus it usually takes about a week or more to get the disease out of their blood.

There is no known cure for the Zika virus, so health experts recommend that pregnant women not travel to South America. If you have to travel outside of the U.S. and go to South America or the Caribbean, health experts recommend that you use bug spray, wear long sleeves, and stay indoors as much as possible, preferably with air conditioning.

(Story Update/Editors Note)

Since the writing of this article, according to Reuters, "Two major Texas health centers have developed what they are calling the country's first hospital-based, rapid test for the Zika virus that can produce results in a matter of hours." The hospitals that can provide this test, Texas Children's and Houston Methodist Hospitals are both located in Houston's downtown Medical Center. Before these recent developments, patients had to wait weeks before being diagnosed with the disease. "With travel-associated cases of the Zika virus becoming more prevalent in the United States, coupled with the looming increase in mosquito exposure during spring and summer months, we must be prepared for a surge of Zika testing demand," said pathologist-in-chief at Texas Children's and leader of test development team.

Keeping Pace:

The US struggles to keep up with ISIL's digital/social media campaign

By Joshua Burgman

In February, the US-based tech company, Twitter, announced that it has suspended over 125,000 Twitter accounts “related to terrorism.” According to BBC, “Twitter has more than 500 million accounts around the world,” and their policing of terroristic threats via the website has drastically increased.

Twitter’s eagerness to combat ISIL’s social media campaign began in April 2015, when the company reported the suspension of 10,000 ISIL-related accounts. In an article in the New York Times, Rick Gladstone stated that, “The suspensions came against a backdrop of rising criticism that Twitter has allowed the Islamic State to exploit the social network to spread propaganda, glorify violence and seek recruits.”

Since the realization of the effectiveness of ISIL’s social media prowess, opponents of the terrorist group have called for tech companies, like Twitter, to do a better job at circumventing virtual terrorism. In the same NY Times article, a Twitter representative was quoted as saying, “[Twitter] received a large amount of reports.” Every report that the company receives is directed to “Violations,” a department within Twitter that has recently been expanded to handle the growing number of terror-related accounts.

Twitter isn’t the only US-based company seeking to combat the vitriolic propaganda ISIL is so well-known for. Late February, US Secretary of State, John Kerry met with Hollywood studio movie executives, with the hopes of redefining the narrative through film. Via his Twitter account during the meeting, Kerry posted a photo with the caption, “Great convo w studio execs in LA. Good to hear their perspectives & ideas of how to counter #Daesh narrative,” referring to one of the organizations many aliases.

Like the internet, ISIL makes good use of video production. In videos that have been uploaded to outlets like Facebook or sold in Middle Eastern cities, the group exports its violent and anti-West themed propaganda with the hopes of recruiting more followers to their cause. From beheadings, to setting a cage-full of men on fire, ISIL’s videos promote a skewed version of Islam, prompting some of its members to join with the intentions of waging violent jihad, which, among Muslims, is a holy war or struggle against unbelievers. During Kerry’s meeting with some Hollywood Executives, the Los Angeles Times reported they “discussed a variety of issues, including perceptions of America’s image around the world.”

In a recent hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper deemed ISIL the “preeminent global threat,” confirming the need for Twitter’s recent increase in monitoring terror-related posts on its website, and reasserting the relevance of Sec. Kerry meeting with movie execs. It’s clear from these recent developments that the war against the Islamic State is waged on more than just the battlefield.

New Changes for Metro

by Phillip Feldwisch

On January 24, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County rolled out a series of changes and enhancements to their bus network. Changes included adjustment of running times, changing route configurations, and moving stops along routes to alleviate congestion inside some of the transit centers.

One route that saw a significant change was line 82 Westheimer, which runs from the old Downtown Post Office to West Oaks Mall. At first, the peak frequency during rush hour was eight minutes. This worked for a while, until buses started to become overcrowded. Now, instead of running every eight minutes during the morning and afternoon rush, buses now run every six minutes. This has led to a significant decrease in overcrowded buses.

Another route that saw significant changes was line 56 Airline/Montrose, which runs from the Texas Medical Center Transit Center to Greenspoint Transit Center. The first step was making the September 2015 detour along Fulton-Lyerly-Airline on the northbound trip permanent. Other alterations included moving the stop at Fulton and Deerfield to Northline Transit Center — effective Nov. 30, 2015 — in order to ensure a safer passenger waiting area.

Line 85, which runs the Antoine/Washington route, was also affected. Instead of terminating inside the Downtown Transit Center, the line now stops across the street. One driver I encountered expressed his happiness with the new system. “The changes are a lot better since it was really congested inside the Transit Center,” he said. Since some of the buses are accordion-style, regular buses sometimes had trouble pulling out of their loading areas. This made it necessary to find a different end point for the buses, since the Downtown Transit Center was not designed for longer, accordion-style buses.

Line 47 Hillcroft also saw a major change by adding a 6:40am northbound trip and a 3:45pm southbound trip during the week, to reduce passenger overloads. One passenger has only been riding the bus system for about one month and found it to be an effective mode of transportation. “It’s actually a lot easier to understand the routes and connecting bus service,” she told me. Line 65 Bissonnet also underwent reordering. Weekday eastbound peak times between 6:00am and 7:30am were 12 minutes, but, because of an increase in ridership demand, the time was changed to 10 minutes.

Not all passengers like the changes, though. One passenger commented that the buses are slower since the changes were implemented. Another passenger did not like the new route changes since they now have to take three different buses to work, instead of just one. What’s liked the most so far, I’m told, is the frequency with which the buses run.

University of Houston-Downtown student Sixto Pina stated that he hated the changes at first since the correct bus did not always pull in right away, to Denver Harbor Transit Center. One thing he did like is how often the buses run. Pina also likes that students ride for half price with a discounted Q-Card or Day Pass, purchased at METRO headquarters. Although the changes have seen positive results, the real test will come when Spring Break and Rodeo Houston come in March.



Land of the Free? Maybe Not.

By Terrance Turner

As part of UHD's celebration of Black History Month, on Feb. 10, there was a screening of a film called "Elementary Genocide," which addressed the "school-to-prison pipeline." The event was hosted by Associate Professor of English Dr. Chuck Jackson, who explained the term. "'School-to-prison pipeline' names a racist phenomenon," Dr. Jackson said. Disciplinary problems and unequal funding for public schools — especially in inner cities — have contributed to a kind of tunnel that carries underachieving or unruly students (particularly black ones) into the prison system. The term, he explained, is part of a larger framework that involves systemic racism and economic inequality.

A 2009 study by the Center for Public Policy agreed: "The School-to-Prison Pipeline disproportionately impacts the poor, students with disabilities, and youth of color — especially African Americans, who are suspended and expelled at the highest rates, despite comparable rates of infraction (Witt 2007). Youth of color, in particular, are at increased risk for being pushed out of schools — pushed out into the streets, into the juvenile justice system, and/or into adult prisons and jails."

Where did the term come from? "I would imagine that it comes out of the work of Critical Resistance, [which] is the name of an anti-prison activist group," Jackson said. "Critical Resistance had its emergence in the Bay Area of California. So in the 1980s and 1990s, California underwent a 'prison-ization' of its landscape," and those in the Bay Area, concerned about how many of their relatives were being swallowed by this system, united. An anti-mass-incarceration movement developed, spreading to cities including Houston and New Orleans.

But what exactly is a "prison-ization of the landscape"? Essentially, the state of California had built more and more prisons, Dr. Jackson said, in order to create economic opportunities for working-class people. "So you build a prison and say, 'Hey, everybody who works in this area! Now is your chance to have a steady job and steady pay. You can come and work in here. You don't even need to have a college education!'"

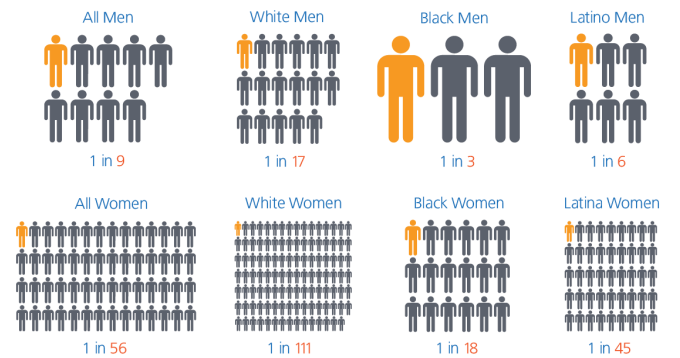
He elaborated further via email: "The description of the 'prison-ization of the California landscape' is an idea that Angela Y. Davis introduces in her 2003 book, "Are Prisons Obsolete?" (14). The topic is fully explored and analyzed by the sociologist Ruth Gilmore, in her book "Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California." It is a process begun during the 1980s and continued into the 90s and 2000s, with the idea that more prisons would lower crime rates and employ large sectors of the population in need of work in rural areas. Instead, both Davis and Gilmore argue, neither of those results were achieved," and the number of California prisons doubled within a decade. (A similar pattern developed in other states, including Texas.)

The film revealed the disturbing economic incentives of prison: in 2012, Corporations of America wrote a letter to 48 states, detailing a \$250 million plan to buy state, local and federal prisons. The proposed 20-year contract would require the facilities to maintain a 90 percent occupancy rate. In short, the prisons get a quarter of a billion dollars if they just keep 9 out of 10 prison beds full.

The movie continued to project a number of troubling statistics: "Right now, less than half of all 4th-grade black boys in the United States of America can read on grade level," one of the commentators claimed. (U.S. Department of Education data says that literacy rates for over 50 percent of African-American 4th-graders were far below average.) "If a black boy cannot read by the time he finishes 4th or 5th grade, there's a 75 percent chance that he will become a criminal by the age of 25," another commentator asserted. He named no source for the claim, but there may be something to it. The non-profit Do Something says on its website, "Over 70 percent of America's inmates cannot read above a 4th-grade level."

If you are reading this and think that this state of affairs doesn't apply to you or your family, you might want to heed Dr. Jackson's caveat: "One of the insidious things about prison is that it does affect all of our lives in ways that might surprise us," he said. "If you have ever bought underwear from Victoria's Secret, you might have purchased clothes that were made by prison labor. The tires of your car — if they have been repacked by Goodyear, that was probably done by labor that was offered by prisoners." Prisoners also make garments, he revealed, sometimes working with toxic chemicals. Inmates don't just make license plates: "They make furniture that is then sold to universities." A fact that should be remembered the next time you are sitting at your desk in class.

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment



Source: Bonczar, T. (2003). *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.



NAACP IMAGE AWARDS

by Casey Black

Anthony Anderson is an actor/comedian best known for his performance in ABC's sitcom *Black-ish* as Dre, a father who struggles with maintaining his family cultural identity while living in a predominately white neighborhood. As host of the 2016 Image Awards, held on Feb. 5, Anderson spent his time seeking to empower the black community with his opening monologue advocating for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). He praised black filmmakers and musicians for their activism, overcoming adversity in the face of police brutality, and discrimination.

Opening the Image Awards performing a tribute parodying the NWA as "Nominees With Attitude," Anderson attacked opposing award shows, criticizing their lack of black representation in television and the silver screen. Before introducing Ice Cube and his son (O'Shea Jackson Sr. and Jr.), Anderson aimed a preemptive strike towards Stacey Dash, whose comments — calling BET and the Image Awards a form of segregation — had left the black community "clueless."

In the wake of the Oscars' second consecutive "white out," Hollywood hasn't done a stellar job of acknowledging ethnic actors. There have only been 15 black actors that found themselves carrying the elusive little gold man across the Academy stage throughout its 88-year history — a disheartening fact, but a grim reality. How do we continue to carry on? How are we supposed to manage when the scales were never balanced for us in the first place? The hosts, honorees, and winners of the NAACP Image Awards knew the answer: it's simply to love yourself, persevere, maintain your ownership, and work together to overcome racial intolerance. Where

the Oscars failed, the Image Awards soared, demonstrating love and understanding of black artists' achievements, while addressing daunting issues that plague African American communities.

Grammy-winning artist John Legend was presented with the President's Award for displaying commitment to making the world a just place to live. A singer, songwriter, humanitarian, and an admirer of Martin Luther King Jr., Legend believes that education is the key to putting an end to poverty. In 2007 Legend started the "Show Me" campaign, designed to assist children in receiving a quality education and finding proven solutions that'll help improve quality of life. Thanking the NAACP, Legend delivered a riveting speech detailing the errors of the criminal justice system. But despite the problems that riddles the country with hate and injustice, Legend remains hopeful and optimistic in a future that could provide opportunity.

Undeterred by Oscar snubs, *Straight Outta Compton*, *Creed*, and *Beasts of No Nation* received their deserved recognition. Michael B. Jordan won Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture, and at the close of the ceremony he received Entertainer of the Year; both for the movie *Creed*. *Straight Outta Compton* broke records, helping Universal Studios become the fastest Hollywood studio to reach \$2 billion at the North American box office, and became the highest-grossing music biopic in history, with a \$200 million worldwide total, according to *Variety* magazine. *Straight Outta Compton* won Outstanding Motion Picture, and O'Shea Jackson, Jr. won Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture for playing his own father, Ice Cube.

Houston's First Annual African American History Month Parade

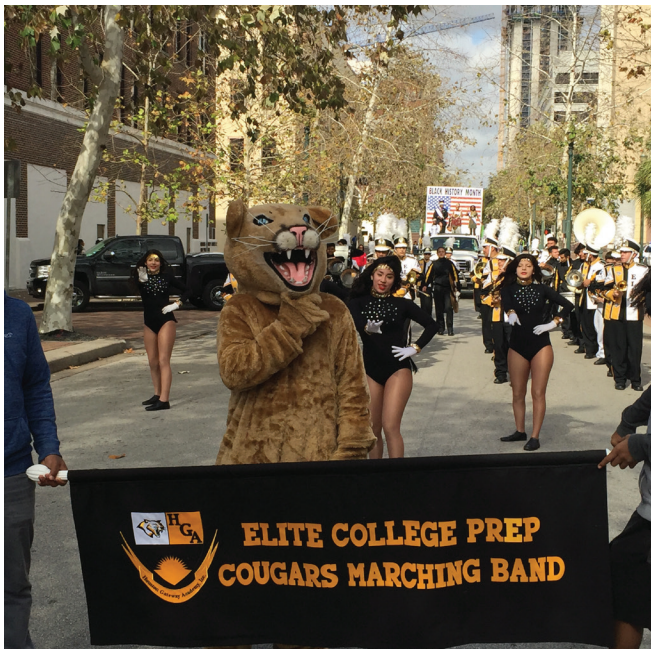
by Joshua Burgman

On Feb. 20, Houston began a tradition that will hopefully continue for generations: the First Annual African American History Month Parade. But sadly, the parade's turnout highlighted an unfortunate reality: the need of heightened participation in events that support and promote the study of the black race.

The parade took place on an extraordinarily beautiful day and was sponsored by The Houston Sun Foundation. The staging location of the procession was in the heart of Houston's downtown area at Texas and Hamilton streets, right outside of the home of the Astros — Minute Maid Park. Shortly after 10am, the Boy Scout Troops of Windsor Village United Methodist Church (Pack 426) took the helm and led the parade through some of downtown's major corridors. "It's an honor to be here," said the troop's Den Leader, Eric. "We are an all-black unit and were invited to participate by W.L. Davis District Sam Houston Area Council." Eric was referring to an organization within Houston that "serves Scouting units located in select schools in the Houston school district (south region,)" according to their website.

Following the troops, were representatives from the Houston-area office of Texas Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and the Elite College Prep Cougars Marching Band. "This was a really fun experience," said Tasmia Hill, a volunteer marching with representatives of Congresswoman Lee. "I feel like I was a part of history today, especially since this parade is the first of its kind in Houston," she went on. "Next year I hope that the word gets out, and we see a much larger crowd than we did today."

The crowd Hill was referring to was virtually nonexistent. Once the parade began, it always seemed that the procession would meet the crowds just around the next corner, but they never appeared. Although the turnout was less than impressive, all was not lost. It was a Saturday in Houston's downtown, and there were plenty of people on the street that were able to witness the city celebrate the history of its African-American community.



images provided by Joshua Burgman

Pictured: participants and attendees at the First Annual African American History Month Parade

And the “Trump”ets Will Blow

by Darci McFerran



Donald Trump is a name that conjures up strong emotions. For the majority, he is the embodiment of hate and fear mongering, a sideshow that dominates the conversation and distracts from the business of political campaigning. Regardless, Trump is a candidate in the American Presidential primaries, hoping to represent the Republican Party. Surprisingly, his campaign has gained momentum, as he has developed a strong following, much to the dismay of many Democrats and even some Republicans. Whatever political views you represent, or personal thoughts you have about the man behind the spectacle, everyone must admit that his antics have captured media attention. Is this a sign of some greater shift in American politics or just more evidence that the American people are giving away their political power to a good reality television show?

An idea, or successful slander, associated with Trump is the comparison that many are making between him and Adolf Hitler. Trump’s use of derogatory language to describe immigrants from Mexico and his rationalizing the use of violence to cope with violence makes it easy to understand the comparison. Could we be facing another Holocaust? Or is it a propaganda campaign intended to mar the image of an already-hated man? Trump supporters proclaim that they favor him because of his refreshingly honest approach to politics, as many years of political dishonesty and war, have left an entire generation of citizens disaffected from the American political process. With taglines like, “Make America great again” and “My special interest group is the American people,” it’s not difficult to see how the campaign captures attention. However, after digging a little deeper, you find these taglines are the frontrunners to ideas born from current fears in society.

It isn’t revolutionary to say that this country needs to change or that we have very serious flaws in our political system. There is even truth behind Trump’s pandering to the political figures that have worn on the American people and their trust in politicians. It’s the foundation of many successful campaigns; we never tire of the promise of a better tomorrow. The bigotry, racism, and hate that Trump spews, regarding nearly every major political issue, is what separates his campaign from the political



promises made by those who came before him. Undoubtedly, this sensationalism is also what keeps tongues wagging. The worst part is that people are responding to his antics. Promises of bombing ISIS, (which can’t be done because it isn’t a location) or deporting all immigrants (is this everyone except Native American? because it is unclear who isn’t an immigrant), have created for Trump a unique following of “white nationalists.”

American society has become so centralized to its never-ending stream of media technology, which permeates every facet of modern day life, that the hypnotic glow of our digital screen has lulled many into paying attention to a marketing campaign dressed up as a political crusade. Whatever the outcome of the 2016 elections, political analysts will be studying the Trump phenomenon for years to come. Hopefully, despite Trumps branding of hate, we will see something good come out of the ugliness that his campaign has brought to the surface of the American political system.

University of Houston-Downtown Student Gets Hands-on Training in Texas Government Members of Texas Legislative Internship Program gain valuable experience in public and private sector

(Austin, TX) // Senator Rodney Ellis (D-Houston) today (2/25/16) proudly introduced the 2016 class for the Texas Legislative Internship Program (TLIP), including Mona D. Smith from the University of Houston-Downtown. Overall, eleven students from Texas and Louisiana will earn college credit this semester while gaining invaluable real life, hands-on experience in public policy.

Ms. Smith is currently interning at the Earl Carl Institute for Legal and Social Policy at Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law working with the Innocence Project.

“Interning with the Innocence Project has opened the door to experiences within the criminal justice system as it relates to claims of innocence for those convicted of serious crimes”, said Ms. Smith. “I hope to learn how to review criminal case files, complete research, and think outside of the box on how to assist the wrongfully convicted. The TLIP program has afforded me this opportunity to gain experience in an area of great passion for me.”

“I’m so proud of these students and their dedication to public service,” said Senator Ellis. “Just as hundreds have before them, they are using this opportunity to gain valuable, firsthand knowledge into how government works and insight into the critical issues facing Texas.”

Senator Ellis was inspired to create TLIP in 1990 because of his mentor, the late Congressman Mickey Leland, who stressed the importance of using one’s individual success to provide opportunities for others. As his Chief of Staff, Ellis established an internship program in Congressman Leland’s office and carried on that tradition when elected to public office.

What began as a small group of students 25 years ago has blossomed into one of the most successful legislative internship programs in the nation. TLIP has provided more 670 valuable experiences in the Texas Legislature, the offices of the Texas Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, city and county offices, and even Texas Monthly magazine. Past TLIPers have gone on to work in the White House, Congress, various state agencies, and the private sector, and three are current members of the Texas House of Representatives.

Students receive a minimum of six and a maximum of fifteen academic credit hours for participating in the program, which combines academic study and research with supervised practical training. Undergraduate and graduate students interested in the political process and in the kind of humanitarian service exemplified by the late Congressman Mickey Leland are encouraged to apply for admission to TLIP. A TLIP internship lasts for one academic semester and affords students an opportunity to experience public service firsthand.

Student biography

Mona D. Smith has worked for the United States Department of Treasury for 8 years. She is currently a senior at the University of Houston-Downtown and will graduate in spring 2017 with a Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice. Mona will continue her education and pursue both a Master’s degree in Administration of Justice and a Juris Doctorate at Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Mona hopes to be a catalyst for change against the disparities within the American criminal justice system.

To learn more about the program, visit www.rodneyellis.com/tlip.

The Long and Winding Road to the Republican Nomination

by Jason J. Rivas

The 1970 classic by the Beatles is an unlikely method of describing the current road to the Republican nomination in July. However, that is precisely what 2016 has become for the Grand Ole Party. Six candidates have succumbed to the tumultuous travels of Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina. Now, the remaining candidates must trudge along and survive Nevada and South Carolina in order to see whether their road to Super Tuesday remains clear.

Mike Huckabee and Rick Santorum learned that Iowa would not resuscitate their campaigns like before. Both men had captured the Iowan evangelical and populist spotlight in their respective campaigns in 2008 and 2012. However, 2016 proved too arduous for a repeat performance by either. Huckabee and Santorum had placed all their chips on Iowa, but caucus-goers were unmoved by their staunch, social conservative philosophy, as both finished near the bottom of the pecking order. Iowa's last victim is perhaps the most noteworthy. Rand Paul launched his campaign on a great deal of promise and hope. The tea-party favorite senator was heralded for his push to decrease government oversight, protect civil liberties, and his isolationist philosophies seemed appealing to many moderates, particularly the younger generations. His work in reaching across party lines, visiting urban areas and liberal colleges, and prison reform agenda made him a champion for moderates and libertarians, but his message never connected with those deeper within the party. Senator Paul has stated his intention to continue the fight to reform Washington as he begins to focus on his senate reelection campaign. The future Republican nominee would be wise to reach out to Paul, as his libertarian-focused ideology may become more attractive to voters, and balance out the ticket. With Iowa in the backdrop, New Hampshire arrived to thin out the conservative pool even further. Carly Fiorina became the first casualty. Her ill-informed crusade against Planned Parenthood, as well as her polarizing message failed to materialize much support from conservatives, forcing her to resign from the race. The other victim of New Hampshire was

Chris Christie. His leadership through Hurricane Sandy, as well as embracement of Barack Obama's support through the aftermath of the storm cast him favorably among his constituents, but also created some sentiments of ill will with hardline conservatives. He easily won reelection in 2013, but was soon marred by the controversy, coined "Bridgegate;" several of his aides had shut down a bridge that connected a New Jersey suburb to New York City, as an act of political retribution. He struggled for months to break away from the crowded field, and eventually rested his entire campaign on New Hampshire, where it floundered. His, once boisterous, voice now reduced to that of a whimper. Christie, though, would not go down without adding some chaos to the field. On February 6, Christie decimated Senator Marco Rubio through a series of exchanges in which Christie questioned Rubio's leadership credentials. Rubio, rather than defending his record, continued rehashing the same, Obama-bashing denigrations that exposed his weakness of being a rehearsed, rather than able, leader. Rubio, however, is seen by many within the Party as the future. He is young, ambitious, and has a tantalizing background as the son of Cuban exiles. His approach, thus far, is to pick up as many delegates as possible, avoid any crossfire from Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, and maintain solid finishes ahead of John Kasich. This strategy would make him the ideal candidate for the Republican establishment. As for Jeb, Super Tuesday is now lost in the clouds of defeat. Last year, Jeb appeared to be the presumptive nominee: he had a solid record as governor of Florida, maintained good relations with all outliers of the Party, especially with the Latino community, and had a prestigious name among conservatives. Unfortunately though, the Trump/Cruz campaigns — as well as his protégé, Rubio — have exposed substantial flaws in his campaign strategy. He seemed awkward and unable to captivate voters in the early states, with some of the establishment now switching their allegiances to Rubio. Bush placed the remainder of his political influence and allure of his family name in South Carolina. He vigorously stumped with his father and brother by his side. However,

the gregarious Trump, Cruz, and Rubio machines dismantled his remaining support in the state, forcing him to drop out of the race after a lackluster fourth place finish, leaving Kasich and Carson as the next potential victims of the three-horsed juggernaut.

Kasich and Carson are also in need of delegates in order to facilitate their campaigns further. Kasich thus far has shown resilience despite a lack of funds and interest. He earned a respectable second place finish in New Hampshire, catapulting his numbers in polls. Kasich, unlike the other candidates, has stayed out of most of the brawls in the spotlight. As well, his message over Medicaid and immigration has been welcomed by many moderates. His platform is based on compassion towards the less-fortunate and ability to be a problem-solver. Kasich may not get the nomination, but he will certainly catch the attention of the presumptive nominee when seeking a running mate.

As for Carson, the campaign seems to be at a make-or-break point, come Super Tuesday. Carson's oddball style of debate, as well as questionable statements, have failed to generate similar success as Trump and Cruz. Low poll numbers suggest that Super Tuesday may be out of reach for his campaign.

Cruz though, has found extraordinary success throughout his campaign. His polarizing message, based on his stringent religious ideology, has made him an evangelical and Tea Party darling. Washington elites fear that the White House will be out of reach with him as their nominee. But Cruz's support has shown that he has a strong following. The Republican Party is in need of a jolt of energy, and he and Trump have, so far, delivered. Cruz has been hailed as the second coming of Ronald Reagan, and has pushed for a restoration of conservative values towards governance. To win the White House, though, the next nominee must be willing to adopt moderate principles, present a comprehensive plan for immigration reform, present a logical case as to why liberal governance has failed, provide a better alternative for Obamacare, and prove they are the candidate capable of defeating Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton in November.



Bad Blood: No Slut Shaming

by Elisa Gonzalez

In the last few years, #slutshaming has gained serious attention across social media; taking American culture to task for continuing a double standard that long predates the internet: criticizing women, but not men, for their sexual conduct. It's a form of sexism so deeply seeded culturally, that women, themselves, are often the perpetrators of it without even realizing its harmful effects.

Oxford Dictionary defines slut-shaming as: "the action or fact of stigmatizing a woman for engaging in behavior judged to be promiscuous or sexually provocative." It's a perfect definition which rightfully includes reference to sexual provocation.

When Beyoncé performed at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards declaring herself a feminist, to a public whose response was widespread disbelief, it was a fierce and timely endorsement of feminism. Sadly, swarms of people—many of them women—aimed to discredit her commitment to the movement because of her "sexually provocative" image. "Twerking is not feminism," said singer Annie Lennox soon after that performance.

Remember when the numbers of Bill Cosby's sexual assault accusations were steadily climbing? Even though the depth of the accusations had not reached their full capacity yet, supermodel/reality TV star Janice Dickinson came forward with her experience of being victimized by Mr. Cosby. Cosby's lawyers and the, yet skeptical, public quickly pointed to her history of drug use and sexual proclivities in an attempt to discredit her. This tactic later served as Cosby's go-to defense for many of the charges waged against him. This is slut-shaming, but also a form of the even more sinister: victim-shaming.

One of the most recent examples of slut-shaming that comes to mind is part of a newly-issued warning from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), which warns women—and only women—about the increased threat of sexually transmitted diseases when choosing to drink excessively, because "Women who binge drink are more likely to have unprotected sex and multiple sex partners," according to the

CDC. In another fateful pairing of victim/slut shaming, the report goes on to warn women of the heightened threat of rape when drinking. The article received massive backlash online, and it makes you wonder: are there any ladies working at the CDC? Surely there must have been one who saw that report and thought, this might be biased. The fact that the report was published proves that when it comes to slut-shaming, too many women are either unable to recognize it or too uncomfortable to speak out about it.

This crime against women is such a significant part of history that, instead of speaking out against it, women are pressured or misled into participating in it. It stems from the old-fashioned beliefs passed down from the most conservative of generations, back when it was accepted for the masses to assume a woman was only as valuable as she was pure. It was those same old-fashioned beliefs that relegated women and minorities to powerless positions in society. And it is those same old-fashioned beliefs—with their stubborn refusal to surrender—that threaten the social progress the millennial generation is making.

Because it is so commonplace, slut-shaming might seem harmless to some—those being judged should just not let it bother them, right? The problem is not simply calling out prominent female figures for being too sexy or too promiscuous. The problem is that when women have to answer to qualifying criteria that men do not, they are left with less time to showcase all of their infinite strengths.



Pro Rape Rally...Really?

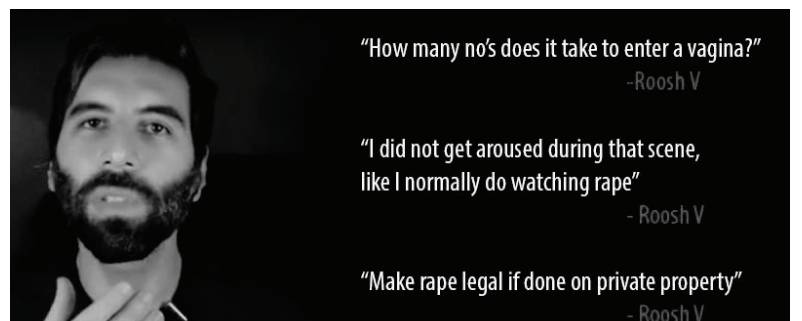
by Kara Moore

With the GOP race going strong, we've all heard some views that are a little out of the norm. Building a wall along the Mexican Border (Trump), "Carpet bombing" ISIS until sand glows in the dark (Cruz), and making college education free (Sanders). All kinds of statements you'd expect at this point during primary election campaigning. One view no politician can seem to get behind, though, making rape legal on private property.

It all started in his mother's basement. Daryush "Roosh" Valizadeh, a self-described Pick-Up Artist from Maryland, started a website called "Return of Kings." The website, which promotes "neo-masculinist" ideas, has such article titles as "Why Men Are Intellectually Superior to Women," "Do Women Prefer Drama Instead Of Justice," and "5 Ways to Groom an Indian Girl to Be a Subservient Wife." If you don't find any of these headlines sexist or cringe-worthy, Return of Kings is your kind of place. Apparently this is true for many others, as a BBC study found that roughly a million people use the website.

Of course, this figure may be a little higher now because what really drew attention to Roosh's ideas was a video he made. In the video, he advocated for the legalization of rape on private property in order to "hold women accountable for their actions." It is Roosh's belief that women should not go home with men they don't intend to sleep with—and that if legal rape were a threat, they wouldn't. He then planned over 40 intercontinental meet-ups for these people, who have since been dubbed "pro-rape advocates" to get together, which caused international outrage.

In Canada, a league of women boxers promised to show up at the meetings to protest them. Australia saw a petition to ban Roosh from entering the country. Right here at home, Governor Greg Abbott stated, "This pathetic group and their disgusting viewpoints are not welcome in Texas." Clearly, Roosh was making more enemies than friends, which is why he decided to cancel the meetings altogether. The meeting planned in Houston was supposed to take place near the arch of the Sam Houston Monument in Hermann Park. Many people planned to go and protest during the event. Even after its cancellation, people still showed up with some flashlights and double-checked the monument, swinging the lights around in the darkness looking for pro-rape advocates. While not quite the bright, angry protest that was anticipated, it's clear that a majority of Houstonians were not quite behind the idea of legal rape under any circumstance.



This Conversation Must Be Had

by Joshua Burgman

When Beyoncé took the stage during the halftime show of Super Bowl 50, a good majority of the American public were not ready for the message she was preparing to deliver. Following Queen Bey's controversial performance, Kendrick Lamar shocked the 2016 Grammy audience with a politically-infused rap lyric and a not-so-subtle visual that shed light on the woes of America's criminal justice system. The outrage that followed each of their artistically political statements, was a clear indication that the conversation on race in this country has yet to reach its zenith.

As I watched Beyoncé and her cadre of all-female dancers, dressed in costumes that paid homage to the legendary black activist organization, the Black Panther Party, I was happy for her. Being able to express oneself, especially in such a highly publicized, artistic manner, must have been quite liberating. Given the passion with which she performed, it was clear that the Houston born musician had something to say.

Although she does not publicize it, the Grammy award-winning singer is a major contributor to causes that support the uplifting of black people. In Houston alone, Beyoncé has donated millions to organizations that work to make better lives for the less fortunate. When she released her new song "Formation," and the video that went with the melody, she introduced the world to a voice that we've never heard from her before; a voice condemning police brutality and advocating for the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Panthers. Sadly, it was not well-received by all.

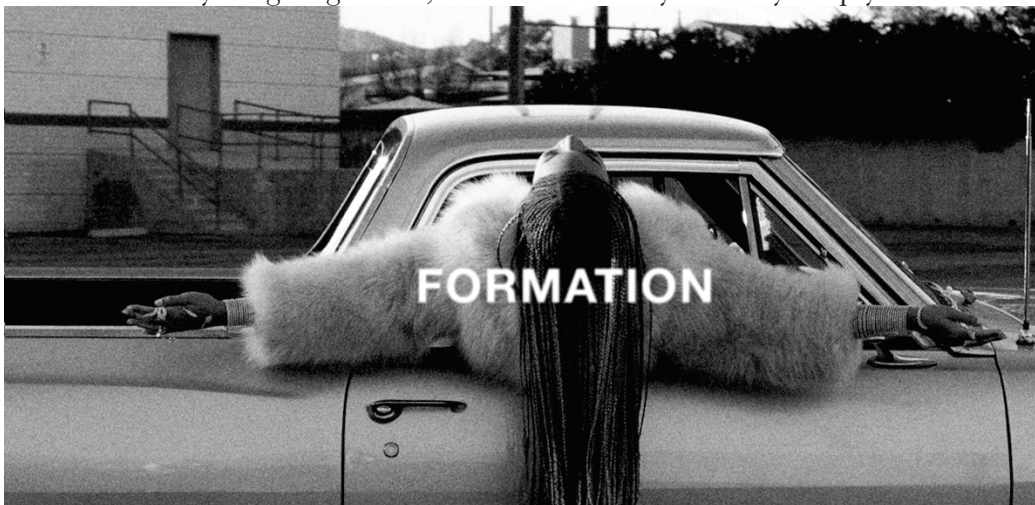
Robert Arnold, a sheriff in Rutherford County, Tenn., was completely put off by the performance. "With everything that happened since the Super Bowl...that's what I'm thinking: Here's another target on law enforcement," he told The Washington Post. Arnold was referring to Beyoncé's super bowl performance and Formation video which begged law enforcement to "stop shooting us;" "us" meaning black Americans. Arnold would later go on to explain that his statement "reflect[s] the violence and senseless killing of seven deputies in the U.S. since the show aired. My comments are an observation of the violence that has occurred, but in no way is meant to offend anyone." His comments also reflect those of former New York Mayor, Rudi Giuliani. "I thought she used it as a platform to attack police officers," he told the hosts of FOX and Friends. Both of their remarks reminded me of the infamous statement made by Malcom X, when asked about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. "When you send your chickens out in the morning from your barnyard, those chickens will return that evening to your barnyard; not your neighbor's barnyard," X told the New York Times. "I think this is a prime example of the devil's chickens coming home to roost."

Then there was Kendrick Lamar. I'm still rendered speechless by his performance as I write this. The intensity of Lamar's production translated his message in a way that stunned even the black community; he performed with such profound fury. When he took the stage, as the leader of an all-black chain gang, surrounded by his band, which were in jail cells—the message was clear before he even spoke a word.

In her New York Times bestselling book, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness," author Michelle Alexander illustrates Lamar's points beautifully. "The criminal justice system was strategically employed to force African Americans back into a system of extreme repression and control," she says. "A tactic that would continue to prove successful for generations to come," Alexander writes.

The truth is, Beyoncé and Lamar weren't saying anything new. The problem is that they were saying it. After both their performances, the term "unapologetically black" came up a lot, referring to the no-holds-barred manner in which both performers relayed their message. Personally, I prefer the way Legal Analyst Sunny Hostin refers to the term. "Unapologetically socially conscious," is the way she described it while speaking with the ladies on the daytime talk show, The View.

Any way you slice it, what Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar did was attempt to have a real conversation regarding racial issues in this country; something white America does not seem to be ready for. I liken the situation to what one would expect during family therapy. When families are referred to a family therapist, it is usually because they have issues that are deeply seeded, and it isn't until they have open and honest conversations about those issues, that they are able to solve anything. Right now, our human family has very deeply-seated issues, and the conversation must be had!



*Top Left and Top Right:
Still image captures from Beyoncé's
"Formation" music video*

*Bottom Left: Performers during the
Superbowl 50 halftime performance*

Color Me Happy

by Chelsea Chance

Students often find themselves struggling to focus on their studies as they begin to stress over the expanding pile of work each semester demands. No matter how well we study, the brain can only handle learning so much information before a break is necessary. Unfortunately, constant Internet access is both a blessing and a curse. Without the Internet, students lose a lot of useful resources. With it, procrastination wields its greatest weapon, which can affect even the most diligent student. Before we know it, our “short break” has consisted of 12 episodes of our latest television obsession, with only one chapter down and four more to go.

Today, anything resembling a study-break quickly results in hours of precious time being thrown out the window, producing an abundance of unhelpful anxiety. With the threat of midterms looming ever closer, college students will begin to stress more than usual as they start cramming and are inadvertently sucked into a cycle of studying, stressing and time wasting.

But how are students expected to unwind without losing hours of study time? Many recreational activities can be either time-consuming, expensive, or both. The answer lies in a pastime most of us haven't revisited since childhood: coloring. From choosing your favorite colors, to the repetitive motion of filling in the lines on the page, the entire coloring process has been defined as a type of “active meditation.”

Though adult coloring books have gained much popularity in the past two years, they have been around for quite some time. Psychologist Ben Michaelis stated, “There is a lot of history of people coloring for mental health reasons. Carl Jung used to try to get his patients to color in mandalas at the turn of the last century as a way of getting people to focus on the subconscious to let go. Now we know it has a lot of other stress-busting qualities as well.”

For those of us who prefer to have a creative outlet, coloring is a great alternative. Not only does it offer multiple anxiety-reducing benefits, it simultaneously instills feelings of nostalgia and happier times. “Coloring definitely has therapeutic potential to reduce anxiety, create focus or bring [about] more mindfulness,” says Marygrace Berberian, a certified art therapist and the Clinical Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator for the Graduate Art Therapy Program

at NYU.

Coloring allows us to switch off our brains from our daily worries and focus only on the black and white lines before us. Psychologists found that coloring, in or out of the lines, helps unlock creative potential. Additionally, it can relieve tension and anxiety, something we college students have a surplus of.

This genre of books currently occupies multiple spots on Amazon's top-100 bestselling books list. The UHD bookstore now offers three different books waiting to be filled in, and for the student on a budget, a quick search on the Internet will yield an abundance of free coloring pages ready for printing. From floral patterns, to Harry Potter Creatures, to Swear Words, there is a coloring pattern for everyone.



JooYoung Choi's Exhibition: Paracosmic Alchemy Is Here!

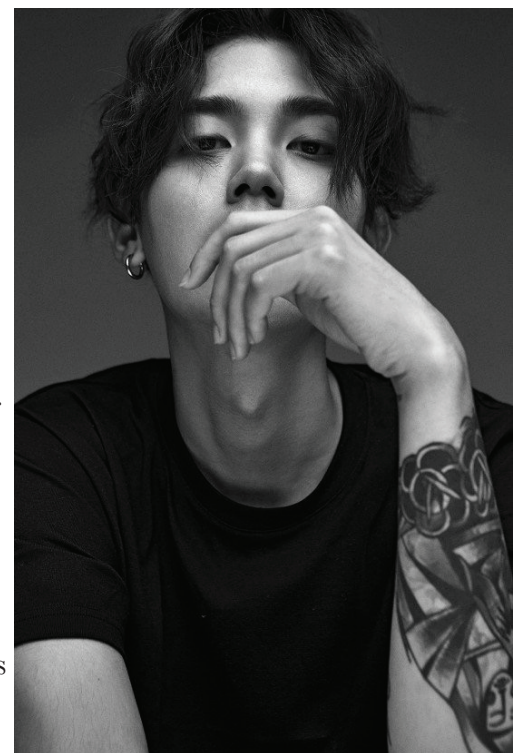
by Karen Reyes

Houston-based artist JooYoung Choi is currently displaying her exhibition, Paracosmic Alchemy. On Feb 12, Choi's work was debuted at Montrose art gallery, Anya Tish Gallery, and will be available until March 12. In this exhibition, Choi creates characters in her own fictitious world called “The Cosmic Womb.” She draws largely on her personal life, from her experience with adoption to her search for identity.

Choi was born in South Korea and soon after was adopted to an American family from New Hampshire. While she completed her BFA in Boston, she also reunited with her birth-family. Coming from such a diverse background, many of her art inspirations derive from her culture.

The Cosmic Womb is a world of stories created through painting, video art, animation, puppetry, and music. The paracosm, which is a highly constructed imaginary world, is a 6,732-mile structure governed by Queen Kiok, six humanoid creatures called Tuplets, and one earthling from Concord. Just by this description of Choi's imagination, you can tell how amazingly talented and inventive she is.

The vast imaginary world of Choi is a form of narrative, serving a purpose in addressing challenging issues — through playful descriptions — such as: racism, systemic oppression, personal identity, and memory. She desires to engage her viewers in a way that will evoke curiosity and learning. JooYoung Choi's intense and vivid paintings, videos, and sculpture installations are on full display. Make sure to be part of this fictitious world before it disappears from our city forever.



2016 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo: Gun and Port-a-Potty Free

by Elisa Gonzalez

If you're a fan of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLSR), the best thing about it, is that it comes every year and at just the right time: when the pangs of smoked turkey leg withdrawals intensify, when you long for the soothing rhythm of heavy boots beating the dirt, and when restaurant barbecue just doesn't seem quite smoky enough. The season is upon us, and according to reports it promises to be the sacred Houston event you know and love, with a couple of noteworthy distinctions concerning vastly different issues.

As most at UHD are aware (by way of Gatormail), 2016 marked Texas' inauguration of both Campus Carry and Open Carry, to which HLSR — like most family-friendly public events/spaces — was expected to respond. In an official statement on its website, the HLSR wrote, "The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, in an effort to provide a safe environment and promote a family-friendly atmosphere at the city's iconic entertainment event, will prohibit concealed and open carry of handguns by private citizens at the 2016 Show."

Unsurprisingly, there have been a few reports of backlash from open carry advocates concerning HLSR's ban. Leaders of Open Carry Texas (the state's official open carry advocacy group) criticized the decision. According to Chron.com, David Amad, the organization's vice president, cried foul: "It's the livestock show caving into the fears of the gun control crowd. Some people don't like guns and they can't explain why."

The banning of firearms in Houston's more family-oriented spaces and events has been largely undisputed. The Houston Zoo, all of Houston's museums, and all of Houston's

major sports and concert venues have all also exercised their rights to remain gun-free, with little protest from the public.

On a less serious note, HLSR has made another official announcement about this year's event, and it eliminates an almost universally despised activity: using port-a-potties. According to the Houston Chronicle, the festival will be providing "comfort stations" where fans can expect to find flushable toilets, running sinks, and air conditioning. Could HSLR be setting a new standard for Houston festivals going forward? One can only hope.

As per usual, fans can also expect to find world-class musicians, the likes of which make deciding which night to attend especially difficult for those of us on a student's budget. This year's lineup includes Jason Aldean, Pitbull, Luke Bryan, Darius Rucker, and Florida Georgia Line, just to name a few.

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	VALUE WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 The Band Perry	2 Chris Young	3 Jason Aldean	4 Jason Derulo	5 Cole Swindell
6 Shawn Mendes	7 Miranda Lambert	8 Pitbull	9 Brett Eldredge	10 Luke Bryan	11 Darius Rucker	12 Billy Currington
13 Go Tejano Day	14 Kenny Chesney	15 Kid Rock	16 Jake Owen	17 Florida Georgia Line	18 Little Big Town	19 Brad Paisley
20 Keith Urban						

2016 Tickets on sale Jan. 16 at 10 a.m. (Online Waiting Room opens at 9:30 a.m.)
Create or update your MyAXS account at axs.com/rodeohouston_registration
Value Wednesdays include \$10 upper level Rodeo tickets, plus values throughout NRG Park.
Weekday Performances 6:45 p.m. • Weekend Performances 3:45 p.m.

Local Band Becomes National Sensation

by Terrence Turner

On Feb. 10th, just minutes away from UHD's campus, a listening party was held for the debut album of a local Houston band that has been making a Texas-sized mark on the national scene. The Suffers, formed in 2011 by Adam Castaneda (bass) and Patrick Kelly (vocals/keyboards), is a 10-piece band that includes lead vocalist Kam Franklin, Alex Zamora (guitar), Kevin Bernier (guitar), Cory Wilson (saxophone), Jon Durbin (trumpet), Michael Razo (trombone), Jose Luna (percussion), and Nick Zamora (drums). Their sound, which they call "Gulf Coast soul," is a musical gumbo of blues, country, rock, R&B, Cajun and Caribbean genres.

The band's name, according to Franklin, originated from apparent frustration with its lack of appreciation from the industry. She told Glide magazine that the name came from a Jamaican film called "Rockers." In that film, she said, "the Sufferers are people that are putting out music and putting out art, but are not getting anything in return for it;" a syllable is removed from the bands title, to make it easier to say.

If they were worried about being overlooked, the Suffers' fears have been completely dispelled. Last March, they landed a gig at the famed Austin music festival South by Southwest, they also appeared on "The Late Show" with David Letterman. In August, they won 11 Houston Press Music Awards including Best Horns, Best Bassist, Best Keys, and Local Musician of the Year (for Franklin). Just three days after an appearance on "The Daily Show" with Trevor Noah, their newest album was released on Feb. 12th. Check out music store shelves to get it now!



10-piece
American soul
band,
The Suffers

photo credit:
Daniel Jackson

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		MARCH				
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Chill Out with EVC! 11-2pm Next to Starbucks	3 Xperience Stem at 3rd Floor Coffee House 12-2pm	4	5
6	7	8	9 Roberto Franzosi "Things to do With Words" N1099. 2:20-3:20pm	10 Get Your Geek On! A423 3:30-4:30pm	11	12
13 Daylight Savings Set Clocks 1 Hour Forward	SPRING BREAK!!			17 St. Patrick's Day	SPRING BREAK!!	
20	21	22	23	24 StandOUT! Drag Show Meteor Lounge 7-9pm Nancy Lopez "Wounded Innocence" N1099. 2:30-3:30pm	25 Good Friday	26
27 Easter Sunday!	28	29	30	31		

WRITING & READING CENTER



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