

ISSUE 35 free

### TABLE OF CONTENTS TO PEE OR NOT TO PEE 6 Bathrooms, Rated | Daisy Foule **SWEET MEMES ARE MADE OF THIS** 10 Recipe for Zesty Meme Cuisine | Eugene Cheng ISLA VISTA BELOW THE SURFACE 14 A collection of Underwater Images | Marco Mazza **IN VERSE** 18 Our Poetry Selections | Michelle Politiski THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM 20 Conservatives and Republicans at UCSB | Libby Landells- Hayward 94 I Spy with My Little Eye ... | Jess Chou **UCSB SMASH** 26 You Trynna Catch These Hands? | Will Stone WORD'S DECLASSIFIED UCSB SURVIVAL GUIDE 30 For Freshmen, Transfers, and Anyone Confused | Hailey Gross ALL FRILLS NO "THRILLER" 33 A Fully Illustrated Halloween Playlist | Zoë Jones and Tarush Mohanti 36 Isla Vista Events | Isla Vista Arts IS IT COOL TO JUUL? 38 Vapes and E-Cigs in IV | Mai Le DARE TO BE BARE 49 The Naked Souls of IV | Marina Sonn SWIPE-CISM 44 46 The Ultimate Test of Your Gym Persona | Madison Hallam BEING A BROWN GIRL IN A BARBIE KEN WORLD 48 Sorority Life as a Woman of Color | Khando Dolma **RUFF MORNING** 50 A Far-Fetched Tail of a Good Boy | Cassidy Brown INK'D 56 Tattoo Artist of Isla Vista | Alaska Yokota AN ODE TO THE FUTON 58 A Tribute to an IV Staple | Ushma Patel GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN 59 James Gelb's Reputation | Michelle Politiski SIERRA HOTEL **62** Hanging with the Sunset Club | Cassidy Brown **ALBINO RACOON** Beware of E.S.T. | Madison Mead

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We're all just bumbling around trying to make it.

Maybe you're trying to make it through the quarter without falling victim to the allure of "good enough." Maybe you want to make it to winter break without losing another Hydroflask. Or maybe you just want to survive the first week of class without going to the wrong lecture hall.

Inevitably, plans are going to change. So why even make them? Isla Vista—and college in general—is for spontaneity. It's for last-minute decisions to enroll in Elementary Bowling with your friends. For taking study breaks with your roommates to dance around the apartment. For swerving onto Pardall at the last second to bury your face in some Freebirds on the way home.

Being a part of the team here at WORD has shown me that if college teaches you anything, it's that there's no such thing as "being prepared." When our wise and beloved editor had to bow out last quarter, everybody rose to the occasion and made this magazine happen. I'm honored to take over his role as editor and can't wait to work with this incredibly talented team that brought Issue 35 to life—even if it didn't go exactly as planned.

Because none of us know what we're doing. None of us stick to Plan A (or B, C, D, E, F, or G). The only way to ensure that things go right is to sit back and enjoy the ride.

Everything will happen the way it's not supposed to.

Cassidy Brown
Co-Editor in Chief

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO SEE PAST ISSUES AT WORDMAGAZINE.ORG

WORD MAGAZINE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:









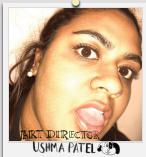




Editor in Chief (Apparently?)



ART DIRECTOR MADISON MEAD &... FUTURE CATLADY



future dog lady

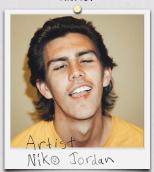


Michelle Politiski Poetry Snob















Daisy Houle





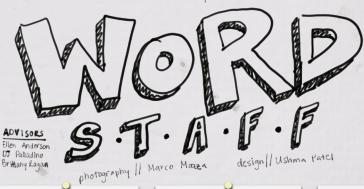


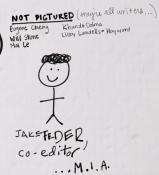




















In our last issue, we reviewed the perfect cup of coffee. We thought it only seemed fit that we alleviate your subsequent state of emergency by guiding you to Campus and Isla Vista's finest (or far from it) bathrooms.







The abundance of natural light and the breathtaking vision of Goleta's serene coast makes the experience in this "gold standard" of a restroom remarkably unique. Users are completely alone in this spacious chamber, thus it cultivates a feeling of a "safe space:" a space free of external judgement. Additionally, this restroom includes a well-placed handrail, further enhancing the sensation of ease in this oasis. Might we suggest taking full advantage of this rare facility by refraining from technology use? Rather, you should find yourself immersed in the serenity of nature's vision and take this time to reconnect with your body—you may even get in touch with your inner you and find yourself in child's pose or maybe even occupy the space for a little longer in savasana.

The white tiled floors are clean and appealing due to infrequent use of this fourth floor hidden treasure. One critique however, is the inequity between this chamber and its corresponding female lavatory which lacks the awe-inspiring window. This social atrocity did not go unnoticed. However, we would like to encourage anyone reading this review to make a point of experiencing the sanctuary that is this restroom regardless of gender.

Rating: (Not to Pee) 12345678910 (To Pee)

### BUGHANAN WOMBN'S

Upon entering, our impression was, "This is just another bathroom among the plethora of decomposing facilities." The interior design is minimally detailed, and each fixture is some variation of a banal, off-white shade: while we applaud the continuity of the chosen color scheme, it is clouded by the facility's aged and slightly unkempt state and left us feeling unsatisfied.

We were disappointed to find broken latches, leaving the left and center stalls unusable. We tried not to let this inconvenience taint our already sub-standard experience, but this was nothing in comparison to the pandemonium we were about to find. The interior panels of the right-most stall exhibit a barrage of student angst. "WHITE GIRLS CAN'T WEAR HOOPS" is scribbled in all caps alongside an active poll: "Buddha Bowls vs. Woodstocks" and a message stating, "Animals are here with us not for us, go vegan." We were struck by the intense student passion demonstrated by this vandalism, and it left us impressed with the raw personality this restroom was able to capture.

Rating: (Not to Pee) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (To Pee)







This location lies off campus in the heart of Isla Vista on the Embarcadero del Mar side of Ansiq'Oyo' Park. This lavatory's setting elicits much lower expectations of luxury and comfort, but this did not compensate for the dissatisfying quality of our experience. The cold metal seats were alarmingly narrow and low, and the overwhelmingly foul stench that felt deeply entrenched. We were disappointed at the presence of an odor given the adequate waste disposal system in place.

We were pleasantly surprised by some redeeming qualities including the colorful, aquatic-themed ceramic tiles circling the space. Additionally, the roof of this chamber has been removed and replaced with the panel of a chain-link fence. This permits transmission of natural light, as well as prompts a comfortable degree of air circulation. We noticed an air dryer was the only hand drying option installed but would like to report effectiveness and adequate pressure. The atypical character and thoughtful features undoubtedly aid the Ansiq'oyo' Park bathroom in lying a step above the park lavatories we customarily see, and it recieves extra glory for its keeping of many from peeing on the streets.

Rating: (Not to Pee) 12 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (To Pee)

UGEN PO





Pleasantly surprised would be a gross understatement of our impressions as we swept open the door to the powder room on the ground floor of the University Center. Given the UCen's recent position in headlines and on elections ballots due to its inadequacy, we were shocked at the high-caliber architectural feat exhibited by this room. We typically see similar aesthetics in luxurious settings, often hotel lobbies, not adjacent to a crumbling university post office.

The deep, earthly brown tones of the interior fixtures, the granite countertops, and the warm but slightly dim lighting radiates a feeling of comfort. The faux wooden floors and the artistic stone work on the walls immediately put us at ease. The countertop mirrors bordered in rich mahogany-esque wood frames provide ideal photography locations. The atrium is spacious and houses a highly functional full-length mirror. The pressure of the hand dryers is efficient, but the faucets could expel water more forcefully. If A.S. is thoroughly dissatisfied with their current assigned spaces, they may want to consider meeting in this stunning chamber just one set of stairs down.

Rating: (Not to Pee) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (To Pee) 11







Join us at our weekly meetings! Thursdays from 6-7:30pm Contact us at hrb@as.ucsb.edu.

We promote open education and awareness regarding basic human rights principles through event forums and educational campaigns.

WANT TO SEE YOUR ORGANIZATION OR CLUB IN WORD MAGAZINE? Contact our Ad Coordinator at madisonthallam@gmail.com to get an ad placed in our next issue for only \$20.





words // Eugene Cheng illustration + design // Justin Taing

### Where were you when you first saw the UCSB Hitler meme?

The date is Friday, December 8th, and David Lee is feeling antsy. Like many of his fellow students, the UCSB freshman found himself wandering through lecture notes and study guides like Stevie Wonder at a house of mirrors. This was still three days before Chancellor Yang would announce the postponement of finals due to the Thomas Fire.

"There was a lot of nervous energy surrounding UCSB," Lee recounted. "That energy just couldn't be translated into studying." Channeling the kinetic hysteria within himself and the collective student body, Lee created a moment in time indicative of our prevailing moods.

Lee's iteration of the Downfall parody was one of many student-made creations that found its way onto our laptop screens during those chaotic few days. Armed with resentment in one hand and N95 masks in the other, students begrudgingly

maintained their studies while shoving their concerns into other outlets—like browsing memes. They say it's always better to suffer with company.

Rising from the descending smoke was "UCSB Zesty Meme Cuisine for Horny Teens"—previously named "UCSB Fiery Memes for Ashy Teens"—our very own Facebook meme group. Peek inside and you'll find an image of a panting SpongeBob donning a Gaucho hat with the caption: "Me after biking up the slight incline at Pardall Tunnel." Another post is without any bells and whistles, just a picture of a text message: "I was hungry and didn't have time for breakfast so I just ate an Adderall."

Sophomores Anthony Nguyen, Andrew Doan, Adil Troung, and Alvin Bui make up Zesty Meme Cuisine's administrative committee. "We were sitting in Ortega and we were trying to find a meme page for the school," Nguyen explained. "There wasn't anything funny." Like Lee, dead week was the catalyst for these old floor mates. "Let's do something crazy, let's find an outlet to do something," Bui said, playing his younger self.

Bui shrugged and suggested, "Okay, let's start a meme page."

Various members came and went since its inception in December 2016, but within a year they had amassed a three-thousand member following. The meme quartet shared moderating duties, with Nguyen being the most eager to contribute handcrafted content in addition to those posted by regulars. But everything changed when the Thomas Fire attacked.

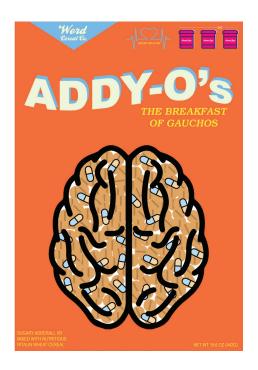
"I woke up one morning," Nguyen said, "and everyone's texting me: 'Ay bro, your meme page blowing up!'" They capitalized off their newfound success by—you guessed it—making more memes. When the dust finally settled, Zesty Meme Cuisine's membership ballooned up to ten thousand. As of May 2018, they are within reach of fifteen thousand members.

Memes are, in a way, inherently unoriginal—even down to their origin story. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins unwittingly became the Christopher Columbus of memes after coining the

term in 1976 to describe a "unit of cultural transmission" analogous to genetic replication through natural selection—songs, ideas, clothes, catch phrases, and the like. The transformation of memes into viral internet creations is a "hijacking of the original idea," Dawkins stated, which substitutes Darwinian selection's random chance with deliberate design by human creativity.

"Hijacking" is, with a few exceptions, a necessary process in meme creation. Break down the funniest, most inventive memes of our time and you'll find two moving parts. Memes cannot exist without introducing familiar aspects—such as a movie scene or a relatable scenario—within the meme. But what makes memes greater than the sum of its parts is the juxtaposition of one familiar aspect with another, resulting in a recontextualized final product.

Most of Zesty Meme Cuisine's celebrated posts are existing memes painted in a Gaucho-colored coating. Lee's infamous creation merely demanded new set of



Another post is without any bells and whistles, just a picture of a text message:
"I was hungry and didn't have time for breakfast so I just ate an Adderall."

subtitles over the timeless Hitler meme. It has over two thousand likes. Even the group's name is a direct cut and paste from an existing UCSB meme group.

Not surprisingly, Zesty Meme Cuisine follows in the footsteps of established meme pages from other colleges, with "UC Berkeley Memes For Edgy Teens" being the granddaddy of them all. Last year, one of its moderators published a blog post on *The Daily Californian's* website that outlined what constituted good and bad memes. Good memes have originality as the "key ingredient," while "the bad and the overdone go hand-in-hand." Above all, the author advised all future meme enthusiasts to "avoid the boring memes that lack the edginess they deserve."

To that, our local admins respectfully disagree. "A really good meme is something that's understandable and relatable to everyone," said Bui. Nguyen added: "When you come to this school and it's so big and scary, you need a community where people just relate to each other and have fun together."

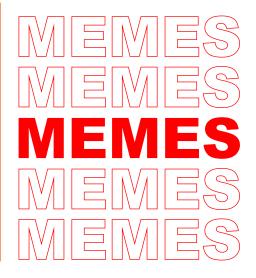
Maybe our meme culture is underdeveloped compared to that of Berkeley or UCLA; they've certainly been in the game longer. Or maybe that's just not our style—aren't we known for our laid-back attitude? "Every page has a different feel," Nguyen said. "There's a different culture, and that really depends on the school."

Regardless, the moderators of Zesty Meme Cuisine place their focus less on overseeing cutting-edge, revolutionary memes, and more on fostering an online gathering space for campus and IV culture to thrive. Nguyen insisted that despite their admin status, "we're not running the show—it's the people making original content." So what if the only alterations made to a well-circulated meme is an added caption about roundabouts and Yerba Mate?

Integral to the administrative group's moderating philosophy is their lack of input into the Zesty Meme Cuisine ecosystem. Although internet memes are made and shared by human design, the UCSB admins are taking every step to ensure their organic growth beyond creation. Besides responding to individual complaints and removing agenda-setting posts, the four moderators adopted a hands-off approach—deferring power to the community. And this postmodern philosophy needs no quality control.

The date is Thursday, June 20th, and the year is 2013. Dawkins is billed an

"If a meme's not good, you can tell because there's ten likes in two days," Nguyen explained. "But if a meme's fire and zesty as shit, then it'll blow up."

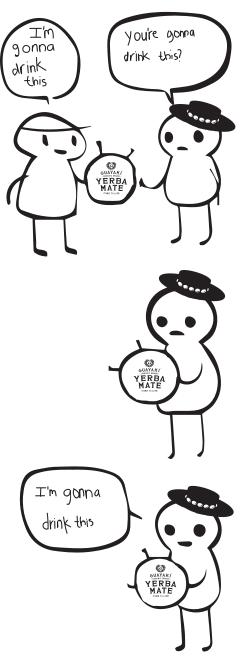


# "When you take memes too seriously, it stops being a meme and it stops being funny."

introduction slot for the New Directors Showcase at Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. After a short speech on memes and their viral nature, he suddenly exits stage left as the speakers in the theater play a snippet of his speech on a recorded loop. Slowly, the audio becomes more and more jumbled as psychedelic swatches of color flashed on the screens. There is some semblance of a song. Dawkins reappears for the last portion of the presentation; he plays a solo on some electronic wind instrument. Dawkins could not have possibly predicted the trajectory of his "meme" back in 1976. But an expert on Darwinian natural selection must understand the weight of randomness in changing just about everything. In 2013, the father of memes found himself within a meme, just one of millions in the world.

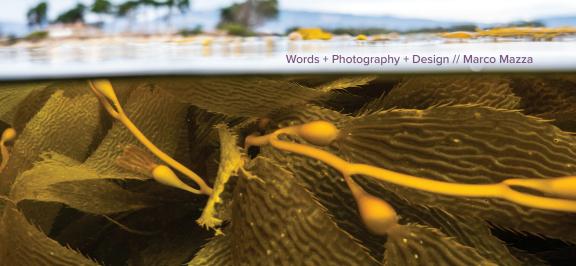
"I think the fact that we have a 'meme culture' is extremely strange," Lee said, "but I'm so glad it exists." Maybe in a few years' time memes will cease to be such a strange phenomenon. Academia has taken interest in studying its usage and impacts. Corporate heads are starting to incorporate memes into their marketing strategies. Or maybe internet memes will continue to evolve to face these changes.

Nguyen points out, "when you take memes too seriously, it stops being a meme and it stops being funny." w



# ISLA VISTA BELOW THE SURFACE

A COLLECTION OF UNDERWATER IMAGES TAKEN RIGHT HERE IN ISLA VISTA



Isla Vista is known for a lot of things: UCSB, sandy beaches, expensive bagels, dirty feet, biking through stop signs, and of course—the partying. But, college students aren't the only ones bustling around this town. In fact, Isla Vista is home to one of the most complex, diverse, and biologically productive ecosystems on earth. All you have to do is look just below the surface.



# A BEAM OF LIFE

An old I-Beam from the pier that once extended southeast off Devereux Point serves as a home for an incredible abundance of life.

### 1. WAVY TURBAN SNAIL

You've probably found the spiraled shells of these Turban Snails washed up in IV beaches. These mollusks cover the local reefs, grazing on algae and small invertebrates.

### 3. CABEZON

These fish often lie motionless, blending in with the surrounding reef. The Cabezon has a skin-like outer membrane rather than scales.

## 5. CALIFORNIA SPINY LOBSTER

They take up nearly every crevice in our local marine preserve. A few lucky ones have avoided the local fishery, growing up to 12 pounds, making them larger than small dogs.

### 2. GARIBALDI

Our California state fish can often be found wandering the reefs grazing on algae. These bright orange damselfish are known to defend their nests aggressively.

2

### 4. CALIFORNIA SHEEPSHEAD

This species of fish has the ability to change its sex from female to male in a matter of weeks (female pictured to the right). A male Sheepshead can weigh nearly 40 lbs.

6

### 6. CHESTNUT COWRIE

Cowries are known for their beautifully polished shells. Their mantles are able to cover the entire outside of the shell, polish it, and clean off external growth, keeping it nice and shiny.

### INHABITANTS OF THE REEF

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS: COMMON SIGHTS IN LOCAL WATERS



### THE SPANISH SHAWL **NUDIBRANCH**

These sea slugs only grow to a couple inches in length, but certainly make up for it in color. The bright orange appendages on their backs filter oxygen out of the water, and their brilliant coloration warns predators that this species is not an edible option.



### LEOPARD SHARKS

Hundreds of Leopard Sharks gather in the shallows on calm, warm days off Devereux beach. There are only a handful of aggregations this large in California—we are lucky to have them in our local waters. Harmless to humans, they will often scare off when we get close.



### **GIANT KELP**

Macrocystis pyrifera, is one of the fastest-growing organisms on Earth, growing at a rate of up to three feet per day. These towering columns of kelp are anchored to the ground by holdfasts that keep the kelp securely fastened to the surrounding reef in heavy current and swell. Although the kelpbeds here in Isla Vista only reach maximum depths of about 40 feet, individual stalks can grow over 100 feet long.



### THE BATRAY

These rays are often seen flying through the local kelp beds, or sifting through areas with sandy or muddy bottoms in search of food. Their wingspan can reach up to six feet. This particular ray happened to be missing its tail.



### THE TWO SPOT OCTOPUS

This cephalopod is not only able to change its color, it also has the ability to manipulate the texture of its body to match the surrounding reef. Octopi are some of the smartest creatures on earth, with communicative and problem solving skills that rival those of a small child.



harmless to humans, was once frequently caught, de-finned, then thrown back in the ocean and left to die just to meet the human demand for shark fin consumption. Fortunately, these sharks have been appearing more frequently in local kelp beds over the years. This particular shark, seen right off Devereux Point, was about eight feet long.

### DO YOUR PART

Most of us are only four-year visitors in this town. We shouldn't trash it and leave: life in IV goes beyond what the eye can see. The way we live our lives affects more than just ourselves. That plastic bottle you misplaced Friday night while wandering DP, those cigarette butts you dropped in the park, those beer cans you forgot on the beach, even that takeout container that never quite made it to the trash—they all have the potential of harming the fragile marine ecosystem beyond our shores. If we choose to live in IV, it is our responsibility to protect it, just as it has become our responsibility to live sustainably and protect our planet. If we're going to have the time of our lives here, the least we can do is be respectful neighbors to our good friends living just below the surface. W

# In Verse

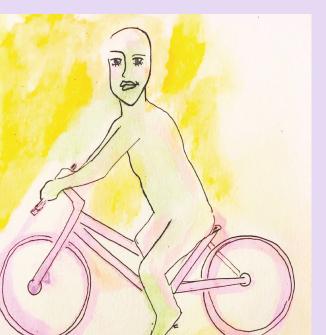
poetry editor // Michelle Politiski illustrations + design // Maricruz Mendoza

### Timshel // Thou Mayest

// Hugh Cook

I would say goodbye on North Schafer St.
I would sit by Noname on the Telefone.
I would leave Del Playa, I would leave home too.
I would sit right here, and write this to both of you
No matter the helix, there's a reason I'm feeling.





### **Light Town**

// Victoria Penate

Impossibly young, under Sunshine and influence, we Live just to try it And pedal on through;

Vibrant serenity Issues new stillness as Sunday brings quiet and Time just for you;

A shiny, pink bicycle cruises away.

### Sábado

// Talia White

Sitting hot in the skin a layer of yellow before flesh. The sun is in us

And little waves smaller than pinky toes murmur at the sand and in our ears—
We murmur a little louder,
We want to hear more

And we do, at night, with the music and the feet

The feet stepping on lawns and streets in time Little layers of sun keeping us warm





### Salt and Coffee

// Shelby Rodgers

How crisp the scent
When the Earth opens up
Exhaling that salty mist
Which binds itself to her core.

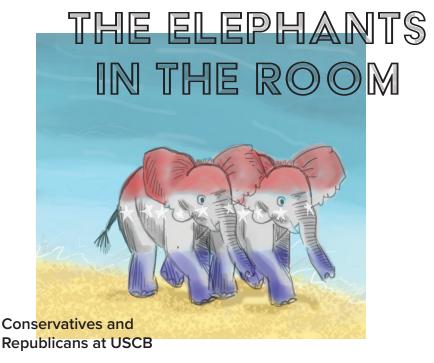
She takes this into her being Absorbing such foreign minerals Which we consume without question In her, just beginning to spore.

Fragrant flowers emerge
From bitter soil made wet with sobs
Sprouted from saline sustenance
Steadily breeding distorted lore...

And how rich the flavor
Vivid velvet ripples thoroughly
While whirling resonance dances on the palate
Provoked by the heat of daylight's roast.

Embodied strength bellows
Sonorous tones immersively ring
As solar rays reverberate in exclusion
Unmindful of indulgent obstruction of the coast.

This scorching eclipse only pronounces The pitch profoundness that still brews Despite gulfs of fear and unfamiliarity In receptive openness and resilient love, engrossed.



words // Libby Landells Hayward illustration // Theresa Phan design // Madison Mead

Dominick DiCesare vividly remembers the night when Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential race.

"Some of the members of our group got assaulted. One of the guys got hit in the back of the head a couple of times, some people got their property stolen. We had people being pushed and shoved around, being shouted at in their faces. It was expected to happen to some extent, but it was aggressive, the most aggressive it has ever been."

You may be surprised to learn that DiCesare is a member of the UCSB College Republicans, that he and his friends were victorious that night, and that his story took place in Isla Vista.

Being a conservative college student comes with baggage. It comes with abuse, it comes with hate, but it also comes with a community of like-minded individuals that recognize the need to be tolerant, to be inclusive, and to be strong. Whilst the majority of my conversation with UCSB's College Republicans was defined by the hostility and intolerance they experience, it also proved that optimism and anticipation for a future marked by political cohesion and composure exists and is tangible.

During my time with the UCSB College Republicans I interviewed five of their members, ranging from freshmen to the newly elected president. I heard an abundance of anecdotes about the vilification and demonization of conservatives at UCSB and in IV, as well as the animosity between conservatives and liberals, and its resulting despair and deflation. For them, the college environment of a Californian school is tainted by turmoil, intolerance, and

exclusion. It is one where Democrats have it easier, where the faculty and administration make them feel undervalued, where you pause to analyze the potential backlash of the word "Republican" before establishing yourself as one.

### A CULTURE OF HESITATION EXISTS WITHIN THE COLLEGE REPUBLICANS.

Newly-elected president of UCSB's College Republicans, Leslie Garcia, called UCSB's post-election period in

2016 a time of quickly and fervently organized "democratic re-education." She couldn't believe the university conducted an event that "demonized [an] entire political party, a sector of their own students." She recollects that "at one of the events on that day, a professor specifically called out 'a student organization who brings white supremacist and neo-Nazi Ben Shapiro onto campus." He literally said those words and spewed hate about campus Republicans and Republicans in general. It was very disheartening."

In the same vein, Ethan Sayers reiterates Garcia's feelings—"All classes were canceled the day after, there were faculty panels, there was one called 'Trumpism, Fascism, and White Supremacy." People have this assumption that we are all white supremacists because of panels like this. It breaks my heart. It frustrates the shit out of me."

Whilst the hostility and grievance described by Garcia and Sayers is specific to the post-election period, the same stances and approaches to political education and biases can be observed today.

"Propaganda" was the term Noah Chaffino used to describe an anthropology class he has undertaken at UCSB. He went on to say that he "wasn't prepared for the liberal and left-leaning... nature of the faculty and administration" and that "Democratic beliefs are taught as fact rather than as opinion."

It isn't iust Chaffino who subscribes to this belief. Tales of writing essays from a bias that conflicts with one's own just to reflect the ideology of the lecturer in the hope of achieving a higher grade are rife. Stories about not raising an opinion in class in fear of confrontation from lectures or fellow students are extensive. Anecdotes illustrating the discomfort felt by conservative students in classes that they feel are unnecessarily politicized, like Physics, are in abundance. DiCesare defends some professors, noting that not all are closeminded or of extremely biased opinions, but even he admits that it takes added time and effort to argue from a position that clashes with UCSB's faculty.

A culture of hesitation exists within the College Republicans. When I asked a question, a visible thought ran through each interviewee's mind. I could see them analyzing the situation, looking for the potential backlash, formulating a response, and then answering me. These behaviors extend to their friendships where the interviewees, and in particular a freshman, Daniel Magnuson, reported apprehension and unease around his peers.

BEING A
CONSERVATIVE
COLLEGE STUDENT
COMES WITH
BAGGAGE.

Magnuson disclosed, "I know I shouldn't be scared that saying my beliefs will endanger the friendship or screw it up for a week but that happens, and it has happened before."

#### **NEOCONTROVERSIES**

He recounted feelings of discomfort and anxiety during situations with his friends in which politics were the topic of conversation due to the fear of confrontation. Many interviewees resonated with this idea and spoke of resisting political conversation because they know that they hold beliefs that are controversial when considering IV and UCSB's liberal environment, and that they cannot be bothered to strike up a fight because of the effort it entails, or they see the circumstances or the topic as not significant enough to lose friends over. DiCesare felt strongly that these experiences are confined to the campus Republicans' sphere, declaring, "The Democrats just don't get that, and if they did, they know that they could retreat to faculty members, to the student senate, to administration. We don't have that. We just have each other. We retreat to ourselves. It feels like no one is there for us, that we just get told to be 'less controversial', even though in the grand scheme of things we don't have a controversial opinion."

This was an observation shared by all interviewees. Chaffino notes that "The university overwhelmingly favors democratic beliefs," and Garcia simply

"DEMOCRATIC BELIEFS ARE TAUGHT AS FACT RATHER THAN AS OPINION." concludes, "Democrats definitely have it easier."

I spoke with a number of Democrats on campus about the aforementioned issues disclosed by the UCSB Republicans. One student in particular, Nina Mokhber, a Democratic student, said "I just find it to be quite ironic that Campus Republicans seem to be so sensitive to having their beliefs challenged because it makes them feel like Democrats are intolerant when so many of the Republican party's ideological perspectives perpetuate the intolerance that they complain about receiving."

It's not all like this. It's not all anxiety, vilification and repressing your beliefs. As a Republican, you won't always be the only elephant in the room.

Garcia ended her interview with me with the following anecdote: "I live with a girl who is president of the Campus Democrats, so that is just telling of the fact that we can be tolerant and we can overcome over political differences."

Garcia's reality—her experience of successfully working, socializing, and living with a leading member of the opposite political ideology without fear of expressing her true values, without fear of judgment, and without fear of being demonized—is one that is full of optimism for a college experience that is receptive and permissible.

DiCesare echoes this sentiment. He describes the UCSB College Republicans as previously having been much more passive and implicit in their beliefs and aims, as operating on a local level exclusively.

He states, "Back then, if my friend asked for my opinion on politics, I wouldn't lie, but I certainly wouldn't tell the whole truth. I would use lines like 'Well, I don't know, I think it's a complicated issue...' but I have evolved over time and I understand to help my fellow Republicans feel confident in having their voices heard, I must as well."



He says that having speakers on campus like Ben Shapiro and Milo Yiannopoulos, who challenge the status quo, is positive, that it normalizes conservative opinions and promotes a surge in membership to the College Republicans significantly. He finished his interview by concluding that he is supportive of the bolder and braver steps the group is taking to being candid and comprehensive in their beliefs at UCSB and that, in IV, "[the College Republicans] are becoming stronger."

While they both experience and understand the fear and anxiety that comes with openly self-identifying as a conservative or a Republican, Garcia and DiCesare, along with all of my other interviewees, paint an image of a future that is by no means idyllic,

but is hopeful and shows the experience of Republicans on campus and in IV as increasingly positive and accepting.

I will leave you with a quote from one of the newest UCSB College Republicans, Magnuson: "I feel like my experience on campus has made me a more open-minded person. Originally, I just believed what my parents told me, then I questioned it myself, and now I am confronted with contrasting opinions every day. I've had the opportunity to be presented with a wide range of views. I've got to the point where if you respect my views, then I'll respect yours. Yeah, it's cool to be on a college campus. It's tiring and can be scary, but communities like the College Republicans can take me away from that."



I spy a blood bottom shoe,

a Psycho, a missing twin, a killed mocking bird;



A vape, a Dumpling King, 3 pencils, the word 'word' and a ball to dunk



# YOU TRYNA CATCH THESE HANDS?

words // Will Stone photography // Francisco Berrera design // Ushma Patel

On November 21, 2001, Super Smash Brothers Melee was released for the Nintendo Gamecube. This much-anticipated successor to the original Super Smash Brothers for the Nintendo 64 was an immediate hit with everyone who played it. It was a fantastic group party game that allowed for a truly fun, multiplayer game aimed at players of all ages. This historic installment of one of Nintendo's most successful franchises has been praised for its record-breaking initial sales numbers, state of the art graphics (at the time), and complex physics engine—but its most valuable accolade has been the astronomic longevity of its relevance. Most console games have an average shelf life of around one to three years, with some games lasting a bit longer due to dedicated fanbases. To this day, almost 17 years later, Super Smash Brothers Melee maintains a thriving professional scene, various clubs dedicated to it around the country, and is still being fleshed out and pushed to its limits mechanically. Many modern games implement patches and updates in order to keep the game fresh and ever-changing, Melee on the other hand has been the same exact game all this time, while still having some aspects that remain unknown to even the most dedicated players.

A group of these Melee fans live and play right here in Santa Barbara's backyard. The UCSB fighting game club "UCSB Black and Blue" has a subgroup called "UCSB Smash" that, while a good portion do prefer going toe-to-toe in newer smash games, has a diehard Melee community at its center. The group usually meets at least once a week for a local tournament either in the Multicultural Center (MCC) or at Zodo's Bowling Alley—but that's not where the majority of Melee is played.

While competing and proving your skills is a massive incentive for these guys, Isla Vista is littered with Smash houses and personal setups used for practice and friendlies. The concept of grinding out practice and perfecting your own style is a notion akin to that of a jazz musician developing their flare or a passionate chemist pushing the boundaries of the scientific world one experiment at a time. Smash club member Nathan Kruse, a third year samus main and mathematics major, is still fascinated by the game he loves each and every day: "[Melee] really is like a scientific field. New things are discovered about it every day, new moves are named after the famous players who discover them, and the scientific method is applied often and with success." With a stable, unchanging medium to work with and an impressively complex original physics engine implemented by Nintendo, Kruse goes on to say "It's basically math. No, it IS mathematics. There are a set amount of things you can do, and every input has a non-changing value. There are exact angles, specific timings, and correct answers to every situation that make the game logical". This approach to such a relatively old game is what breathes life into its competitive community.

Another inspiration for the UCSB smash club is the professional melee scene. Major eSports teams sponsor highly ranked Melee players from around the world to play in high-stakes tournaments almost every month. While there are many of these players fighting for the right to call themselves the best in the world, a select few truly embody the spirit of the game, and have been duking it out since the game's release in 2001. Players like Mango, Plup, and Mew2King sit atop the professional Melee throne, and perform absurd

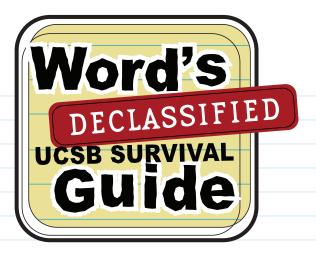
mathematically impressive strings and combos at the highest level of competition whenever they get the chance. Mango and M2K are old guard of the Melee scene, two of the original five Melee "Gods," but couldn't have more distinct playstyles. While M2K is a Marth/Sheik main who adheres to the previously mentioned methodology of calculated chess moves, Mango is a gutsy Fox/Falco player with a completely opposite mentality. Yes, early in his career Mango surely researched frame data and put in the legwork necessary to be successful in this pseudo-field, but now he has learned to rely on his muscle memory and intuition, often with entertaining and downright inspirational results. If Mango is feeling himself, you better get out of the way. Finally, Plup is a Samus/ Sheik main from Florida, and happens to be Kruse's favorite player; "Samus isn't really a high-tier character, so seeing somebody climb super high up on the rankings with her and even winning major tournaments makes it more fun to watch." While Mango and M2K have been around for awhile. Plup is a relatively newer and younger face in the scene. With a new wave of players like Plup reaching out and actually achieving huge amounts of success in 2017 and 2018, college Melee clubs around the nation can latch onto a uniquely relatable role model.

The UCSB smash scene is truly in a fun and collaborative place right now, but only a short while ago it was faced with a door-die scenario. During the 2016-17 school year every week smash club was held in the UCSB Hillel in Isla Vista. A great venue, with great storage, and great club officers to keep the community chugging along in the right direction. Unfortunately, this well-oiled Melee machine had an expiration date, and it was fast approaching. With many Melee-loving seniors graduating, new leadership was already being pushed to their limits in order to match the success of their predecessors, when at the end of the school year the Hillel announced that their prices would be rising to a financially impossible rate for a weekly school club

to pay so regularly. With all this bad news dropping at once and everyone heading home for summer break to soak in the perceived doom of their favorite after school activity, morale was at an all-time low. The UCSB smash facebook page was filed to the brim with "The Melee scene is dead" memes and players desperately trying to find places to play. "It was pretty bad for awhile. We still had our own setup at home so I could keep playing, but those big communal tournaments were what made our community so special," said Kruse. "[Melee] meetings were fun for everyone, of every skill level. At its core, Smash really is a multiplayer party game, and I missed seeing new people having fun with it every week." The club members really didn't know what would happen or how the mentality of the student population had changed.

After a long summer of questions and doubt, the remaining club members rallied. With an influx of freshman members and passionate players that refused to believe the scene was "dead," the Melee community had life again. "We just wanted to have a sick Melee scene, you know? I want people to say 'Santa Barbara? Oh yeah, they have a fuckin' sick Melee scene," said Kruse on what motivated him and the rest of the members. They found cheaper venues to hold their weekly tournaments, figured out storage situations to house the CRT TVs and gamecube consoles, and prepared for a new year of Melee. Super Smash Brothers Melee has truly reached out and influenced thousands to this very day. A thriving professional scene, an ever-changing list of known combos and techniques, and a number of passionate local scenes like the one here in Isla Vista are all factors keeping the old game alive, making the Melee community historically great. Needless to say Kruse is pretty happy the local scene is back and thriving, "Just come out and play. It doesn't matter how good you are, the community will help you get better. The thrill of a tournament, even if you just buster-out and go 0-2 is such a fun experience." W





words // Hailey Gross illustrations + design // Niko Jordan

In a college town full of Gauchos, legends and legacies, and an albino racoon, my fellow WORDies and I try to do the impossible: bring you a guide that will help you survive—nay, make the most of your time here in the happiest place in the 805.

To the incoming freshmen finding their way, transfers still figuring out the ropes, or to anyone else who may feel they are in need of a little refresher course: welcome to Fall 2018. Just a slight disclaimer, I am merely a student entering my third year—I do not claim to know everything there is to know about UCSB or all the ins and outs of Isla Vista.

What I can offer you though is a brief crash course you may find useful at one point or another in your time here. Enjoy.

### Tip 123: Beware of Bikes!

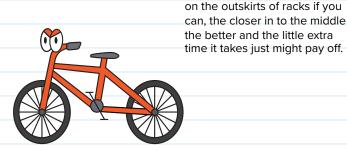
Not quite sure if I can ever stress this first one enough. First and foremost, if you are not already aware, bikes always have the right-of-way (or at least they think they do) and you as a pedestrian always have the duty to be aware. Period. Aside from walking at a considerate pace, you have the one job of looking up from your phone every now and then and maybe even checking both ways before crossing a path to do your part in keeping you and everyone else safe. Don't let us down.

Next, if you are the one braving the bike paths and riding a bike in rush hour, please do have some consideration—meaning please, kindly, stay in ya damn lane.

Be sure to also exercise caution when it comes to keeping your bike safe. Yes, bike thefts do happen. So no matter how much good karma you may think is headin' your way, take the necessary precaution.

Bonus Tip: Avoid parking your bike





### Tip PS42W: On the Road

While we have our attention pointed to road etiquette, let's talk IV: while out and about do not, I REPEAT, DO NOT sit down on curbs. Yes, there is a law against it and if you did not already know or find this to be a tad obsurd it may be because you have never happened upon a place where the police actually enforced it...until now.

Just take our WORD for it, don't do it.

# Tip 6HLQ: Balance, Balance, Balance

This should be the mantra you live by here. You may be slightly more familiar with its sister motto, "work hard, play hard"—which, though another vital method of survival, cannot be made possible without maintaining a system of balance.

What does this even mean and how can I become a balanced individual? Baby steps. When it comes down to it, we are all faced with the best problem one could have: too many opportunities.

Sometimes everything UCSB has to offer you may conflict with everything IV has in store for you and you will most likely have to sacrifice a few parties for some library sessions. The good news is you will thank yourself later and be able to enjoy yourself even more in the long run. Avoid





unecessary stress at all costs stay balanced.

Bonus Tip: One of the greatest things you can do for yourself is plan ahead to get your work done before the end of the school week. God knows you do not want to be the one sad human stuck catching up on work on a Sunday evening while your friends are ending theirs with Netflix. Push yourself now so you can treat yourself later.

### Tip 901SD: You CANNOT Plan It All

Now, as much as the previous tip may seem to suggest that a balanced life will always lead to success, this is unfortunately not the case. The truth is, there are some things you simply cannot plan. You may start off with one idea of how you see your academic career going and end up taking a complete 180. And you may think you need to have it all figured out overnightbecause your friends seem to, because your roommate has been declared in their major since the third grade, or because being comfortable in the unknown is far too daunting a task. But sometimes, shit just happens—and how you bounce back, adapt, and grow in response is what truly makes it worthwhile.

Bonus Tip: Do NOT compare yourselves to others. This is a general key to being successful and sane in life, but especially at UCSB. Some people may be really great at holding up the facade that they have it all figured out but what's interesting about that? Everyone is in their own point of learning and growth anyway and you are doing yourself a great injustice if you rush your process. You're doing great sweetie.

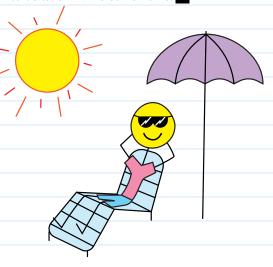


Bonus Bonus Tip: You may get stressed at times, overwhelmed even. Do not hesitate to reach out for help—whether it be a visit to a professor or TA's office hour, signing up for CLAS, visiting CAPS, or just taking a chill pill in an egg chair in the Career Center for a bit. All the resources you need for success are at your fingertips and within walking, biking, or scootering distance—it is up to you to take advantage.

### Tip F1N: Appreciate Isla Vista

As a unique community that cannot be found on or around any other college campus, Isla Vista stands harboring our late nights, early mornings, questionable decisions, and greatest memories. That being said, do everything you can to savor your time here. As much as it may seem to be your personal neverland at times, time can and will tick away faster than you'd ever imagine possible. It may strike the eye as one grand playground now and again, but just as you would any other home, protect it. Preserve it, keep your times lit and your couches not. Let us keep our haven beautiful for our future Gauchos to come.

IV seems to have a mind of its own, and you may not know it at first but you will find that this place we call home has the power to bring out the very best, very worst, even the very weirdest sides of people—yourself included. Things you thought you may never see are no longer given even a second glance and a third of the population seems to forget shoes on a daily basis. It gets loud, it gets colorful, it gets odd, stressful, chaotic, spontaneous and above all, beautiful. It's all here for you and ready to be taken in. Welcome home.





words // Zoë Jones illustration // Tarush Mohant

The stories many of us heard about October 31st in Isla Vista are all but, well, dead. In contrast to its wild past, the day has taken on a more subdued feeling in the past couple of years. Honoring this new incarnation of All Hallows' Eve in our town, this playlist explores the classic nature of the holiday: chilly, dusky — and a little creepy. These songs not only admire the strange, but welcome it in with open arms. Here's the soundscape for your late-night, moon-lit Halloween hangout.







# **AROUND TOWN**

photography // Alaska Yokota design // Ushma Patel for more information visit www.ihc.ucsb.edu/ivarts

### **MAGIC LANTERN FILMS**

IV's personal movie house screens the best of current cinema and occasionally keeps you up all night with a Harry Potter or Lord of the Rings marathon! Friday and Monday at 7 & 10pm in IV Theater. Only \$4. Free treats. www.facebook.com/MagicLanternFilmsIV





#### **IMPROVABILITY**

Start your weekend with a laugh. Join the audience of UCSB's award-winning improvisational comedy team and be a part of their fast-paced show. Voted Best Late Night Entertainment at UCSB! Fridays, 8pm in Embarcadero Hall.

Only \$3.

www.facebook.com/islavistalive

### AS PROGRAM BOARD FILMS

AS Program Board is a student-operated, non-profit organization that provides fun and educational events for the UCSB community. You can depend on AS to show a terrific free movie every Tuesday night in IV Theater. https://aspb.as.ucsb.edu



### **MULTICULTURAL CENTER**

Make MCC your "home away from home." They host a thrilling program of culturally high-powered events on campus, in Isla Vista, and in Santa Barbara.

www.mcc.sa.ucsb.edu

#### **UCSB THEATER & DANCE**

Just 30 seconds from Isla Vista! Walk though the flashing Pardall Tunnel and your world opens up to thrilling theater and dance performances. Check out their current season and low-cost student tickets.

www.theaterdance.ucsb.edu

#### **JEFFREY'S JAZZ COFFEEHOUSE**

Swing by one of their free jazz concerts! Jeffrey's is more than a music and poetry venue; it is a place of healing and solidarity that welcomes all Isla Vistans. https://www.facebook.com/JJCIslaVista/



#### THE BOX

Do you wish your visual art could be ogled by thousands every day? Display it in The BOX, a student-curated gallery located in the lobby of IV Theater. Exhibits range from skateboard art to watercolors. Open to all students!



#### **BE THE PRODUCER**

Need advice on producing your own show or performance in the wilds of Isla Vista? Ellen Anderson, the director of Isla Vista Arts will happily help. Ellen Anderson at eanderson@ucsb.edu

#### **LAUGHOLOGY**

Live stand-up comedy shows. Past comics include Vincent Oshana, Rory Scovel, and Andy Hendrickson. Always funny, always free, most Saturdays at 8pm in Embarcadero Hall. www.facebook.com/Ucsblaugh



# Is it Cool to Jule?

words // Mai Le art // Theresa Phan design // Jess Chou

If you've ever wondered why you've seen clouds of smoke forming over the cubicles in the quiet floors of the library, think no further—you probably were merely an innocent bystander witnessing the new craze over e-cigarettes that is currently taking storm. Within these past two years, e-cigarettes have come to make an increasing appearance in the lives of UCSB students as a wieldy accessory during socials, trips to campus, and study sessions at the library. Similarly to how one would carry around a cell phone, carrying an e-cigarette has become a necessity for many to have on them at all times. Students who have never touched any form of vaping or smoking before are found to be turning from their old ways by picking up the habit of using e-cigarettes.

"I was in the middle of a stressful time in my life and after trying a friend's Juul, I realized that getting domed was a low effort way to destress," stated Sheila Tran, a second year at UCSB who had never before smoked cigarettes before getting her own Suorin.

#### I ASKED TRAN IF SHE WAS AWARE HOW MANY TIMES SHE PUFFED ON HER JUUL A DAY TO WHICH SHE REPLIED, "NOPE."

According to Tran, getting "domed" is "a high induced by high concentrations of nicotine. You feel light headed, but your body is heavy at the same time. I'd describe the sensation as euphoric and relaxing."

For experienced vapers like Miles

Wilson, vaping was much more than just nicotine fix—it was a lifestyle and a community.

"A lot of kids at my highschool were very into mods. They showed me what an RDA was, which is a rebuildable dripping atomizer. I personally had to build the coils that heated up the oil to make it vapor," stated Wilson. "It was also a hobby, seeing as I could make different designs and test new things out to see what would and wouldn't work."

After vaping for around two to three years, he quit once he moved to IV.

"Now I use those stupid Juul things occasionally. Juuls are are a bit more satisfying to the nicotine cravings but a little less satisfying as a vaping device because I like to do tricks when I smoke and can't get enough smoke to do it with those."

In a time where fitness and health is much more relevant to American society, e-cigarettes, like the Juul, have been able to catch the attention of many by presenting itself as a healthier alternative to smoking cigarettes while still providing the effects of nicotine.

The Juul was created by James Monsees and Adam Bowen, both entrepreneurs from Stanford who, according to the Juul website, had "been smokers for many years, but were increasingly dissatisfied with the health and social impacts of cigarettes." The Juul boasts its ability to provide the qualities of actual cigarettes in a much more attractive and simplistic manner.

In comparison to its predecessor, a



typical box mod vape, the Juul takes on the appearance of a USB and is much sleeker and smaller, making it easy to carry around in public. Adding onto its convenience, the Juul only needs to be charged in a USB port, like any iPhone would. The act of smoking is made a much easier activity; one would only have to suck away at the Juul to get the "doming" head rush they desire. The puff of smoke that results, in contrast to regular cigarettes, is much more discrete and smooth. The bitterness of smoking is replaced with a wide variety of flavored nicotine pods such as cucumber, fruit medley, and crème brûlée. According to the Juul website, each pod contains 0.7mL with 5% nicotine by weight, which is approximately equivalent to 1 pack of cigarettes or 200 puffs. I asked Tran if she was aware how many times she puffed on her Juul a day to which she replied, "Nope."

How did the Juul manage to get so trendy? Although much of the Juul's popularity was earned by the benefits it offers as a product itself, much of its popularization was catalyzed by the fan following it developed.

Since the Juul looks similar to a USB, its appearance is much more inconspicuous and is a lot easier to carry around than typical box mod vapes. This makes it easier



for Juuls to be carried anywhere—whether it's a classroom, concert, or party, at least one person in the group would usually have a Juul on them. With this, sharing plays a huge role in Juuling culture, making it easier to introduce to new people.

"I bought 4 Juul Pods last week, but finished all of them this past weekend," stated Harlan Langlois, a fourth year at UCSB. "I went to Mammoth and passed my Juul around to everyone."

Since Juuls have become so mainstream and widespread, it's not surprising that they've made a comedic appearance on social media and in memes as well. The most famous example is a viral video that showed a girl sharing her "Juul" with people at the club, when in actuality, her "Juul" was a USB drive.

The minute long video contains clips of people going in for a puff and laughing in awe after realizing that they had been sucking on an office supply instead. On the UCSB Free and For Sale page during finals week, people were sarcastically selling hits on a Juul for \$1 each at the library. As the Juul becomes increasingly popular, the possibility of it being harmful seems to become more of a distant afterthought.

"I feel like Juuls are made into a joke so much that it almost feels like self harm is becoming increasingly normalized," stated Tran.

At the peak of the popularity of cigarette smoking in the 1920s, glamorization in media and a general lack of knowledge allowed cigarettes to gain the reputation of being something cool, normal, and even healthy. Fast forwarding to the 21st century, the parallelism between the introduction of cigarette smoking and the emergence e-cigarettes isn't too far fetched.

The Juul presents itself as the 20th century cigarette, but in modern form. While it is true that the e-cigarette and vaping both lack tobacco and may serve as healthier alternatives to cigarette smoking, not enough time has elapsed to study its long term effects. Concern for cigarette smoking didn't surface until the 1950's,



where diseases were finally recognized to be caused by cigarettes. It took decades for society to simply realize that smoking is unhealthy.

Following this realization, it took even more time, as well as an increase in tobacco-free campaigns in the late 1900's and early 2000's, to further dissociate cigarettes from their past reputation of being "cool." If the same timeline of introduction, popularization, experimentation, and realization were applied to e-cigarettes and vaping, society probably wouldn't recognize the potential consequences until, at the earliest, 2040.

After enough time has elapsed, the consequences of using these

# UNFORTUNATELY FOR US, WE ARE THAT FIRST GENERATION OF USERS. WE WOULD PERSONALLY AND INTIMATELY DISCOVER THE CONSEQUENCES OURSELVES.

products could finally show up in the first generation of users, where conclusions about vapes and e-cigarettes can finally be made. Unfortunately for us, we are that first generation of users. We would personally and intimately discover the consequences ourselves.

"I feel like vaping is something that's

very risky," stated Wilson. "There's so many things that we don't know about it yet and WE are basically the guinea pigs for the whole thing."

In an effort to slowly quit traditional cigarettes, many smokers joined the e-cigarette movement to ease the transition to being smoke-free. In theory, this isn't a completely unreasonable idea. At the very least, tobacco would be cut out, and hopefully, at a certain point, nicotine as well.

But this usually isn't the case—people end up still using both instead of quitting one for the other. Back in February, a UCSF study was able to find that the use of e-cigarettes on top of regular cigarettes increased heart attack risk. With cigarettes alone, the risk of getting a heart attack is three times the risk of a non-smoker. Adding e-cigarettes on top, it's five times the risk.

"With vaping, people are smoking things we don't necessarily understand," stated Madison Barnes, the tobacco cessation specialist at the Alcohol and Drug program on campus. "If people want to quit smoking, people shouldn't use vapes to slowly wean off of cigarettes. The only way people should quit is using the a standard nicotine treatment with patches, lozenges, and gum." Unbeknownst to many UCSB students, five week nicotine treatments are offered by the Alcohol and Drug Program for free.

### DARE TO BE BARE

words + photography + design // Marina Sonn



"I was painting barefoot earlier... I love feeling grounded."

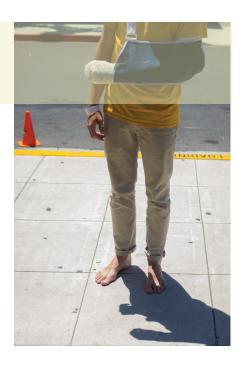
"I'm not wearing shoes right now because I sprained my arm and don't want to put them back on."

Ryan Leigh

"I love being barefoot because it makes me feel grounded and connected to the earth." "Dancing when you can feel the ground is fabulous"

Hanna Koehler // Kate Morgan







"I've been wearing sandals but just being barefoot is a lot more comfortable than flip flopping around. And gardening barefoot just feels right."

Daysi Perez

"I am going to have a bunch of creepy old men looking me up after this."

"He stole my quote. I didn't say the quote about the old men but I was thinking it.

Jake Newman // Kevin Stier



"Once you start noticing the barefeet you see them everywhere."

Maya Zohbi



"I had a jack hammer dropped on my left toe. It hurt forever. Like... forever. I try to take great care of it."

Wayne Mcgeachy



Bare feet are an integral part of Isla Vista Culture. They tip toe into bathrooms, coffee shops, and across library floors. They tread across stained streets of IV, stomp through lively DP houseshows, and add subtle color to our dynamic community. My question: "Who are the people on top of the feet?" #barefeetofiv w

# SWIPE-ISM

words // Sonia Htoon

design + illustration // Ryanne Ross

I'm a biracial woman AMA\* (footnote: AMA means Ask Me Anything).

That was once UCSB Senior Emily Arlen's bio on the popular dating app, Tinder. Tinder bios exist to entice a conversation between two complete strangers hurtled into a virtual space together with hopes of establishing a potentially intimate connection. So it was surprising for me to hear that Emily chose the foundational topic of conversation to be about her racial identity.

"I just got annoyed of getting the same, 'what are you' questions," she said, "so, I just wanted to be more upfront about that"

According to her, around forty percent of all the messages she received centered on the topic of her race. Though her bio was meant to confront this issue in a tongue-in-cheek sort of way, it opened up the floodgates for comments like:

Biracial women are exactly my type. You got a really exotic look to you. Why are biracial people hotter?

Comments like these made their way into her message even before the new bio, when it was about liking volleyball and being from LA.

"It makes me feel like a dog," she said, "it's like hearing, 'wow, I love that breed."

Arlen's insensitive suitors reveal more than just the inherent creepiness of most men on dating apps. In an age where intimate connections are made within milliseconds and based on instantaneous impressions of curated selfies, dating apps like Tinder reveal an ugly truth about our racist subconscious.

Half Japanese. Quarter Italian. Quarter Polish.

Arlen's knee-jerk response to the perpetual "what are you"-type questions she gets on Tinder.

"I just got sick of it being the first thing we talk about," she said, "that's the first thing people see about you."

> "IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A DOG," SHE SAID, "IT'S LIKE HEARING, "WOW, I LOVE THAT BREED."

The app is designed in a way that allows people to sift through profiles fast, assessing desirability at record-breaking rates. It's inevitable that a person's race is probably one of the first things you assume about someone in their featured photos.

Co-founder of dating website OkCupid, Christian Rudder in his book *Dataclysm:* Who We Are When We Think No One's Looking (2014), explores how instant assessments based on profile pictures reveal systemic racial biases in online dating communities.

His research revealed that Asian men and Black women were the groups with the lowest response rates on many online dating sites. This was one of the findings backing his claim that OkCupid users' racial desire biases mirror those of white supremacists in the real world

To Rudder, the users on these sites are "blameless" and it's the fast-paced nature of decisions based on profile pictures that are at fault. It can just be considered... a user's preference. To me, his findings still reveal very visible, problematic patterns in virtual dating communities today.

First, people often confuse preferences with explicit sexual racism.

When someone says:

"I don't date (race) people" OR "I love (race) people."

Statements like these make assumptions that cluster an entire racial group into a singular identity, which is... you guessed it: racist. A statement of preference, on the other hand, could be something like:

"I only date vegans" OR "I'd never sleep with a racist."

It's okay to have preferences but recognize that racial preferences are racist.

Second, our left swipes reflect racial hierarchies and norms that still exist today. Not all acts of sexual racism are as explicitly verbalized as the first example. Swiping data from Tinder and OkCupid users show how ingrained perceptions of social and racial hierarchies have implicitly racist effects in a romantic context. Even the defense of "racial familiarity" (racial dating preferences that come from groups one is familiar/not familiar with) reveals that a lack of exposure leads to a perception of a racial norm or hierarchy.

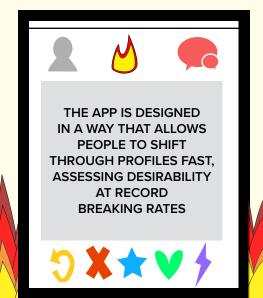
Some scholars blame a lack of diverse representation in the media for perpetuating western beauty standards and consequently skewing romantic preferences toward

whiteness. I agree that more diverse exposures could lead to higher empathy between people of different races, but a lot can be done on the small scale of our smartphones as well.

"Call people out for the shit they say. Like, 'Hey, you can't say stuff like that because it makes me feel like an object.'" Arlen advised, "Guys won't like that but do you really want to be with a guy like that whose not open to improvement?"

Arlen's story reflects that of many other people of color on dating apps and her resolution to be more confrontational is essential. It's productive to confront people sending weird fetishy messages about your race as a form of education. It's also important to confront yourself and reflect on subconscious racial preferences that you may have. I'm not exempt from being guilty on that front in the past.

Tinder reveals systemic racial biases rather than perpetuating them. If anything, the dating app is doing the opposite. A 2017 study done by Cornell found that dating apps are actually leading to an increased rate of interracial marriages by creating exposure to people outside of their community.



# MISFITS

words // Madison Hallam photography // Marina Sonn design // Ryanne Ross

#### the ultimate test of your gym persona

The mixing pot of foul-smelling humans, also known as the gym, is home to many different types of people. Whether your idea of fun is pumping iron or pumping your stomach after a wild night—we've got a gym persona for you. Please enjoy.

#### What is your mode of transportation to the gym?

- A 1968 Cadillac hatchback with beige carpeted seats.
- B A convertible Benz, I wouldn't be caught dead biking.
- **c** A mountain bike (with a helmet, knee and elbow pads, and shin guards).
- A penny board that bends under the weight of my jacked bod.
- E Bare feet.

#### What's your favorite pre-workout meal?

- A nice, cold, crisp glass of prune juice and Nance's homemade bread pudding.
- **B** Avocado toast topped with a vegan poached egg and the souls of my enemies.
- **c** Cup of noodles.
- Two protein bars, pre workout, and one glass of ultra-pasteurized raccoon's milk.
- E Home-brewed kombucha and a handful of spinach leaves from my garden.

#### What's your favorite type of activity?

- Leaving passive-aggressive voicemails on my grandkids' phones.
- **B** No, my sorority doesn't MAKE me do cardio group fit classes, they are just ENCOURAGED.
- **c** Pottery classes.
- Pumping iron (I'll bet my protein powder supply that you can't out-rep me).
- **E** Anything outdoors—because mother nature sure is beautiful.

#### What's your go-to gym attire?

- A New Balance's, sweatbands galore, and shorts that expose just the right amount of scrotum.
- B Head-to-toe Lululemon, two waist trainers, and a Cartier ring that I never take off.
- **C** The clothes I wore to class: jeans and a hoodie.
- A tank top cut all the way down the side and a flat-billed hat that reads "Full Send."
- Vegan, organic, fair trade, gluten-free hemp pants, a "Life's Good" shirt, and no shoes.



#### Mostly Ds: The Silver Fox

You swim in a (very constrictive) tiger print speedo. You have approximately 11 wispy white hairs pulled back into a low pony. You throw a fit when the pool doesn't open at exactly 6:30am. Once you're finally allowed to get in, you float \*face down\* at the surface making the lifequards momentarily question if you've kicked the bucket

#### Mostly As: The Gym Rat

You can be found in front of the mirror at all times. Someone says, "Excuse me" as they reach in front of you to grab a dumbbell, and in response you blurt out "EatSleepLiftRepeat." You remind the two brain cells bouncing around in your skull to stop fighting and start doing their job. Your nipples become exposed when the breeze catches your ripped tank. You frequently wipe your face (which is as dry as your personality) with a Vineyard Vines brand sweat rag.

#### Mostly Bs: The Energizer Bunny

Your workout playlist is strictly Cardi B. You're worried about sweating too much and staining your Beats orange with the spray tan you got this morning. Your favorite thing to do at the gym is glare at anyone who comes within five feet of you. Most of your time is spent sipping out of your pink blender bottle while on the elliptical. Your disposable income is always falling out of the pockets of your Lululemon leggings.

#### Mostly Cs: The Newbie

You enter the gym (adorned in khakis and flip flops) and make a beeline for the front desk. You nervously ask how much a membership costs, only to be enlightened by an employee of the freeing truth. You try to get the stairmaster to work for 10 anxietyridden minutes until you realize there's a sign placed on it that reads "Out of Order."

#### Mostly Es: The Outdoorsman

Your chest hair is braided and embellished with wooden beads. Your farts smell like nag champa. You have a tattoo of the PETA logo but won't show it to anyone unless they have the same astrological sign as you. You've seen Odesza perform live on 16 different occasions, and you never fail to bring that up when you meet someone new. At the gym, the rock climbing staff calls you by the name of your spiritual guide, "Wolfgang." When you reach the top of the climbing wall you let out a howl that comes from deep within and you bang your fist on your chest three times—one for each of your past lives.

## WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

# BROWN GIRL Toadre and Ken WORLD

words // Khando Dolma

design // Ryanne Ross

photos// Kailah Korsh

As I passed by the frat bros guarding the door to their party, one shouted in my direction, "You're lucky I like Asian girls." Why is our brown body limited to beauty within our realm? We are constantly reminded of our brown skin by comments like "You're so pretty for an Asian girl" or "Wow, I've never met a pretty Indian girl!". Much like myself, every girl I interviewed has, at some point, had to deal with iterations of comments such as these thrown their way in a misguided attempt at flattery. Yet Chelsea Lumidao,

Alpha Delta Pi sorority sister, disagrees with these comments, saying that "It's annoying because I should just be pretty period. It feels like they're saying, 'You're pretty for an Asian, but compared to all

the other races, you're not,' and that's such a backhanded compliment that I don't even want it. I think that my race should be not be a factor for whether I am beautiful or not."

A beautiful girl in Isla Vista has blonde hair and blue eyes, a fit physique with beautiful skin—possessing the cliché "beachy" look that is characteristic of a stereotypical sorority girl. You know, if my name were Becky or if I had blonde hair and fair skin, my life would be a whole lot

easier. I wouldn't have to change my name when I'm ordering a drink at Starbucks. I could wear the brightest of colors without having to worry about whether my dark skin stands out too much. I would be able to experiment more with my makeup without having to think about how it would look on my skin tone. I wouldn't have to constantly find ways to validate the color of my skin and the beauty that it holds because the media would provide ample evidence for why my skin color and features are beautiful; if I were

white.

The UC Santa Barbara demographics of 2017-2018 showed that 28% of the student body was comprised of "Asian and Pacific Islander", a category that is responsible for

representing over fifty different countries with physical traits that range from either end of the spectrum. This category includes countries like Japan, India, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan.

Although we may not consciously acknowledge it, our hometown, culture, and family all shape our perspective, influencing what we define as beautiful. Anshika Bagla described her hometown, Cerritos, California, as "not very white", but

predominantly Asian and Indian. When I asked her how her experience as a "brown" girl has been at UC Santa Barbara and in Isla Vista, she mentioned, "Coming to Santa Barbara was really a culture shock because it was really different seeing this many white people." She described how, although there were a decent percentage of Indian-American people here, most of the people she associated with in Isla Vista were white; stating, "I definitely feel out of place being a brown girl."

Neha Makkapati shared a similar experience coming from San Ramon, California. She confided, "I never really felt the need to conform to beauty standards in my hometown because my high school was primarily Asian." However, Calista Liu and Chelsea Lumidao, sorority sisters of Alpha Delta Pi, describe their hometown to



be predominantly white. Calista explained that it has never been hard to integrate or assimilate herself, stating that her experience as a "brown" girl has never been the result of her being treated differently; "I have always been exposed to the typical American upbringing."

"The amount of times that someone has asked me 'what are you?' I can't even count. It should be intimidating, but I've grown up being surrounded by white people, that I am now immune to it."

Chelsea claims that it was her mother that pressured her to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards, not the demographics of her school. Constantly reminded to wear

sunscreen and to not stay out in the sun too long, she remembers her mother's repetitive tone telling her,

I definitely feel out of place being a brown girl.

"The lighter you are, the better. It's always better to be paler, for some reason, in Asian cultures, especially for Filipinos."

This value of fair skin doesn't stray too far from other Asian cultures either. Reminiscing about her childhood, Anshika stated, "Something that's really frustrating is that light is always associated with beauty. It's also common in India, so it's something that my mom specifically has pushed on to me. She would say 'Oh your skin looks too dark we should use bleaching cream', which was really common to use in India."

"Beauty is being confident in yourself and beauty comes from within, it's not what other people see, but I mean it's really hard to internalize that, especially when you don't look like anyone in the media and everyone that's considered beautiful."

Anshika Bagla describes what she believes the definition of beauty to be, while simultaneously contradicting herself in the realization that this definition of self-confidence being parallel to beauty is not commonly projected by society. When I asked, "What beauty standards do you

The lighter you are, the better.
It's always better to be paler,
for some reason, in
Asian cultures.

believe are represented in Isla Vista?", there wasn't a moment of hesitation—every single answer included the words: tall, blonde, skinny, and white.

Maureen, a first-year Filipino-American student, without hesitation responded with her opinion on PanHellenic sororities here at UC Santa Barbara: "When I think of a sorority girl, I think of a tall, blonde, white girl. I would never want to be in a sorority because

You see the majority of the people going through recruitment and they're all white. They all have this kind of unattainable beauty, where even if you tried to copy them and do whatever they do, I'm not white.

I know I don't fit in." I interviewed three "brown" girls that are currently affiliated with a PanHellenic sorority on campus to get their perspective on what lies behind those towering walls with the large Greek letters plastered on the sides. Calista described her insecurity during recruitment week being one of the few "brown" girls, discussing the unattainable beauty standards that are reflected by sororities.

"You see the majority of the people going through recruitment and they're all white. They all have this kind of unattainable beauty, where even if you tried to copy them and do whatever they do, I'm not white and I will never be able to achieve that standard."

Neha, a sister of the Pi Beta Phi chapter at UC Santa Barbara, characterized her experience as unorthodox. Being a woman of color in a PanHellenic sorority, she immediately stated, "It's annoying sometimes because I feel a little bit different from everyone else. I am aware of the fact that I don't look like most of the other girls in the sorority, which is a little weird for me, but I try not to let that bother me. It's not that bad, but I am aware of the fact that I'm probably the only Indian girl in Pi Phi. Wow, it's really white. It's so freaking white."

Sadly, Anshika's reaction to a UC Santa Barbara sorority's Instagram page wasn't surprising. She was right. Jaw-dropped, she was left dumbfounded at the lack of diversity. Anshika comments how through this mode of social media, "they are perpetuating what they think is beautiful."

I asked Calista, Neha, and Chelsea, to each individually look at their sorority's Instagram page and asked, "How does it make you feel when you scroll through the pictures posted?". Calista sighed quietly before answering this question by explaining that all sororities say that they want to be inclusive, that every girl is beautiful, and that it's not about looks—

"But there is a standard that they uphold. They create their own image, which doesn't necessarily represent the girls in the house accurately."

Chelsea, also in Alpha Delta Pi, commented on her sorority's Instagram page hesitantly; "I am proud of my sorority and the way they represent themselves, but I do see that sometimes it's kind of sad that it's just all white girls that are posted on there." Reflecting on the Pi Beta Phi's Instagram page, Neha's voice emanated no doubt while responding, "It's super white. It's annoying because everyone looks the same and there is this certain image that they are





eft // Calista Liu right // Chelsea Lumidao

trying to portray. I wish they would change that; it's always a really pretty white girl who's skinny and blonde and it's weird to see because I know I'm not that, but I am a part of this organization. At the same time, I am okay with not looking like that, not looking the same as everyone else."

Being a "brown" girl, Maureen has never felt like she fit in, expressing how sororities

Beauty is being confident in yourself and beauty comes from within, it's not what other people see, but I mean it's really hard to internalize that, especially when you don't look like anyone in the media.

reinforce the media's version of beauty while excluding anyone that doesn't fit this description; she explained, "There's a certain type of people that go here and no one is like me."

However, Chelsea Lumidao has a different approach to these Eurocentric beauty standards that are ingrained within Isla Vista.

Her experience with Alpha Delta Pi and as a resident of Isla Vista has been nothing but positive, and she concluded, "My presence as a brown girl isn't shown anywhere else, but I think it's a blessing and a curse. It's a burden that I have to carry, but when we go through recruitment next year, I am going to be that Asian face that that Asian girl sees walking through the house tours and she will think, 'If she can do it, I can do it.' So, I hope that I can pave the way for more Asian girls to feel comfortable joining sororities and being a part of this campus and this community."



## RUFF MORNING

#### A Far-Fetched Tail of a Good Boy

words // Cassidy Brown illustration+design // Tarush Mohanti

My person snaps on my leash and opens the door. I cannot believe this. I see the crunchy leaves falling outside. I feel the crisp fall breeze. I can already smell the dog next door. I bolt into the big, big world.

TODAY IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

I pee on that dog's grass as we stroll by. Now it is my grass.

A person approaches and pets my head. It feels nice. He smells funny. He is talking to my person. They sound happy.

"I have to go to class," he says.

He stops petting me.

Stupid class.

We enter a place with a delectable scent. I sit and smile at the person behind the counter.

She is using a happy voice. That is good.

She leans in. My tail wags. This is going to be fabulous. She crouches and I lick her face. She hands me a piece of BACON. I eat it right from her hand. I want more. Is there more? I look into her eyes so she will understand the severity of the situation. She laughs and hands my person a package. I know it has food in it. Maybe there is bacon in there. Maybe she will give me some.

#### TODAY IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

FRIEND.

I FOUND FRIEND.

I sniff him. He smells nice. I like him. I wag my tail—he wags his. I crouch down—so does he. I want to play. I feel a tug—my leash is gone! We race to the tree, we dart back. We leap all over each other in jubilant thrill and I am ecstatic.



It ends as abruptly as it began when my leash snaps back on. I gaze behind me. I don't get to play with other dogs very often.

Bye, friend.\*

We go back past the bacon. I can still smell it. I am tired. I poop on grass. It is my grass.

PAIN. My paw stings sharply. The hurt shoots deeper with every step. I look at my person and try not to cry.

"Oh no, it's a piece of glass," she says.

I do not know what glass is, but I do not like it. It sounds like class.

Stupid glass.

She picks it out and it hurts for a second. I step on it. I guess I am fine.

I pee on our neighbor's tree. Now it is my tree.

We're almost home. I am tired. My person opens the door—

WATER. I drink and drink and drink and drink. When I am done, I go upstairs and make sure my person is safe. She is.

I wonder if she wants to play. Or maybe cuddle. Perhaps she will be in the mood for a nice long drive with the windows down. Maybe she is going to make food and share some of it with me.

I hope she does.

I hope it is bacon.

I smile and wag. I cannot wait to find out what is next. Can today get any better?

She sighs and pets my head. (I love it when she pets my head.)

"I wish I could stay," she says in her sad voice. (I do not like her sad voice.) "But I have to go to class."

She picks up her backpack. My heart sinks. My tail drops. As I watch her open

#### I pee on that dog's grass as we stroll by. Now it is my grass.

the door, I feel a despairing sense of dread. Maybe if I keep looking at her, she won't leave. I do not want to be without her. What if she never comes back for me?

She closes the door.









#### **APRIL ANDREASEN**

AGE: 20 SBCC ART MAJOR BLACK WORK AND REALISM





# INK D TATTOO ARTISTS OF ISLA VISTA







#### STUART CHAPIN

AGE: 22 UCSB ART MAJOR IGNORANT STYLE

#### PIERCE GONZALEZ

AGE: 20 UCSB PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR STICK AND POKE / LINE ART







## ISLA VISTA

PHOTOGRAPHY + DESIGN // ALASKA YOKOTA

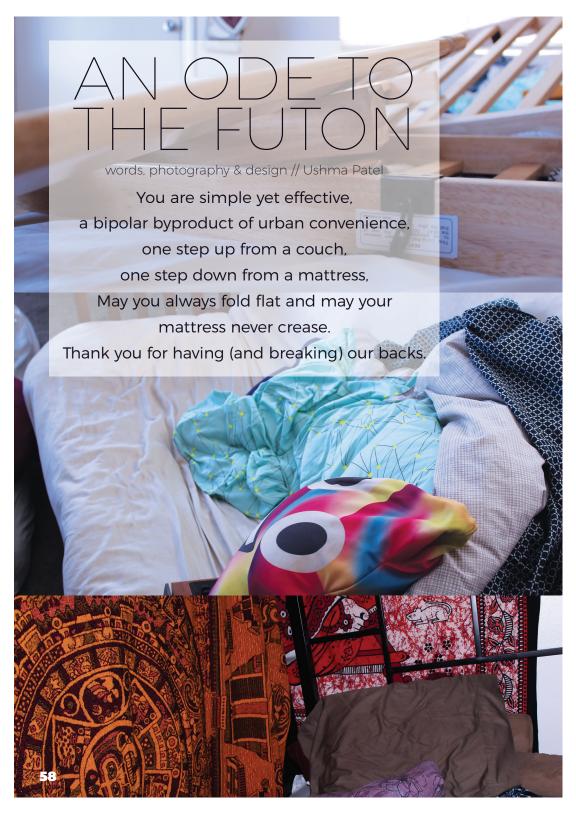




#### **JUSTIN CAPONE**

AGE: 20 UCSB ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR LINE ART / SIMPLISTIC







#### JAMES GELB'S ISLA VISTA REP

"I KEEP TELLING

YOU GUYS NOT TO

FUCKING PARK HERE"

For most residents of Del Playa Dr. in Isla Vista, the horrible tales of James Gelb, a property owner with Del Playa Rentals, are the stuff of daily conversations. Local newspapers chronicled an altercation between Gelb and IV resident, Ethan Bertrand, in November of 2017.

Gelb was videotaped cursing and throwing homophobic slurs at Bertrand in downtown Santa Barbara, and Bertrand subsequently received an outpouring of support from the community online. This was, for many, the beginning of a greater public awareness of the harassment that Gelb has now been committing for decades.

Gelb has been a landlord in IV for over 23 years and,

throughout his residency as a property owner, has been accused of abusive behavior and misconduct with tenants of his own as well as other residents of IV. According to the Daily Nexus, as of November of 2017, there have been at least 20 court filings

against Gelb and 37 filings against his company.

But for those of us who neither rent on Del Playa nor know the story, why exactly has Gelb come under so much fire beyond one altercation? I wanted to hear from someone who has experienced an incident with Gelb firsthand. Aliza Jeong, a second year Psychology and Brain Sciences major and employee at IV's Hana Kitchen, had a verbal altercation with Gelb in the parking lot behind the restaurant early in 2018.

"I'm really accustomed to parking behind the alley because there are reserved parking spaces there. Because we were out of spots, I parked in one adjacent to one of the parking spots, and I didn't really know that wasn't necessarily allowed," Jeong stated in an interview.

Jeong went on to explain that she was parked in the spot, which she later found out

was part of Gelb's property, for a maximum of 15 minutes while she went to pick up a food order.

"I came back out, and James Gelb was on the phone trying to get my car towed. I told him, 'I'm so, so sorry,' and I apologized profusely and told him it wouldn't happen again and that I would move immediately."

However, these apologies did not stop Gelb from verbally attacking Jeong and her friends, including Leah Ding, a second year Statistics major. Jeong said the situation began to escalate once Gelb found out she worked at Hana Kitchen.

Jeong continued, "He kept screaming, 'I keep telling you guys not to fucking park

> here,' and just started cursing. That's when it started escalating, even though I've never heard personally not to park in that spot. I just kept telling him, 'I'll leave right now.'"

From there, Gelb descended into a spiral of curses and slurs.

According to Jeong and

Ding, he started calling the girls "fucking dumbasses", "bitches", and even displayed his middle finger.

"I think I was relatively calm throughout that time," Jeong said, "We were really just trying to leave. The doors were open and people were already getting inside by that point."

Jeong, Ding, and two other friends continued to remain calm in front of Gelb. They continued to apologize and make their way out of the parking lot while Gelb continually screamed curses, sexist slurs and expressions of outrage.

"As we were reversing out of the parking spot, he just kept getting really close to the car," Jeong recalled, "I was pretty scared. I kept shaking for a half hour to an hour after the whole thing happened. Because he was verbally abusive, I didn't know what else he would do."



Someone in Jeong's car recognized the man harassing them as James Gelb, based off of a video on Facebook's UCSB Free & For Sale page wherein Gelb could be seen verbally harassing bikers in IV.

This proves that Jeong and Ding are not the only ones to have this kind of interaction with Gelb, and that these incidents of harassment are relatively frequent behaviors of his.

Another center of attention for Gelb's activities lies within a private Facebook group called Texts From Gelb. The group is entirely private and only members can see its posts and invite others to join—but the group has over 3,000 members. Its contents are aimed at exposing Gelb's tendency for harassment and include pictures and videos of sightings of Gelb, and even a few videos of Gelb raising his voice at tenants of Del Playa and El Nido. Although the group is intended mostly as a space for airing grievances about Gelb and not necessarily pursuing legal action against him, it seems to have led to an increased awareness of Gelb's inappropriate behavior and made students more likely to speak out against it.

It is common knowledge that rental companies in IV can be difficult to work with. Students frequently report feeling taken advantage of, losing money, or not getting maintenance requests fulfilled. But these things pale in comparison to the kind of verbal harassment Gelb has been documented for perpetrating. So why do

people keep renting from Gelb and his company?

Ding chimed in, "A lot of people find it really appealing to live on Del Playa, so they don't really have a lot of options," raising the point that Gelb owns some of the most desirable oceanside properties in all of IV. However, it was announced in 2017 that Gelb has listed his IV properties for a total asking price of \$79,024,950 and will be discontinuing his business in the UCSB and IV area after they are sold.

"I think we're all pretty glad to hear that," Jeong stated in response to the news, "because we honestly don't need someone like that in our community."

I asked the women what they think people should be aware of before choosing a rental company. They agreed that looking online for reviews on sites like Yelp is the best bet against ending up with a company like Del Playa Rentals. They both rent from KAMAP, who they said are superb with maintenance requests and have never given them trouble. They are glad they checked reviews before deciding on a place to live.

In the name of good journalism, I wanted to hear from Gelb himself and see if he could defend himself against these allegations, so I approached Del Playa Rentals seeking a quote from Gelb or any comments he could give me. They referred me to Gelb's personal email, and I reached <u>out</u> to him.

His response: "Go stick it." W

## SIERRA HOTEL FROM HOT MESS TO HONOR RECRUIT

words // Mario Moreno illustration & design // Ushma Pate

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Mario was enlisted in the Navy from 2003 until 2012 as an aircraft electrician. He went on several deployments on board the aircraft carrier U.S.S Harry S. Truman in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. He volunteered to be a Navy recruiter during the last few years he was in the Navy. Upon finishing his active duty service, he moved with his family to Goleta and began to study electrical engineering. He transferred from Santa Barbara City College to UCSB in 2015, and will finish his degree in electrical engineering in 2018.

This is going to sound cliché, but the event that permanently transformed me was boot camp. When you realize that Navy boot camp is only nine weeks long, it seems strange that fifteen years later it still influences my actions. I don't think that I was brainwashed or that they did something special to force me to change. I think I wanted to change; I needed to change. When I joined the Navy, I was already twenty-six years old. That's practically ancient for a recruit in boot camp. Why would I join the Navy at twenty-six? I can explain in two words. Hot mess. That's it, I was a hot mess at twenty-six years old. I guess I could go into more detail, but I think we've heard the story before. All I can say is that I knew I needed structure in my life if I was going to make it out of the Bay Area alive.

I had been dating the same girl for around five years and we were a horrible influence on each other. Her name was Kelly. You name it, and I guarantee we did it. It was like we were in a race to see who could die first. As fate would have it, we were going through a rough patch in our relationship, which gave me just enough time to clean myself up. By rough patch, I mean that I found out she was cheating on me. Repeatedly. I signed up. Time to ship out was fast approaching, and we were trying to work our relationship out. In my mind, I

knew it wouldn't work, but I loved her. Two months to boot camp, and I knew she was still seeing other guys. I still loved her. One month to boot camp. She won the race. I'm not kidding. She died one month before I was supposed to go to boot camp. What was I supposed to do now? She had a son that I loved. He didn't have a mom any more. I couldn't leave him. Kelly's mom convinced me to go. She knew what would happen if I didn't. I cried the next thirty days and then I shipped out.

To be honest, boot camp saved my life. It wasn't hard. My life had been hard. Boot camp was a piece of cake. The whole day was filled up with activities, so there wasn't much time to think about other things. I did what I was supposed to do, and it turns out I did it well. Towards the end of boot camp, the division voted to pick an honor recruit. Your peers pick out the recruit who personifies the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment. My shipmates picked me. I had gone from hot mess to honor recruit in nine weeks. When I graduated boot camp, I must admit I cried one more time thinking about my accomplishments, wishing she was there to share them with me. W

#### **ABOUT SIERRA HOTEL**

"Sierra Hotel" presents writings from participants in UCSB's creative writing workshop for veterans and military dependents. The workshop, which began in 2012, provides the opportunity for this unique group of UCSB students to write about their military experiences as they study the craft of creative nonfiction. To read more work by UCSB student veterans and military dependents, visit Instant Separation, A Digital Journal of Millitary experience from the University of California: www.instantseparation.org



#### The Epidemic of Excrutiating Small Talk

words + illustration + design // Madison Mead

We were driving along the highway. I had my head leaning against the window, looking at the sky while chill tunes drifted into my ears from the speaker. The clouds looked like fish scales. All of a sudden, I was aware of a silence so long and potent that it hung in the air between me and the driver, making me squirm in my seat. The awkward silence had arrived, with the dreaded Excruciating Small Talk (EST) looming on the horizon.

Ever since the silence had penetrated my consciousness, I couldn't seem to think of anything else. It must have been ages since either of us had spoken. I felt the weight of the time on top of my chest, restricting normal breathing. Calm down, I told myself, you're being dramatic, silence is fine, it's comfortable, some topic of conversation will naturally present itself. But, unable to follow this advice.

I rummaged frantically for any morsel floating around my brain, but it was empty. Please, please, no more "fine, how are you?" and "how 'bout that weather today?" How could I find that perfect balance between incessant rambling and utter silence?

I finally blurt out, "The clouds look like fish scales," pointing a dopey finger out the window. EST initiated. She responds, "Yeah they do," and silence settles in with satisfaction once again, leaving me with the desire to punch myself in the stomach, but trying to maintain a semblance of normality. I just want to always be hilariously funny, quirky, entertaining and also have meaningful, intelligent conversations, all the while preserving authenticity—is that so much to ask?

I used to avoid riding in cars with people I didn't want to (or didn't know how to) talk to. What a ridiculous thing to spend energy on. I could



have written a book, five books, by now, with the amount of pure energy I have wasted not only trying to avoid situations where I would have to make EST, but also on the actual act of attempting to make EST.

What is wrong with silence anyway? It is even considered immature to constantly fill the silence with ruthless yammering. Yet we (humanity?) continue to fill it. I try to live by a rule where if I don't have anything to say, I don't talk. Why stress about finding something to say, and polluting the air with empty noise in the process, when I didn't even want to talk in the first place?

But this actually isn't a rule I live by. First of all, it is more of something I tell myself to feel better when I fail to break the silence. Generally, I despise trying to talk if I do not have anything to say, but I find myself trying anyway.

Secondly, it's a bad rule. There are a lot of great experiences to share with people when you put the effort in to connect. Wanting to make conversation is not something of which to be ashamed. Humans are social creatures and our relationships are crucial to a fulfilling life. It doesn't make you emotionally dependent or unstable (I hope). Sometimes I wish I could just skip the pleasantries and get to the good stuff. We seem to be waiting for things to happen naturally when really we should take charge and open ourselves up to people, but it's easier to say than put it into practice. So where's the balance, the sweet spot, between not wasting effort on worthless conversation, and

making the effort to try to connect with another human being?

.... Oh, did you think that was a question that I was going to answer? I was asking you—or rather shouting into the dark, mysterious void, doubtful of recieving an actual response, but with enough hope to ask anyway.

I sense I'm not the only one affected by EST. It's a somewhat acknowledged but widely unstudied epidemic. Too bad I'm not a scientist. There is something that we are seeking in small talk, and we will continue to talk small until we reach something big.

Remember, if you ever want to practice your awkward small talk, don't hit me up at donttalktome@ fakeemail.com. W



## ISLA VISTA GIVES YOU CREDIT

#### MAGIC LANTERN FILMS

#### FILM/MEDIA 119ML ISLA VISTA FILM EVENTS

Magic Lantern Films teaches the ins and outs of film programming using IV Theater as a lab. Students gain experience in budgeting, publicizing, and curating, culminating in the execution of screenings that come out of students' own pitches. Contact DJ Palladino at dipalladino @ihc.ucsb.edu.

#### WORD MAGAZINE

#### **INT 185ST**

#### THE CREATION OF THIS MAGAZINE

This issue of WORD: Isla Vista Arts & Culture Magazine is brought to you by the student artists and writers in INT 185ST and its partner OSL campus organization. We welcome new writers, designers, photographers, and illustrators from all majors at our Friday meetings. Contact Ellen Anderson at eanderson@ihc.ucsb.edu.

#### IV LIVE!

#### **THEATER 42/142**

#### PR AND ON-SITE EVENT MANAGEMENT

Experience promoting and producing weekly improvability comedy shows along with additional live performances in Isla Vista. Learn backstage and front-of-the-house skills. Explore public relations, advertising, and production management in this real-world setting. All majors welcome. Contact Alesha Claveria at aleshaclaveria@umail.ucsb.edu.









## A COOL CUP FOR YOUR HOT COFFEE.



ISLAND VIEW
OUTFITTERS

YOUR LOCAL SPOT. 6565 TRIGO ROAD, ISLA VISTA ISLANDVIEWOUTFITTERS.COM

