



STUDENT PROFILE: ERHAN GUNER



by Jason J. Rivas
Campus Life Editor

I recently had the privilege of sitting down with Erhan Guner, a senior at UHD who walked away from a life in business for that of the stage. With graduation nearing, Erhan hopes to share his love back home in Turkey, and inspire the youth to try their hand on stage, through his philanthropy.

At a young age, Erhan found himself in a choir where he discovered his voice. Blown away by his silky smooth notes, his teacher quickly established him as the centerpiece and soloist for the school choir. But just as his stock was on the rise, Erhan made an impulse decision to move to America. It was a move he initially regretted but stood by.

Feeling alone, Erhan started following in his father's footsteps and began studying International Business. But he was never truly happy with his choice and his grades showed it. Looking for a different path, Erhan found it at the O'Kane Theatre in 2012. The students and faculty welcomed him with open arms as he auditioned and quickly landed a role in a one-act. Reinvigorated, he changed his major to Fine Arts and immersed himself in all things theatre. Not only has he performed in several UHD major plays, but he also has written and directed two well received one-acts.

While blossoming on stage, Erhan as well rediscovered his first love in singing. A regular at Nazif's Grill, he was encouraged to sing with the house band performing. Impressing the band and owners, Erhan then joined the reconfigured band and together they performed and spread the intricate majesty of Turkish

music at a variety of social gathering and weddings. They began to attract a following amongst the Middle Eastern community because of the similar culture, religion, and musical styling. His performances would bring people from all walks of life together to share in the musical display and help fuel Erhan's ideas after UHD.

Erhan has big plans after graduation in spreading the acting bug back home. First, he has a teaching position in place at an art school for the preadolescence. Afterwards, Erhan will start his own theatre company to showcase the undiscovered talent within Turkey. Finally, Erhan's philanthropy work aims to raise funds to travel to less fortunate villages and build a small stage for the youth. "Not having what we have here in our life, access to unlimited sources, not having those, I think they need a commitment, a place to show off their talent and share the bug of theatre with them." Erhan sums up his thoughts for all who read this by saying, "Find your passion and go for it, sometimes earning five dollars for something you're passionate for is better than making ten dollars you feel nothing for." If you feel like you are not passionate about your current academic major, talk to an advisor who can help you find a way to pursue your passion. Erhan performs Wednesday nights from 10 PM to Midnight at Café Mawal and will be appearing in The Diary of Anne Frank, this April, on campus.



Photos by Darci McFerran - Dateline Downtown

Translation and meaning of the sign next to Erhan:
#SayNoToWomenCruelty #EmekSinemasi (was the historic movie theatre govt tear down to build a mall) #Soma (a mine accident happened last summer 301 mine workers died) #SayNoToHateCrimes #OzgecanAslan (the girl who recently died) #RespectTheArtAndTheArtist #GeziParki (the park that resistance took place two summers ago) everything started when govt officials attack the protesters who were protesting the govt for wanting to cut the trees in that park and build a mall there too. #WorkSafety



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NEWS



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HELP WANTED: SALES AND BUSINESS MANAGER FOR UHD'S DATELINE: DOWNTOWN STUDENT NEWSPAPER & WEBSITE 2015-16 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Student Publications Advisory Committee at the University of Houston-Downtown is seeking applicants for the position of business and sales manager for Dateline: Downtown, the student-run bi-weekly newspaper at UHD. Flexible beginning date, but candidates are expected to commit for the entire 2015-2016 academic year. The primary focus of this job is advertising sales. Additional duties include bookkeeping and handling all support functions not part of the editorial operation. The successful candidate will have a strong orientation toward personal selling and developing advertising revenue to permit the growth of the paper as well as effective budgeting and management skills. Duties include managing business and financial matters for the paper, in cooperation with the student editor and adviser, and expanding the sales of advertising space in the paper, including to businesses in the campus neighborhoods of NoDo and Washington St. Successful candidate will train on PeopleSoft accounting system for payroll and accounts. Qualifications include at least sophomore standing, at least one semester at UHD, successful completion of basic business courses, and the maintenance of at least a 2.5 GPA. Applications are sought immediately and will be accepted until the position is filled; interviews start in April 2015. To apply, download an application at <http://www.uhd.edu/dateline/> and forward with letter detailing qualifications and resume via email to Dateline adviser, Dr. Anthony Chiaviello, at Chiaviello@uhd.edu.

HELP WANTED: PRINT & WEB EDITOR FOR UHD'S DATELINE: DOWNTOWN STUDENT NEWSPAPER FOR 2015-16 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Student Publications Advisory Committee at the University of Houston-Downtown is seeking applicants for the position of editor for Dateline: Downtown, the student-run, bi-weekly newspaper at UHD. This position begins after the spring, 2015, semester, to prepare an edition for the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester. Eligible candidates are expected to commit to the job for the entire 2015-16 academic year. Duties include working cooperatively with student business manager and faculty adviser, developing and managing a stable of day and evening student freelance writers to cover news and events on campus and in the campus neighborhood. Successful candidate will be well-versed in the use of Adobe InDesign page-making software and have the skills to post the newspaper and articles online and to maintain the Dateline: Downtown web site. The paper needs stories written both in advance of -- and as follow-up to -- events of interest to students, including student activities and organizations, academics, athletics and lifestyle, university administration, and student government, as well as cultural coverage of activities in the theatre, film, music, sports, and arts communities, particularly as these are of interest to UHD students. Qualifications include at least sophomore standing, at least one semester in residence at UHD, successful completion of basic writing and communications courses, and a current 3.0 cumulative GPA. Applications are sought immediately and will be accepted until the position is filled; interviews start in April, 2015. To apply, download an application at <http://www.uhd.edu/dateline/> and forward with writing samples via email to Dateline adviser, Dr. Anthony Chiaviello, at Chiaviello@uhd.edu.

WAL-MART SUES TEXAS

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

Wal-Mart wants to rollback liquor prices in Texas

Wal-Mart, the superstore giant, filed a lawsuit on February 12, 2015, challenging the constitutionality of certain Texas statutes, which prohibit publically owned corporations from selling distilled spirits. Wal-Mart claims that the laws are unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause, Commerce Clause, and Comity Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The lawsuit claims that Texas law discriminates against public corporations that could provide competitive prices for consumers. "The ban against public corporations negatively impacts Texas consumers, who are forced to pay non-competitive prices because fair competition is prevented," the lawsuit states.

Wal-Mart stated in the lawsuit that publicly traded corporations are banned from holding package store permits yet the law excludes publically traded hotel corporations and allows them to obtain permits to sell distilled spirits. The lawsuit states, "No other state in the nation allows private corporations to engage in the retail sale of spirits but prohibits some but not all publicly traded companies from doing so."

The lawsuit is also challenging the limit of no more than five package store permits per person or company. Even if

Wal-Mart were able to obtain permits to sell distilled liquor in Texas, the permit restriction would only allow them to sell liquor in five of their 546 stores (Wal-Mart and Sam's Club) within the state. Again, hotels are excluded from this law.

Wal-Mart claims that current state laws are irrational, unfair, and unconstitutional.

A spokesperson for Wal-Mart states, "This is counter to Texas' belief in free enterprise and fair competition, limits our customer's choice and keeps the price of spirits artificially high, all of which harm Texas consumers," the spokesperson said. "Wal-Mart believes the law needs to be changed to provide a fair and level playing field so we can offer our customers a

full assortment of adult beverages."

Retailers panic when this corporate giant flexes its muscles because of its ability to significantly reduce prices on everything from grocery to home goods. Wal-Mart, which started out as a small retail business in Arkansas, operates over 11,000 retail units in 27 countries, employs 2.2 million people with 1.3 million employees in the U.S. alone.

Small business advocates feel that Wal-Mart destroys the spirit of small towns by burying mom and pop stores that are an integral part of communities. Liquor retailers in Texas are now quivering at the possibility of being buried under this corporate leviathan.



IRAQ LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE AGAINST IS, WITH IRAN INSTEAD OF U.S. LED FORCES

by GeRoyal D. Jackson
Staff Reporter

On Monday, March 2nd, the Iraqi military launched a major military operation against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS or IS, to reclaim the strategic city of Tikrit.

In an indication of the growing divide between the Iraqi government and the U.S. led coalition forces that have conducted coordinated airstrikes against the Islamic State, the coalition did not lend aerial cover to the Iraqi operation. In fact, coalition officials were largely uninformed of neither the planning nor the timing of the offense. Instead, Iraqi officials are relying on Iranian advisers and forces to supplement their militias.

The U.S. led coalition as well Human Rights groups have cautioned Iraq's reliance on Iran as well as the use of a majority Shiite military force attacking a Sunni town. The caution is justified as there have been documented cases of

Iraqi forces committing abuses against civilians after retaking other cities in the country from IS.

The risk of the majority Shiite forces attacking the Sunni stronghold hold the threat of sectarian violence and possibly a looming sectarian civil war in the absence of the Islamic State.

The operation comes on the heels of an announcement from U.S. officials that they would postpone an assault on Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq and an IS stronghold.

80 miles north of Baghdad and 140 southwest of Mosul, Tikrit is a strategic stronghold the Iraqi and coalition forces must take before sieging Mosul.

In a defiant tone against the Western coalition, an aide to the Iraqi Prime Minister has openly voiced the growing impatience Iraq has with the West and the shift to Iranian assistance.

"If the Americans continue procrastinating about the time it will take to liberate the country, Iraq will liberate Mosul and Anbar without them," said the aide, Ali al-Alaaq. Retaking the city and without help from coalition forces could prove a major victory for the Iraqis, literally and symbolically, however the threat of sectarian violence could completely dissolve the coalition.

While the U.S. led coalition will not participate in the offensive to retake Tikrit, the forces continue their bombardment of IS militants in other parts of the country.

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NEWS

BRAZIL'S WATER TAPPED OUT

by Miguel Nunez
Staff Reporter

Southern Coastal Brazil is facing a water shortage that is affecting the everyday lives of its citizens. According to International Business Times, "Water cuts and blackouts have spread across large areas of south-east Brazil as a result of the worst drought in the country since 1930. The drought has hit Brazil's three most populous states: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais." and they are not alone in facing extreme droughts. Here in the U.S. We have also seen extreme droughts.

Take for example California. In early 2014 the state faced its own drought which is still going on today. This drought caused local officials in California to make new laws meant to limit water consumption. For example a Californian could be fined up to 500 dollars a day for violating the new rules governing how to wash a lawn or a car. Residents were also encouraged to reserve as much water as possible. Even today such recommendations by officials have not swayed.

While some people may want to attribute this California drought to climate change scientist from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are saying that in this one rare particular instance that is just not the case. According to Professor Richard Seager from Columbia University's Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory, "It's important to note that California's drought, while extreme, is not an uncommon occurrence for the state." He went on to say, "In fact, multiyear droughts appear regularly in the state's climate record, and it's a safe bet that a similar event will happen again."

Of course all this is not to say that climate change is not happening. The vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is occurring. According to a recent peer reviewed study done by Sarah Green, a chemistry professor at Michigan Technological University, and about ten other scientists, about 97% of scientists agree that climate change is occurring and what's more it is being caused by man.

Right now what is going on in south eastern Brazil

according to some scientists is because of deforestation of the Amazon, which in part affects local climate. A leading climatologist and earth scientist for Brazil, Antonio Nobre has stated that such actions like cutting down trees in the amazon has led to climate change. He has been quoted as saying, "That's what we have learned - that the forests have an innate ability to import moisture and to cool down and to favor rain... If deforestation in the Amazon continues, São Paulo will probably dry up. If we don't act now, we're lost."

The citizens of Brazil are already dealing with the severe consequences of this climate change. Take for example some local businesses there. Tigre Cego restaurant located in São Paulo has been forced because of the water shortage to no longer use traditional silverware. Instead they have resorted to plastic utensils and paper plates. In his frustration he has lashed out on the government saying that they are just ignoring the problem.

The truth is that the government is aware of the problem and the only solution it is offering for the moment, much like California here in the United States, is water rationing and in some cases cutting off water completely. In São Paulo residents there up to hundreds of thousands have been cut off. In total though there have been up to four million people in Brazil that have had to deal with water rationing and cutting of services because of it.

The government is doing all it can for the time being by charging more for high water consumption in hopes of discouraging high water use and offering discounts for people who use less water. Even larger businesses and farmers are not safe from this new water usage regulation. The government in Brazil has capped the amount of water that they can use from rivers to water their farm lands.

Even though the Brazilian Government is trying its best to conserve and to encourage water conservation people are not happy. Frustrations are running high and if Brazil does not get more rain soon then weeks without water at a time will just be part of everyday life there.

A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW AS JON STEWART ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

Jon Stewart of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" announced on February 10th that he would be stepping down as host of the satirical news program after an award-winning fourteen year run. Cue the collective Awww!

Immediately after Stewart announced his impending departure from the popular program, wails of woe filled social media. "Surveys have shown that the overwhelming majority of men and women under the age of 35 list "The Daily Show" as their primary source of television news." Clearly, Stewart has connected with audiences using his impeccable comedic timing to report current political and social issues with a quick wit and silver tongue.

Although "The Daily Show" has always established that it isn't a real news

program, Stewart has been compared to award-winning journalists like Anderson Cooper, Dan Rather, and Tom Brokaw. The charismatic Stewart is actually a very talented actor and comedian whose viewers have religiously flocked to him four days a week for their daily dose of satire.



His perspective of the world has made us laugh and made us think.

We will miss the way he makes us laugh at our government (It's actually not that hard to do): "We have it. The smoking gun. The evidence. The potential weapon of mass destruction we have been looking for as our pretext of invading Iraq. There's just one problem - it's in North Korea."

We will miss the way he makes us laugh at ourselves: "Fatherhood is great because you can ruin someone from scratch."

We will miss the way he makes us laugh at our history: "I celebrated Thanksgiving in an old-fashioned way. I invited everyone in my neighborhood to my house, we had an enormous feast, and then I killed them and took their land."

But most of all, we will miss the way he just tells it like it is: "If you don't stick to your values when they're being tested, they're not values: they're hobbies."

FBI DIRECTOR GIVES SPEECH ON RACISM

05

by Miguel Nunez
Staff Reporter &
JhaRe' Scott
Coauthor

The seventh and current director of the FBI James Comey recently gave a speech at Georgetown University and he had much to say about racism in law enforcement. In his speech he referred to racial bias among police officers as the “hard truths”.

In his speech, which Comey titled *Hard Truths: Law Enforcement and Race*, he said, “Much research points to the widespread existence of unconscious bias. Many people in our white-majority culture have unconscious racial biases and react differently to a white face than a black face.” James Comey might not be far off in his assessment.

There have been a few studies done to support the claim that there may just in fact be racial biases among police officers, even if just unconscious. According to drugpolicy.org, an organization that promotes drug policies that are grounded in science, compassion, health, and human rights, “Although rates of drug use and selling are comparable across racial lines, people of color are far more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated for drug law violations than are whites.” They are not alone in sharing these ideas.

Other well-known organizations have also shared similar studies that support the idea that racial biases exist among law enforcement. The NAACP has come out with alarming statistics. On their own website they write the following, “About 14 million Whites and 2.6 million African Americans report using an illicit drug, also 5 times as many Whites are using drugs as African Americans, yet African Americans are sent to prison for drug offenses at 10 times the rate of Whites.” These are alarming statistics to say the least.

It clearly points to a justice system in which being black seems to be just as punishable as possessing illegal drugs. Though this is not to say we have a corrupt legal system entirely, but it does point to a system that is in desperate need of some sort of reform and this is where James Comey comes in and why his speech carries so much weight.

Comey’s speech was unexpected to start with. Many said that they were surprised to have a man in his position talk about something so real. Karen



Edmonson, a former president of the NAACP chapter in Yonkers, N.Y. had this to say about Comey’s speech, “It’s rare that someone of his stature can be so honest and say, ‘Yeah, but we all have prejudices.’”

In his speech Comey talked about prejudice and biases that all police officers share when working on the street, even everyday people. Though James Comey specifically talked about law enforcement and how a police officer will look at two individuals in the same scenario, even in the same clothes, differently simply because of their skin color. He said that it was hard for an officer to fight a behavior that constantly gets reinforced by past experiences. It is these prejudices and racial biases that he is determined to stop and what his speech focused on. He also made the point that he wanted to better the relationship between officers and the public. It must be said though that this mantra of ‘fostering a better relationship between the police and the public’ has been used far too long without any tangible results.

Yet this time it might be a little different. It is not just that we have the head of the FBI coming out and saying that there exist in the police ranks a divisive racial bias, but also because some people seem receptive to the idea of this change being driven by someone with such a high stature. So much so that they even put forth ideas they believe will assist in decreasing the racial prejudice among the police.

NPR asked a Georgetown graduate what he thought of the speech and he said, “I would like to hear him have a plan for how he’s going to allow the average

person to be employed by the FBI,” he went on to say, “Someone who grew up in the projects is not going to meet those requirements for law enforcement.” Already it seems that people are willing to speak their mind about what real solutions could be offered to fix a system which needs it.

Although there was much optimism shared among people who heard Comey’s speech there was also people who did not feel the same.

Many people especially on twitter had their own usually not so positive comments on Comey’s speech at Georgetown University using the hashtag #ComeyAtGu. On Twitter plumandmustard wrote, “started off sounding like a progressive speech & ended up being a love letter to police & a ‘change your ways’ to communities.” It was sentiments such as this that were shared among some on the internet.

The FBI director admits these faults within the police force and addresses them in a powerful speech that rings with truth. Maybe this is not the speech that will change society or the police, but maybe it can be a starting point in which real conversations can be had about an important issue.

James Comey finished his speech with powerful words that should echo in the minds of the listeners for a while. “We all have work to do—hard work, challenging work—and it will take time. We all need to talk and we all need to listen, not just about easy things, but about hard things, too. Relationships are hard. Relationships require work.”

NEWS

DESPITE BUMPY START, UHD'S DAY AT THE CAPITOL PROGRESSES THE GATOR WAY



by Jason J. Rivas
Campus Life Editor

Photos by Benjamin DeSoto - Dateline Downtown

On February 23rd, students and faculty of the various campuses of UHS (UH-System) descended onto the steps of the capitol to raise their concerns and wishes for their respective universities. Although questionable circumstances made for a rough start, UHD made a fine impression on the various state congressmen and staffers currently in session.

Allegations of sabotage have surfaced that “big brother,” UH may not have had UHD’s best interest in mind. These accusations stem from the buses UH lent UHD, which were later shown as unable to travel faster than 45 MPH with banners proclaiming “UHS Day” flying off mid-travel, and revealing the UH logo. More assertions rose that the other universities: main campus, Clear Lake, and Victoria, used coach buses which were far better suited for high speed travel than that of the UHD lent buses. The transportation fiasco caused UHD to arrive in Austin at 11 AM, missing all of the morning meetings with State Congressmen and staffers. A reception held for the universities was heavy on Cougar PR, particularly UH football, and light for the other three universities. As a volunteer present at UHS Day, I can say that there were ominous signs of potential bias, but they could also be misinterpreted coincidences. Although the buses and UH-heavy propaganda merit some suspicions, it ultimately falls on UHD to provide adequate transportation and “Gator Pride” for their constituents. An investigation by UHD’s SGA has been launched, and it is important to note that at the current moment, there are only allegations and not enough substantial evidence to warrant a conviction, in the court of public opinion or higher.

Meanwhile, 35 students and various members of the UHD faculty, including UHD President Dr. William Flores, met with staffers and congressmen to continue the promotion of UHD’s importance in Texas and stimulate bills that would provide additional funding for the institute. In particular, is the push for funding for a STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) facility. As demand for more graduates from these four fields rises, UHD is finding difficulty in fulfilling the needs of the globalized job market, as well as retaining professors who would conduct research on behalf of the university. If the state legislature allocates \$108.7 million, over a 20-year period, then UHD would be able to fund the construction of a STEM facility to continue preparing graduates to be competitive for the job market. STEM funding has been a high priority for the school for the past three congressional legislature’s sessions. Also on the agenda were additional funding for: the new QEP (Community Engagement/Service Learning); a Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability (CUAS); and access to the Microsoft Innovation Center. The CUAS would allow additional research in conservation, pest control, and nutrition as well as a prime center for students seeking additional opportunities for community engagement. The Microsoft Innovation Center would allow the College of Business students to remain competitive in the job-market and/or in applying for graduate programs. Other key topics were increases in funding for the university and students, particularly Higher Education Assistance Funds which help the university fund the various research, projects, and acquisition of student resources at the university.

In spite of the shaky start, the students and faculty of UHD made great progress in communicating their message to elected representatives who were eager and willing to listen and make note. At the end, President Flores voiced pride in his ambassadors, “I’m so impressed with the UHD students coming today... advocating for the interest of higher education, specifically for the University of Houston-Downtown.”

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FROM STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

by Jason J. Rivas
Campus Life Editor

As the semester springs into the break, a late change in graduation date has been enacted while the various organizations of UHD continue providing Major Opportunities to serve their fellow classmates by improving campus food options, school pride, and volunteering.

Graduates for spring 2015 take note: The graduation date has been moved to Friday, May 22 at 3 PM. The potential controversial change was made in part, to ease conflict with the Memorial Day weekend.

UHD Veterans Services, in cooperation with SGA and several other organizations, are moving forward with plans to install a food pantry for all UHD students. Many students have voiced their concerns over Aramark's pricing, forcing some to attend class on malnourished stomachs. The establishment of a food pantry hopes to provide students with a cost-friendly alternative for small meals. UHD Veteran Services recently presented their proposal to the Provost for funding and a proper facility to store canned goods. Currently, a state permit is in the pipeline and volunteering opportunities will

be available for students when the food pantry becomes operational. A grand opening date will be announced in due time.

Stand Out will be holding a drag show entitled "Guys and Dolls," on March 26, at 5:30 in A300. The event is being sponsored by the Golden Key International and Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, the UHD Honors Program, UHD's Texas Freedom Network, and Out for Education. The event will feature both UHD student and professional drag queens and a Q & A. Tickets will be seven dollars with proceeds going to fund the Out for Education Scholarship Fund and Stand Out, the LGBTQ Organization on campus.

UHD's Got Talent will be holding auditions March 23-24 for their event on April 2nd. Contact SGA for more details.

The UHD Garden Club is currently recruiting new members. Amanda Howard, President of the club, invites all: "Do You Want a Better World? Come Grow One! Join the UHD Garden Club, for more info contact uhdgardenclub@yahoo.com"



Finally, the elections for SGA President, Vice-President, and Senators will soon be underway. There are two upcoming information sessions scheduled for March 9th and 13th, at which information/application packets will be provided. A mandatory meeting for those interested in running will be held March 26th, with packets due the next day. Student campaigns will begin March 30th thru April 3rd, and will culminate with voting April 6th-10th. For more information, email Sarah Crass at crasss@uhd.edu.

If you have any questions pertaining to student organizations, email Percy Jackson, Coordinator of Student Activities and Events, at jacksonpe@uhd.edu.



By: L. A. Bonté



For more comics and animations visit FilbertCartoons.com

A FIFTY SHADES OF GREY FRENZY

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

The highly anticipated film adaptation of E.L. James' best-selling erotic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* was released to record breaking numbers over Valentine's Day weekend, and though reviews seem to be mixed, the numbers don't lie. The first film in the provocative trilogy broke records and raked in over \$266 million worldwide in its opening weekend alone.

Fans of the books were skeptical that the writers, producers, and directors would be able to adapt the graphic sexual material from print to screen with an R-rating. If the film accurately translated the book's naughty nature, it would have surely landed an NC-17 rating, but the movie's slightly tamer version certainly didn't disappoint. It was everything the books were: witty, sexy, and a little extreme in all the right places.

There's been so much focus on the dominant and submissive sexual content that the relationship of the two main characters often gets lost in the infamous red room of pain. It is, after all, at its essence, a love story and the awakening of two people. It is the sexual awakening of Anna, the demure and sexually inexperienced college student, and the emotional awakening of Christian Grey, the handsome billionaire with fifty shades of flaws.

James has received criticism for poor writing, but if you read the books expecting something akin to Tolstoy, you'll surely

be disappointment. It's far from the next great literary masterpiece, but it's fun and clearly speaks to the masses.

Critics have also dissed the films unrealistic storyline. It's actually loosely based on the idea of the typical fairytale. It's the age-old fantasy of a rich man who finds a beautiful girl, lavishes her with expensive gifts, fights for her, and they fall in love and live happily ever after. So, it's sort of like *Cinderella* but with nipple clamps.

Isn't a fantastical storyline what fiction and fantasy is all about? The reason we go to the movies is to be entertained and escape reality. We watch films about giant talking robots that transform into cars and fight to save Earth, a man bitten by an irradiated spider that shoots spiderwebs from his wrists, and mutant humans who have various super powers, but this storyline is unrealistic? Okay.

The books, which have sold over 100 million copies worldwide, have spawned a frenzy of merchandise related to the erotic thriller like: sex toys, wines, musical compilations, clothing line, jewelry, board games, and more. It's even been the inspiration for cookbooks—*Fifty Shades of Bacon*, anyone?

Most importantly, *Fifty Shades of Grey* has spurred conversation about human sexuality and how we define the joy of pleasure. Fans, especially women, are on the precipice of their own awakening. Women are learning what it means to be sexual beings deserving of the passionate arousals of all the senses. It's a revolution, and it's about time.

SPRING BREAK: PARTY OR PARTICIPATE?

by Darci McFerran
Staff Writer

Spring Break, those two little words can conjure universal images of bikini clad girls, beaches, and beer (or some variation of a frozen tropical disaster with alcohol). Somewhere along the annals of modern history spring break has become synonymous with college parties and fun in the sun. For me, this oddly placed period of off time is consumed with what I like to call, "I can finally try to get my head above water," catch-up! That never-ending to-do list sits proudly laughing at me from the rubble atop my desk and any fantasies of travel become a mere memory. However, let's entertain the notion of what options are available to those lucky individuals who can shake the shackles of their responsibilities.

With winter still hanging ominously over our heads, the urge to travel to a warmer climate seems like the only way to get out of the multiple layers of thermal/sweats wear and frolic along sandy dunes with a frozen tropical disaster of any variation. South Padre Island, Port Aransas, and Galveston are all close enough to be affordable, but they are suffering the same arctic torture as Houston. What makes each of these still viable is the fact that they are close enough that you could head out on a whim, should

the weather improve. Florida and Hawaii both rank in the Travel Channels "top 12 spring break party destinations" and will increase your odds at basking in the warmth of spring better than any Texas locale.

Not everyone is ready for beachwear even if they are ready for some sunshine. So what other options do we have available to us that would be worth skipping a Netflix marathon? What about using the time to see the world and change it! The Travel Channel has cleverly named traveling

with a purpose-voluntourism. Describing it as, "a hybrid holiday that combines volunteer work and travel in a short vacation. Organizations sponsor spring-break getaways that involve engaging in scientific research to protect the environment in exotic locations or rebuilding homes for the materially poor." So maybe you miss out on the tropical frozen disaster, but you might escape

the arctic temperatures while exploring a new place...on someone else's dime!

If all else fails you could find a local charity to lend a hand to and when your done grab a beach blanket and head to Galveston on a day trip feeling like a hero! The to do list will be there when you get back!

<http://www.travelchannel.com/interests/spring/articles/spring-break-voluntourism>



Photos by Darci McFerran - Dateline Downtown

O'KANE THEATER PRESENTS END GAME BY SAMUEL BECKETT

by Darci McFerran
Staff Writer

Every spring the O'Kane Theatre presents a free "Lunchtime" performance to the students of University of Houston-Downtown. For five days, at the end of April, students can bring their lunch to the theater and experience the magic of the stage, for free. Unlike the major productions that are offered twice a year, this show strives to be less conventional. Drawing from a slightly more provocative genre and aiming to invoke thoughts or questions within the viewer. It is an opportunity to experience the more dramatic and artistic edge of this craft.

This season, O'Kane Theater is presenting End Game by Samuel Beckett, who is widely considered to be one of the primary influences of Absurdist Theater. Directed by Professor Luke Fedell, this piece was chosen in order to challenge the students. "The end is in the beginning and yet you go on," Hamm, the protagonist, rambles senselessly to himself. Beckett employed minimalism to convey his ideas, which at the time it was written, was a revolutionary idea that contributed to his debatable role in the Theater of the Absurd movement. Theater of the Absurd is defined by Merriam-Webster as, theater that seeks to represent the absurdity of human existence in a meaningless universe by bizarre or fantastic means. Which, I believe, Beckett does very well in this script by employing seemingly meaningless dialogue and plotline.

The piece has been shortened to fit into the schedules of busy students, but otherwise it ill be presented as the author intended it to be. In fact, Fedell noted that, "It is an interesting challenge to stay true to his (Beckett) goal. I do it to help the audiences think and be creative on their own." The primary characters in this "Lunchtime" cut are Hamm played by Maximos Weimer, and Clov played by Ruben Pabon. The show will run 5 days, April 20th through April 24th at 1:00pm. Bring an open mind and your lunch for a 45-minute detour from reality. No tickets are needed, just walk right into O'Kane Theater, on the third floor of the One Main building, and take a seat.

Professor Fedell concluded saying, "Students can expect to watch a metaphor and walk away questioning what it means. So, I challenge each of you to come up with your own meaning." Well, Professor Fedell, challenge accepted



Photos by Darci McFerran - Dateline Downtown

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

Did you know your UHD student ID gets you discounts to the ballet, theater, museums, and many other venues? On a recent trip to the Houston Zoo, an employee noticed my UHD ID in my wallet and informed me that all students in the University of Houston Systems get in free—always. I had no idea! So, I set out on a mission to discover what other perks were out there.

The Houston Ballet's tickets range from \$40-\$175, but they reserve specific dates for student discount tickets. All you have to do is go to the ticket booth 90 minutes before show time for that specific performance and ask if student rush tickets are available. If seating is available, you can get in for \$10.

The Houston Symphony offers student passes that allows unlimited concerts for \$50, or purchase a single ticket for \$15 starting one week out from the concert and up until show time. The Alley Theater, which is temporarily located on the University of Houston campus while the downtown location is being

THE PERKS OF BEING A GATOR



remodeled, offers tickets for \$16 to all students.

Houston Museum of Natural Science offers student discount tickets for permanent and special exhibits. A few special exhibits currently featured at HMNS are "Samurai: The Way of the Warrior" and "Shark!" I've seen them both, and they are amazing. With your student ID, it's \$18 for "Samurai" and \$20 for "Shark!" The permanent exhibits are \$15 with a student ID or free every Thursday afternoon. The Planetarium is \$7, Butterfly Exhibit is \$7, and the Giant Screen Theaters is \$9.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), offers student tickets for \$7.50 and free entry every Thursday, courtesy of Shell.

AMC Theaters offers student discounts every Thursday. Cinemark also offers student discounts, but the days and times vary by location.

All of these venues require a valid student ID. Check out their websites for more information, and don't be afraid to ask!

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Thurs
Mar. 12,
2015

NEWS

THE UNCONSCIOUS ELECTORATE

by Joshua Burgman
Assistant Editor

As members of the US Congress propose more laws that infringe upon our rights to vote, each election cycle sees a decline in voters going to the polls. Unfortunately, it is not anti-voting laws that are keeping the polling places empty, but an electorate that seems to care less and less each cycle.

Originally we began this article as a news piece, but as we began to do our research, we ran across several dozen articles and stats that reported the dismal numbers that the nation saw in the 2014-midterm elections. Because of that we found it redundant to report to you news that is already out there, besides, why should we tell you something that you already know? You know that you don't vote; our question is why?

For the sake of perspective, we think it is important to give you some numbers. According to a NBC exit poll, only seven percent of voters aged 18-24 showed up and cast their vote, with the majority of the voting being done by forty-five to sixty-four year olds who comprised forty-three percent of the vote. Quite frankly, seven percent of anything gets nothing done. When did we become so apathetic?

The power in the collective voice of the young people in this nation is possibly one of the most influential entities that exist, but we must exercise it, and regularly. In any given election cycle we have the power to affect change.

After the tragic killing of unarmed St. Louis teen, Michael Brown, the young people of this country took to the streets and voiced our concerns to the public for our safety. I say our, because I also participated in a protest that was organized by some of the students from our very school. It was the first time I had ever attended a protest, and I am not ashamed to say that I was very proud to have been able to be a part of that voice. But the entire time I was there, I couldn't stop asking myself, "I wonder how many of the people out here today voted in the last election?" Although it was exciting being a part of a protest for the first time, I felt that our voices would have been put to better use at the polling places.

This article was difficult for me to write because I did not want you to think that I am castigating you. What I really want is to understand. We have the opportunity, provided we work together, to change our reality. And I am coming to you, as I feel I should, completely devoid of any party affiliation. Because rather or not you are republican, democrat, independent, black, white or gold, we all have a vested interest in the future of this country. Protecting those interests commands our attendance at the voting booth.

While I understand President Obama isn't everyone's favorite president. The words he spoke at the 50th anniversary of the Selma march, which was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 50 years ago, were directed at every voting member of our society; party be damned. "All of us need to recognize," he said, "that change depends on our actions." "Of course, our democracy is not the task of congress alone, or the courts alone or even the president alone. If every new voter suppression law was struck down today we would still have, here in America, one of the lowest voting rates among freed people." His words resonated with me, and now my mission is to have them resonate with you.

LATE CHANGES TO UHD COMMENCEMENT DATE SPARK OUTRAGE AND CONFUSION AMONG GRADUATING SENIORS

by Ted Shull
Editor-in-Chief

As members of the Spring 2015 graduating class of the University of Houston-Downtown make plans to celebrate a major milestone with family and friends, many were confronted with an unexpected shock on Monday afternoon. The University sent out emails to graduation candidates on March 9th, stating that "After much deliberation and consultation with various constituents, the University of Houston-Downtown has decided to change this Spring 2015 Commencement date from Saturday, May 23 at 10 a.m. to Friday, May 22, at 3 p.m. It is anticipated that this change can better accommodate graduation candidates and their guests in their celebration of the Memorial Day Holiday".

Many UHD seniors took to social media to criticize the late decision. Senior Kristopher Sharp said "it's problematic for me. I tried to plan ahead to save money by purchasing an airline ticket for a family member, putting a down payment on an event space to host a celebration, and have already sent out emails to close friends – many of whom have already made their own travel arrangements".

UHD Senior, Tarah Taylor, reported that she was contacted by the Registrar's Office in regard to the proposed changes. "I told them that changing the ceremony to Friday seems like a nightmare. I have family who have been waiting many years to see me graduate, and now all those folks are going to have to get off of work on Friday, and return home to Dallas in rush-hour traffic.

According to Kristopher, "what shocks me the most is why the university waited until the middle of the semester to tell us? We should have been notified earlier if this was something that University stakeholders were even thinking about doing".

Students who have concerns regarding this change in Ceremony date can contact Lourdes Ledesma, associate Registrar at ledesma@uhd.edu or call 713-221-8999



TRUST, RESPECT, ACCESS

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by Kara Moore
Staff Writer

Photos by Kara Moore - Dateline Downtown

If you're interested in politics, you've probably heard the phrase "lobbying" or "lobbyist." To some it means a person hired by an organization to convince a politician to side one way or another on legislation that would later affect the organization. Lobbying can be done by anyone though, and I received the chance to experience this process first-hand when I went to Austin with the Texas Freedom Network chapter here at UHD. The Texas Freedom Network is "a Texas organization formed to protect religious freedom, defend civil liberties, and strengthen public schools in the State of Texas." It champions causes such as minority rights, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the separation of church and state. On Thursday February 26, it gathered over 100 members to go to the capital and lobby politicians to vote in favor of new legislation that fell under the campaign's mantra; Trust Texans to make their own reproductive choices, Respect those choices and the medical decisions of the doctors involved, and restore Access to reproductive rights to Texans across the state.

I learned while in Austin that in the last legislative session, a lot changed about access to safe abortions for Texans. To have an abortion in Texas is now a nearly impossible process for most. The restrictions include receiving an ultrasound despite if it's medically necessary, then waiting 24 hours to return and have the procedure. For a doctor to even give the procedure they must have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles, which is difficult because hospitals do not make money off abortions and thus do not usually offer admitting privileges to doctors who perform them. Doctors are also required to tell women that abortion will increase the likelihood of breast cancer, when that has been proved medically false by the American Cancer Society. Finally, all clinics offering abortions were required to become "mini hospitals," upgrades that can cost a mil-

lion dollars. This has forced many abortion clinics to close down, leaving Texas with under 20 clinics. In the Rio Grande Valley this has specifically taken a toll, as it's rural area meant these clinics were sometimes the only access to healthcare that people had. Planned Parenthood provides "anemia testing, cholesterol screening, diabetes screening, physical exams," etc. and when the restrictions went into place that meant a lot of these services could no longer be offered in this area. This also meant there wasn't a place to get tested for HIV, which has been a problem in the Valley for a few years now. All this culminated because conservative politicians under the guise of "protecting women's health" took an attack on access to safe abortions.

The new legislative session has bills aimed to repeal most of these restrictions such as the requirement to tell patients breast cancer is linked to abortion, the 24 hour wait period, and the admitting privileges requirement. Some bills though are just common sense. The two believed most likely to get a hearing are a score of bills "requiring sex education in schools to include evidence based, medically accurate and age appropriate information on pregnancy and STI/HIV prevention methods approved by the FDA, in addition to abstinence" and "allow young parents who are 15/16 years of age or older to access birth control without the consent of their parents." This is the legislation I advocated for with the many volunteers from all over Texas, trying to convince mostly conservative politicians that "Trust, Respect, and Access" are important. It was a process involved in meeting with mostly staff members and not politicians, who spared measly minutes for the discussion, before passing us off with a "please send over more information" and a handshake. Still, the troops rallied at the end to shout in front of the capitol "TRUST, RESPECT, ACCESS" until hopefully someone in that pink granite building heard them.

OPINION

CAN A STUDENT DISCOVER THE TRUTH FOR AMERICA?

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