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Safety Walk: Part One

by Jesse Uppal

Safety, a concept regularly lost amongst words like order and freedom. Finding a perfect balance between the two constantly warring states of human rights across border lines and cultural hotspots. When these two definitive forces of human nature decide to clash on a university campus, all of the denizens of the population should have a say in what does and does not happen in terms of their safety.

This argument was borne when the Student Government Association decided that they wanted to tackle seven initiatives in the 2017-2018 school year. The first and foremost of these initiatives was campus safety. This was not just limited to the police presence or camera locations, but also encompassed making the facilities such as restrooms and stairways safer to use. The concept of safety on campus stemmed from the alarming number of alerts that assaulted the students' emails.

Two incidents occurred in the beginning of October alone, and while the number has died down since then it has not dissipated completely. With concerns such as the Welcome Center having its

windows shot at for the second time, and strangers from off-campus harassing students, safety becomes a significantly important attribute that the student body would like augmented. Nine alerts have

gone out since the semester started on August 28th; considering the hurricane that devastated the city and keeping us from attending for nearly a week and a half, this number remains disquieting.

The safety walk was organized to be a learning experience as students, staff, and an array of police officers planned to canvass the campus and check to see if there were any significant concerns that needed to be addressed. Representatives from SGA made multiple walks of the buildings and parking lots leading up to the official safety walk so as to make sure that they were prepared for the questions that would be fired off.

The Official Safety Walk part one, would cover the One Main Building, the Academic Building, the main parking garage, the meter lot near the Student Life Center and lastly, the Washington St. Lot. Part two of this walk would cover the Commerce Street Building, Davies College of Business, and all of the remaining parking lots and garages. Attendees of this walk would be the Chief of UHDPD Michael Benford, Vice President of Administration and Finance David Bradley as well as members from facilities and a full squad of police officers.

The walk began on the perimeter of the Student

Life Center and examined the meter lot, specifically the camera placements and the emergency box utilities. Many, if not all, of the emergency boxes in this lot had been damaged by Hurricane Harvey and IT is still currently working to repair them. The attendees of the walk also iterated that the bicycle path would be better served if there was another emergency box along the wall of the Life Center near the butterfly habitat.

The walk then continued into the building and inched its way up the floors one by one, designating dead-zones and blind-spots that needed to be pointed out. VP Bradley stated that "cameras are easy, just point out where you want them and we'll get them there. Cameras can give a false sense of security however, as there are over 400 cameras on campus and police can only view 16 at a time. Cameras are better for after the fact, for when you want to find out what happened, rather than what is happening."

Other security measures came up as well, such as placing mirrored panels in the corners of certain hallways so that students may see around the corner before they get there, and increasing the patrol

frequencies of all of the floors with assigned officers. According to Chief Benford, "there are 25 uniformed officers on campus including [himself], as well as 12 security guards hired on by the school." He iterated that each of the security guards patrol a

set amount of floors throughout the day, and they work during two different shifts.

The presence of these officers near the front, north deck, and south deck entrances has increased as well as there is always at least one officer on site that patrols these three doorways throughout the day. Closing the north and south deck doors earlier than 9pm was also discussed, as the south deck door is a frequent site for interlopers and shutting them down early while keeping just the main door open with a security guard would be the safest option.

The walk eventually simmered down into the garage and the Washington St. Lot, where the topic of emergency callboxes came up again. In both the garage and the parking lot the emergency boxes remain out of commission, with the attendees all agreeing that both locations could use an additional call box in a more accessible location. The second part of the walk is due to take place before the end of the semester, and will examine key areas that may have their own safety concerns. Students are urged to come forward and discuss their own safety concerns with the UHD Police so that they can share this information during the walks and the campus can become even safer than it already is.

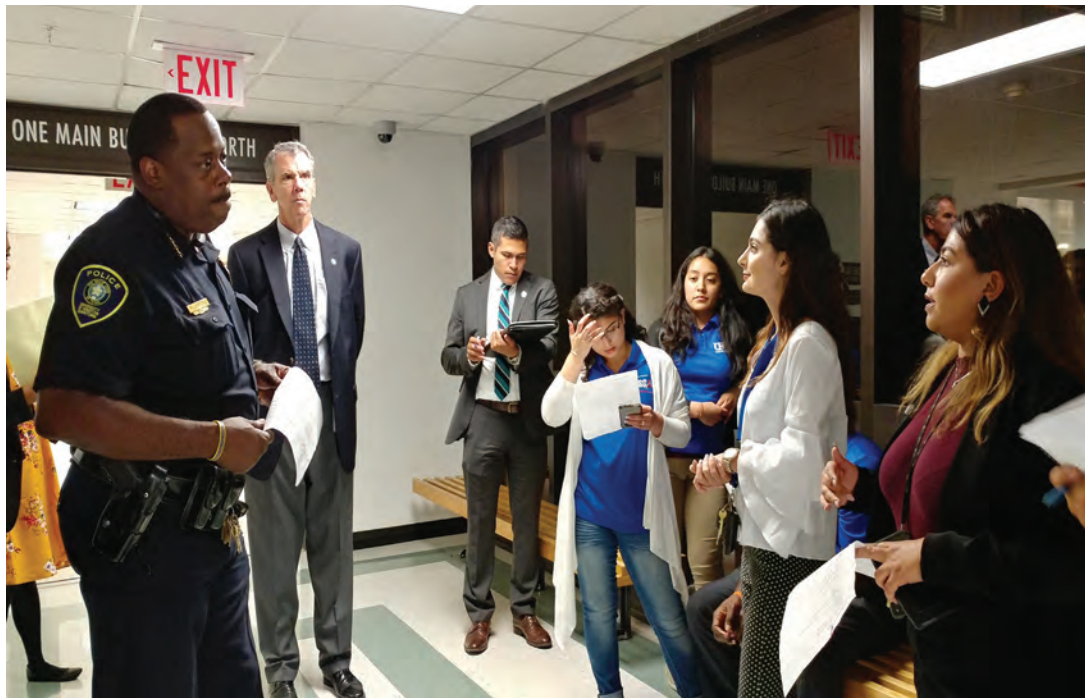


Photo by Jesse Uppal

UHD Now Has the First College of Business Named After a Woman in Texas

by Delia Leal

The University of Houston Downtown is thriving and a lot of it is thanks to Marilyn Davies, who donated \$10 million to our College of Business building supporting UHD's role in higher education; Now whenever her name is searched the first thing that will appear is our college of business. The Davies College of Business building is the first and only college of business building named after a woman in Texas. Davies had attended South Texas College before it became UHD, her brother and son have graduated from UHD, and her daughter is in a graduate program at UH and this is how she grew to appreciate the system.

UHD's college of Business has the largest MBA program in Houston and the Career and Development Center assists students in not only finding jobs and internships but prepping them for their careers. How could someone not be proud to attend a school with such a great



Photo by Delia Leal

business program? With Davies once being a hardworking student herself here, she understands not only the value of higher education but the challenges presented. Davies will now not just be a great name, but also a name that impacts many future students.

It was a memorable day at the building's unveiling ceremony having such an empowering woman like Davies give a powerful speech of how great our school and students can be. "When I think of the

college of business at UHD I think of opportunity, I think of excitement, and I think of legacy," Davies said. It should inspire students to keep striving for success. Not only should we feel honored for this generous gift but take pride in the recognition of hardworking students.

Walk to Vote

by Jesse Uppal

After a push from students, free charging stations will be implemented all over campus before you know it! These charging stations are accessible to both Androids and

Apple products and contain wireless charging capabilities. They will include a tablet shelf so that, if needed, a student can quickly power up their devices and get back to work. They can charge up to eight devices at once and will be placed all over campus.

One will be placed in the Commerce building on the second floor and another will be placed in an open area in the Shea building. The rest will be placed in the Welcome Center, on the second floor where the old lockers used to be and in the Cafeteria by the Coffee House. Other potential areas are in the lounging areas on the fourth and sixth floor, and near the O'Kane gallery on the central column. The plan is to implement these charging stations during winter



break and will be live in the start of spring.

A meeting took place on November second between Samuel Santos, SGA President Faryal Gul, Senator for

the College of Public Service Jesse Uppal, Miguel Ruiz, and Jayne Edwards. They discussed the different types of charging stations, along with the efficiency the stations would give students and the locations of where they should be placed. In this meeting, it was stated that Kwikboost, the company UHD is buying the charging stations from, is at several other colleges, including A&M, and University of Houston- Main Campus. These charging stations have been used for Hospitals, Airports, Stadiums and many other public settings. These free fast charging stations will be a major convenience to UHD Students.

A Walking Foundation

by Jesse Uppal

As the bright beams burst from the sun and coated the ground in their awakening delight, walkers and runners lined up on the Allen Parkway to move their bodies for a great cause. The Aga Khan Foundation charity run was held on November 4, 2017 and raised money for a variety of causes. The campaign managed to raise \$20,000 towards its goals after various donations by sponsors and attendees alike.

The foundation supports various charitable fields such as combatting poverty, increasing education for youths and rural development throughout the entire world. The foundation was created in 1967

and celebrated its 50th birthday at the walk in Houston. The event allowed the different teams to select amounts they wanted to fundraise for, and donors could donate to various teams to help them fulfill their amounts as they walked.

The UHD Social Work Department, United Nations Associations, and Professional Society for Criminal Justice Students sent representatives to the event to show the university's support for the foundation. Members of these various groups participated in both the run and the walk, with some members even donating to the foundation directly. Social Work offered extra credit in certain classes to come out and show their support.



Photo by Jesse Uppal

PSCJS President Mariana Grijalva even came in second place for the 5k run, winning a silver medal for her efforts. She went on to boast that she “forgot to stretch, and got a cramp midway through,” and still was able to finish the race in a placed position. Grijalva then participated in the walk following the run, turning her 5k into a 10k.

Various restaurants set up tents and

sold food and drinks throughout the event while donating the proceeds towards the charity itself. Water, juice, and fruit were provided to the attendees free of charge, and

they even provided kolaches, while supplies lasted. The event featured live music and a silent auction, in which many items were up for sale but attendees were not allowed to call out their bids.

Scouts, families, and hundreds more gathered to make the delightful trek for the cause on the warm, sunny Saturday. The diversity of the event from the music to the food stretched across continents as South Asian and Hispanic cultures united for a terrific result.

Coming this Spring: Free Charging Stations

by Naomi Cardwell

After a push from students, free charging stations will be implemented all over campus before you know it! These charging stations are accessible to both Androids and Apple products and contain wireless charging capabilities. They will include a tablet shelf so that, if needed, a student can quickly power up their devices and get back to work. They can charge up to eight devices at once and will be placed all over campus.

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Klein Oak Students Files Lawsuit After Alleged Harrassment for Not Standing for the Pledge

by Taylor Scott

On October 24, 2017, a lawsuit was filed on behalf a Klein Oak High School student who claims she was harassed by faculty and administrators for not participating in the pledge of allegiance. The lawsuit is filed against Klein ISD and nine current and former Klein Oak employees. In a press conference the student, who wishes to only go by her initials M.O., says she hasn't stood for the pledge since her freshman year in high school back in 2014. M.O. is now a senior at Klein Oak High School and is still having issues with faculty and staff respecting her constitutional right to not participate in the pledge of allegiance. Texas Education Code- EDUC § 25.082 states that schools "shall require students, once during each school day at each campus, to recite:

- (1) the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag in accordance with 4 U.S.C. Section 4; and
- (2) the pledge of allegiance to the state flag in accordance with Subchapter C, Chapter 3100, Government Code"

An exception will only be made to this rule if a student's parent or guardian submits a written request to exempt the student from participation. This Texas State law directly conflicts with the ruling in the 1943 case of West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette. In this federal case, it was determined that it was unconstitutional for schools to require students to stand for the pledge and to punish them for not doing so.

Randall Kallinen, the family's attorney, stated that he believes a written request was provided to the school but the bigger issue is federal law, not state law. ABC13 reached out to other school districts and found that Katy ISD refers to state law in their policies while Houston ISD included the supreme court ruling in their statement:

"The long-standing United States Supreme Court ruling in West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette held that students may not be compelled to participate in patriotic observances, which include standing, saluting and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Accordingly, HISD will not mandate nor interfere in the actions of students in observing or not observing the tradition of standing for the pledge."

In the press conference with her mother, Lashan Arceneaux, and her attorney, M.O. told reporters that she sits because it is her constitutional right to sit. She also added that "we live in a country where there isn't justice and freedom for all. I'm not going to stand for a pledge that says there is when there really isn't."

When M.O. first began sitting, there was an opposition to her actions and over the years the issue worsened. Both the student and her mother spoke with the administration on numerous occasions and then to the district to try and resolve the issue. While M.O. was in the principal's office to discuss the harassment by another student, Arceneaux who was telephoned in for the meeting stated that the family would be taking legal action. Afterwards the principal "called for backup," and officers showed up to the office to escort M.O. out of the building. One faculty member allegedly even went on to compare people who don't stand for the pledge to communists, saying that if you live in America you should assimilate.

According to M.O., the only disciplinary action she ever received was related to her not participating in the pledge. M.O. was written up on numerous

occasions, chastised, and taken out of class over her lack of participation. Other than that, she is an exemplary student with a 3.9 GPA and hopes to attend Rice University. Klein ISD representative, Judy Rimato, released a statement:

"Klein ISD is aware of a lawsuit filed against the District and some of its employees and former employees that alleges that the District and employees have interfered with a student's exercise of her Constitutional right not to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Klein ISD denies the allegations and, after investigation and discussion with those involved over a three-year span, finds multiple discrepancies in the allegations. Klein ISD continues to respect the rights of all students. As Klein ISD communicated to the family's attorney this summer, Klein ISD does not tolerate harassment against students."

Speaking with Judy Rimato on the phone, she was questioned about the note the lawyer mentioned he believed had been submitted to exempt the student from the pledge. She replied that she did not know if any note had actually been submitted or not. The district policy was to have a parent/guardian submit a note and she said "yes, it's a law and we absolutely follow the law," and that the district cannot create a policy that would contradict that law. Ms. Rimato also expressed interest in participating in a follow up interview after the lawsuit is over because right now the district "looks really bad here and we can't see both sides of the story."

Killinen stated that Klein Oak employees either do not know or are purposefully ignoring constitutional rights. He also said that with the number of individuals violating the constitutional right for M.O. to not participate, it is well known that you can harass students for not standing and get away with it. During the press conference, a reporter asked M.O. what she was hoping to get out of this lawsuit, and she replied that she wants to raise awareness to the issue, which is why the lawsuit includes a request that the district send a memo out to all its employees saying that it is okay for students to not participate in the pledge and to not harass them in any way for doing so. She wants students to know their rights and be allowed to express them freely.

The lawsuit was filed just weeks after another one of Kallinen's clients, India Landry, filed her own lawsuit against Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. The New York Times stated that Landry started sitting during the pledge at the beginning of the school year. According to the filed lawsuit, on October 2 she was in the Windfern High School's Principal's office with two administrators when the pledge came over the intercom and the two administrators stood and insisted that Landry stand as well. When Landry refused, she was immediately expelled from the school. She has since been reinstated and the district has stated they will not make a statement regarding pending litigation.

Killinen says that he hasn't ever had back to back cases like these before. Since the NFL protests, there has been a lot of controversy around the observance of the national anthem and in this case, the pledge of allegiance. Killinen also stated that these district employees are being allowed to express their political leanings instead of respecting and acknowledging the students' constitutional rights.

#MeToo

by Angel Lopez



“Hey girl, wanna help me out?” he licks his lips and locks eyes with the girl. She panics, recognizing the danger posed by the stranger and leaves to seek help.

In the wake of the sexual allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein, this scenario is all too real, and it is important to shed light on the ever-growing issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment. In October 2017, stories of women accusing Weinstein of sexual assault, sexual harassment and even rape began to rise and continue to grow. So far more than 50 women have come out and told their stories of their interactions with the accused. One actress, Ashley Judd, recounted her uncomfortable experience with Weinstein while filming her movie “Kiss the girls.” She claims that her first interaction with him was in a hotel room while he wore a bathrobe and asked her to watch him shower and proceeded to try and make sexual advances on her. She described her confusion and fear to speak up given the power he had over her as the person who hired her for the project. Weinstein has since been fired from his own company, The Weinstein Company, and many other major film associations due to these accusations, which he has denied.

The growing number of women in Hollywood telling their stories of being sexually harassed and assaulted also gave birth to another powerful movement: #MeToo. When the New York Times first reported the allegations against the producer, and the media began to flood with new stories from different

women every day, twitter became a platform for women to tell their own stories of being sexually assaulted. Actress Alyssa Milano tweeted about the news, and shared her idea to respond to a tweet using the hashtag “#MeToo.” It is important to note that the “Me Too” movement was started 10 years ago by black female activist Tarana Burke, to reach sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities.

Immediately after this tweet, women everywhere began sharing their stories and the hashtag quickly began to trend, with some simply tweeting “#MeToo” to show their support and others describing the fear and guilt they felt. This hashtag gave women the chance to feel validated and free to express their dismay concerning the ignorance toward this persistent issue.

This ignorance not only affects the way women are treated when speaking out about their experiences, but it lessens the probability of any man who is sexually assaulted to speak out. Men, unlike women, are

generally taught a culture that to feel is to be feminine, and to be feminine is to be avoided. When a man becomes sexually harassed it is unlikely that he will seek help for fear of being ridiculed by other men. The idea is that men should be able to protect themselves instead of being afraid. While almost anywhere, women are more likely to experience such violating acts, it is important to also realize that men can also fall victim. In addition to the rise in women sharing their fearful experiences, men in Hollywood began sharing their own. One actor, Terry Crews told his story of attending a Hollywood event and being groped by another Hollywood executive while he stood next to his wife. He described feeling attacked and confused and, of course, violated. Men being open about their experiences allows other men, who are stuck on this toxic notion of masculinity, to accept their own fear of being violated and tell their own stories. Because it is important to shed light on this issue that exists silently in the male community, knowing about the resources available at UHD is crucial to the well-being of every single student.

UHD’s Title IX and sexual misconduct policy are built to keep students safe and allow them to have

someone to turn to when they have, or even feel as though they have been sexually harassed. This policy is inclusive of any student regardless of race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc. If you feel as though you have been attacked in any sense of the word, Title IX



is in place to protect you and your privacy when you choose to report it. Reporting a violation means going up to anyone on campus with any kind of authority, or going directly to the office of Title IX coordinator Tommy Thomason on the third floor in Student Affairs. It is the school’s goal to ensure every student of the resources in place specifically for them.

When asked about the possible repeal of Title IX under Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Thomason reassures students that these policies would “stay in place to protect the students and to respond to charges of any kind of violation of our policies.” No matter the magnitude of your situation, so long as you feel as though you have been violated in any way, these resources are meant to be there for you for when you are afraid for your safety at this campus. Though this issue affects mostly women, it’s time to start talking the stigma surrounding men who are sexually harassed but made feel ashamed for wanting to speak out about it.

Houston, We Have a Pennant!

by Michael Case

From a city underwater to a city under the bright lights, the Houston Astros have won the World Series. The Astros battled against the Los Angeles Dodgers for seven games and came away victorious. As Dodger stadium emptied out with sullen Dodger fans, thousands of miles away Minute Maid Park was packed with elated Astros fans, spilling into the streets of downtown Houston. A 22-year championship-less streak was broken Wednesday night giving the city, destroyed by a natural disaster just weeks before, a chance to celebrate.

This journey to baseball's highest honor began years ago. The Astros were collecting 100 loss seasons like old coins, and were the laughing stock of baseball. Those terrible seasons turned into high draft picks. Players like

went back to work, as did the Astros.

Closing the season out in dominating fashion, the Astros then waited to see who the first-round opponent would be, none other than the world-famous Boston Red Sox. The Astros brought the better team, but the Sox brought the history and hardware, Astros looked great in their 3 wins, beating the Red Sox in 4 games. Some national pundits took notice, but most were fixated on the Cleveland and New York series. The Yankees, sports royalty, upset the Cleveland Indians by winning three straight games to face the Astros. First, the Red Sox in the first round, and now the Yankees in the second round. This World Series would not be given but earned. #EarnHistory was more prophetic than anyone knew.



Photo by Michael Case

George Springer, Alex Bregman, and Carlos Correa became prospects giving Astros fans hope for the future. In 2014, Sports Illustrated made a bold, and downright laughable prediction, calling the failing Astros franchise 2017 World Series Champions. The only ones laughing now are Astros fans.

With a young, talented core, General Manager Jeff Luhnow needed to add veteran pieces to help balance the locker room. Former Yankees Brian McCann, Carlos Beltran, and Josh Riddick were added in the 2016 offseason. The Astros sent a message to the rest of the league, we are in it to win it now. Making a strong playoff push in 2015 helped showcase the Astros young talent, the 2016 offseason helped showcase the Astros front office. The Houston Astros were no longer the weakest team in the league, but a potential playoff threat.

The first half of the 2017 season was great for the Astros, the offense was putting up historic numbers and the pitching was improving. But baseball is a game of streaks and Houston's momentum was showing signs of slowing. The long grind of baseball's 162 game season looked to be affecting the Astros. Then a hurricane made landfall in South Texas, stalling over America's fourth largest city, dumping trillions of gallons of water in short time. The nation looked on in horror as the rain fell, but Texans jumped up and started saving their neighbors. Baseball didn't matter during that time, only community. The citizens of this city and region came together and

Winning the first two games at home and losing the next three games in Los Angeles put Houston on its heels. One more loss and this storied season was over, no rings, no parade, just the annual Houston sports slogan, "There's always next year". Only this team was different. Houston dominated the last two games of the series winning Game Seven in Dodger Stadium. The city went crazy. The streets of downtown and midtown Houston filled with fans and onlookers. The Astros had only made the World Series once before, in 2005, and the result was a four-game sweep. This team felt different. The high fives flowed like beer, plentiful. Houston was dazed by Harvey in late August, now Houston was dazed by the Astros in late October.

The Dodgers came into the World Series with the most wins in baseball and a home field advantage, but the Astros left it the World Champs. The series was not a normal one, featuring an 11-inning game and a 10-inning game, with more home runs than any World Series ever, neither team showed signs of quitting. The two best teams made it to the World Series, and the best team won it. Houston needed a win after the devastation caused by Harvey, and the Astros did what they needed to do to help the Houston community, shining some positive light on a still recovering city.

UHD Sports and Fitness: Let's Get Fit!

by Unisha Curry

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One of the most popular New Year's resolutions is 'get healthy'. Further, the most commonly broken New Year's resolution is "Lose weight and get fit". It holds true that success in losing weight and getting fit is greatly impacted for better or worse by multiple factors. The University of Houston Downtown(UHD) Sports and Fitness Center wants to help students to achieve physical wellness

In an interview, Richard Sebastiani, Director of Sports and Fitness at the University of Houston Downtown, stated "We are not just a place where students can get their

student IDs. We do that and it is great, but there is a lot more than student IDs here. This facility is for all students and there is something for everyone. Moreover, we support the academic mission of UHD by providing great exercise programs."

The UHD Sports and Fitness Center has designed its programs to address a multitude of fitness goals and wellness practices. Some of the classes offered during the Fall 2017 semester are Zumba, Boot Camp, and Ab Extreme. In addition, to the variety of fitness classes offered, personal trainers are also available. Darius Battles, UHD Sports and Fitness trainer shared that some of the reasons why people do not workout are

- (1) They do not have the time
- (2) They do not know how to workout



Photo by Unisha Curry

Pictured: Darius Battles, UHD Sports and Fitness Center Trainer

(3) They do not have the confidence

Getting started can sometimes be the most challenging part. Battles emphasized that one should not wait for an opportune moment to begin working out, however, just get started. Battles also suggested that taking a fitness assessment will be conducive to designing an effective workout plan. He revealed that one of the benefits for working out is that it provides the opportunity to expand one's comfort zone, stating; "Fitness was a stepping stone to get myself where I wanted to

be. I have never been a big chunky guy, but growing up I was timid and a bit shy. However, when I was in the gym getting fit I stood out and I wanted to talk to others. Fitness was a way for me to overcome a fear and expanded my comfort zone."

Furthermore, he acknowledged that one way to overcome intimidation is to obtain a support group, as it can provide accountability and encouragement.

A great deal of one's accomplishments can be linked back to one's motivation. Battles conveyed that motivation is correlated to fitness, in that, it can propel one to accomplish his or her fitness goal. He explained that motivation comes in many forms. Finally, for each of the aspects correlated to physical wellness, we find that the physical wellness is a choice.

NFL Players Take a Stand, by Taking a Knee

by Michael Case

There are countless controversies in America today, some have been going on for years, decades even. Abortion, gun control, police brutality, the list goes on. The newest controversy has hit the sports world, and since it's America's biggest sport, people are not happy. Kneeling for the National Anthem is the latest topic you don't want to hear about, whether it's thanksgiving dinner with family, or a group of friends at a bar. Everyone is talking, no one is listening.

This whole debacle started when quarterback Colin Kaepernick did not stand for the National Anthem in a preseason game in 2016. No one noticed as it happened, but rumors started to spread, by the second preseason game, cameras were fixated on him, and sent the message viral. When asked about why he sat, Kaepernick in a respectful tone, said he was protesting an unfair system for minorities, regarding police brutality and a flawed prison system. He had a hard time standing for a flag that he felt represented this inequality.

Many Americans took offense to this gesture. Claiming it disrespected the military and what they fight for, Americans' freedoms and rights. A veteran, Nate Boyer, saw this action and reached out to Kaepernick, he wanted to find a middle ground with Colin. Can you show a way to protest an unfair system but also respect to those men and woman who serve in the military? Boyer and Kaepernick came up with a solution, he will kneel during the anthem, to show respect to those currently serving and who died in service, but also showing displeasure in an unequal society who claims to promote freedom and justice for all. Unfortunately, the plan did not work as the two intended.

Again many Americans took offense to his gesture. With the pre-season over and the regular season heating up, most of the controversy was left to those who had nothing better to do than troll internet boards. However, the next season when President Trump threw his opinion into the discussion, things escalated quickly. At the beginning of the 2017 season, numerous players from many teams joined in the protest, but not Colin Kaepernick he had not been signed by a team, a controversy in its own right. Again, these players are not protesting anything against the military but that of unfair treatment of minorities in an oppressive system. Still there are many who believe these players are disrespecting the military.

Recently, Houston Texans Owner, Bob McNair put himself under the microscope by using an outdated cliché about 'inmates running the prison' in reference to the players. The fact he used this cliché shows he, like so many others are not listening to what the players are protesting about. Using a prison analogy when referencing people protesting the prison system is beyond the realm of bad taste.

Some have argued these wealthy athletes should "shut up and play", that these men shouldn't be putting their political agenda out there. With a stage as big as the NFL, maybe these players feel they have a responsibility to use their celebrity to shed light on the issues minorities face in America. They have a right to peaceful protest, just like fans have the right to complain or boycott the NFL. Everyone is willing to speak up, but someone needs to be willing to listen.

FITNESSES

The New War on Drugs

by Chris Joseph

On October 26th, the 45th President walked into the east wing of the White House. Waiting in attendance for him were families who had lost loved ones to addiction and drug overdose. This was the moment the President officially declared that the opioid crisis that plagues the U.S. is a nationwide public health emergency.

In President Donald Trump's address to the nation, he stated that the U.S. must confront this epidemic, which Trump labels as "the worst drug crisis in American history." Trump also reassured the American people by stating that he and the federal government are furiously fighting the opioid epidemic.

"This epidemic is a national health emergency... As Americans, we cannot allow this to continue. It is time to liberate our communities from this scourge of drug addiction," President Trump said in his address.

Just before President Trump took the floor, first lady Melania Trump gave a personal testimony about how she herself has met those who were suffering from addiction, and she lost loved ones who had overdosed on opioids. "No state has been spared and no demographic untouched," she said.

Trump has already started taking his first steps in this war against opioids. He said that he will be looking into bringing "major lawsuits against the people and companies that are hurting our people," Trump continued by stating that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is hunting a specific opioid, which Trump labeled "truly evil," will be taken off the market. The President did not give any names when it came to what drug he was looking to remove from the market but, according to the Washington Post, the FDA successfully sought the removal of the opioid Opana ER, which is a pain reliever drug, from the market. However, in 2012 the manufacture of Opana ER, Endo Pharmaceuticals, reformulated Opana ER, thus making it harder to crush. But the FDA stated that this reformulating of the drug now makes it easier for injection, which can spread HIV.

"The United States is by far the largest consumer of these drugs, using more opioids pills per person than any other country by far in the world," said Trump.

When it comes to the reach of opioid use and abuse in the U.S., opioids have found a long standing stay on college campuses. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, The number of opioid-related deaths among Americans under the age 24 almost doubled from 2005 to 2015.

In 2015, Q Market Research of Minnesota conducted a survey that included roughly 1,200 college-age students from all over the country. This survey

discovered that 16 percent of the students have used painkillers that were not prescribed to them. However, that number is significantly higher (22.5 percent) among those students who play or played intercollegiate sports. This survey also discovered how easy it is for college students to get their hands on pills. 32.7 percent of the college students admitted how easy it is for them to obtain pain pills, while over half of the students tested (49.5 percent) said that they can get pills within a 24 hour time frame.

"Prescription pain pills are similar to having heroin in the medicine cabinet," said chief medical officer of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, Marvin D. Seppala MD.

The University of Houston (UH) School Of

Nursing is also doing their part to help put a stop of the misuse of opioids. As of 2016, The UH School of Nursing has implemented a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for prescribing opioid medications for chronic pain patients.

"The updated CDC guidelines will augment existing requirements we already have in place for advance education on

prescribing opioids and using best practices to prevent opioid abuse and overdose," said the UH nursing school's dean Dr. Kathryn Tart.

According to the CDC, opioid-related overdoses have increased between 1999 and 2015. The CDC also stated that opioids were a prime factor in more than 80 percent of the estimated 64,070 drug overdose deaths in 2016 alone. In 2014 alone, almost 2 million Americans misused and/or were dependent on prescription opioids.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the highly illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids like fentanyl, and pain relievers that are available legally through prescriptions such as OxyContin and Vicodin. Opioid pain relievers are generally safe when taken for a short time with the proper dosage. However since pain relievers produce euphoria with the relief from pain, they can be misused by taken in a different way or taking more than the recommended dosage.

If you know anyone who is suffering through an addiction and needs help, you can call The Right Step and they can help you get back on the right track and help you beat your addiction. For information on The Right Step, call 844-768-0430.



The “He Said, She Said” of Trump’s Call to a Widow

by Paula Cano

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Four soldiers lost their lives in an ambush in Niger two months ago. One of them was Sgt. La’David Johnson who left behind two children and his pregnant wife Myeshia Johnson. Ms. Johnson, a grieving widow, stated that her pain grew larger after getting a call from the President of the United States Donald Trump to offer his condolences for her husband, the fallen soldier. Ms. Johnson says the call made her cry even more after Trump allegedly told her that ‘He knew what he signed up for, but it hurts anyway,’ invalidating her grief and the sacrifice her husband made. She stated the President of the United States seemed to struggle to remember her husband’s name, and that his tone of voice just provoked her to more tears. Myeshia Johnson retaliated against Trump during an interview and he responded back with a tweet reading like this “I had a very respectful conversation with the widow of Sgt. La David Johnson, and spoke his name from the beginning, without hesitation!” at a simple sight, Trump’s reaction could be characterized as him completely discrediting the grieving wife, and mother of three. Two UHD Veterans, Francisco Zevallos and Antwaine Sanderson, both students at the University of Houston Downtown, were interviewed to get the opinion of the people most directly affected by this kind of news.

Johnson allegedly cried due to Trump’s tone of voice. Antwaine thinks the widow needs time to mourn the death of her husband, rather than to focus and waste her energy in starting a debate over the president’s tone of voice. Sanderson states “If I’m putting myself in her situation, I would be upset at the loss of the husband, rather than the tone of his voice. Military soldiers die all the time, having the president speak is a privilege but it’s nothing you should hang your hat on, and be entitled to.” In response to this, Francisco Sevallos stated “She’s entitled to feel the way she feels, what it’s not right is for the people to try to make something out of nothing, and divide the country even more.”

Trump’s allegation that “He knew what he signed up for, but I guess it still hurt” Antwaine Sanderson’s remarks that “No, it’s not a proper reaction from him” and stated that, like usual, he doesn’t expect anything positive coming from Trump when he comments on other people and their lifestyle. Francisco Zevallos thinks that this was misinterpreted on purpose by the media to cause dysphoria, “Many presidents call the widows, and they only got a piece of what he said in order to get a certain reaction. In reality, it’s true, everyone in the military knows what they sign up for.”

Johnson’s widow asked to see the body of her husband, but military officials allegedly stood in the way of this request causing animosity for the grieving widow. Speaking at a Pentagon briefing, Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford stated the body did go missing for two days due to a fire fight, but the body was returned to Johnson on October 7, 2017. Antwaine thinks that the fact that they brought his body back should be good enough. Zevallos deems this bureaucratic behavior as “normal” saying that, “She has the right to demand, well, in this case, I wouldn’t know what the right procedures are in the military, but in the civilian world, this is something that happens every day. If I were to die right now, they wouldn’t let my wife see my body every day. There are certain procedures she has to respect”.

Regarding Trump’s tweet, these two veterans were questioned if this is the type of reaction, that seemingly discredits Johnson’s side of the story, is expected from a commander in chief. Antwain accounts that it might have been a simple mistake and that mistakes like this are already expected from this individual, and it doesn’t surprise him, asserting that “No, he probably just didn’t remember the name. It’s President Trump, I expect nothing too prepared coming from him anyway. She should have just been appreciative that the President called her.” Zevallos sticks to his reasoning that there was nothing wrong with his initial behavior.

The Obamas Give Hope to the Next Generation

by Chris Joseph

While everyone in the nation was getting ready for a night of frights and horror, the 44th President and former First Lady was down in Chicago and held their first inaugural summit, bringing together people from across the globe to talk about change.

Barack and Michelle Obama invited roughly 500 young activists from all over the world to have “a collective conversation,” and experience workshops and panels that speak on helping not only the country, but the world. Those in attendance ranged from young aspiring musicians, dancers, businessmen, politicians, and even some big names came to support and speak at this summit such as Prince Harry, Aziz Ansari, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Common, and many others.

“What we need to do is think about our civic culture, because what’s wrong with our politics is a reflection of something that’s wrong with the civic culture, not just in the United States but around the world,” Barack Obama said at the summit.

Throughout the summit, the former-president would often sit down with many of the leaders who were there. They were all so different when it came to their religion, race, and even political views. Obama went to the panels and just sat within the audience, listening to the panelists speak.

Along with a plethora of panelists speaking about change, the betterment of one’s community, there were also some star-studded performances by Chicago native Chance the Rapper, The National, Nas, and Gloria Estefan.

Co-founder of Flip National Mandeep Singh said, “This summit has been an incredible energy and incredible healing energy. I am looking forward to using the people and family I made here to continue working together and building a better world for us all.”

During the whole summit, there was no talk of the terrorist attacks or any negative issues plaguing our world. This was a summit about hope and change, as Obama believes the way to a better tomorrow, is to start with change today. “Hope does not mean that tomorrow everything is going to be better... where hope comes in handy is when you’ve put everything you have into something and that hasn’t worked yet—and it hasn’t worked the week after that, and the week after that, and six months later and a year later,” said Obama.

There are multiple organizations here at the University of Houston-Downtown, such as Stand Out! UHD, Texas Rising, Men of L.E.G.A.C.I, and many more who have taken the pledge to change the world for the better.

Cold War Episode

Sonic Attacks against U.S diplomats in Havana, Cuba

by Paula Cano

The historic visit Obama paid Cuba last year in April, came as a signal that both countries were ready to fix diplomatic differences. These old cold war foes showed interest to finally warm ties exuding hope that the embargo lift could eventually happen. However, it was too good to be true, as chances of healing U.S-Cuba relationship diminished after a recent attack on American government workers in Havana's American Embassy. This unusual aggression took Washington by surprise; it was done through an acoustic device making the diplomats to feel ill. This event heightened Havana and Washington tensions, and it's currently under investigation. President Trump blames the Cuban Government for such assaults that caused at least 22 officials to sickened, symptoms included hearing impairment, dizziness, and nausea. Washington reacted by expelling 15 Cuban diplomats, even after the Cuban government offered to cooperate with the ongoing investigation.

These series of events and allegations not only severely damage U.S and Cuba

ties, but it taints Cuba as entirely anti-American adding to the false narrative that Cuba is a dangerous place for the American tourist, which can be disproven. Just last year during Spring 2016, the faculty-led study abroad to Cuba did not experience one minute at threat. It was the contrary to that, the quality of its people and the culture made it a unique journey. Havana locals made sure the group left with an image of what the Cuban experience is like beyond what they propagandize it to be; they openly established conversations with students and shared their life stories. A place like "El Malecon", the boardwalk, is where the locals gather, bring music, and go on dates. It is a meeting point for locals, and is also known for famous songs like "hasta que se seque el Malecon" "until the boardwalk dries". Friends bring their stereos, dance to their music, while the tourists admire the simple way locals enjoy a weekend. Another one of the favorite places was Fuster's house Fusterlandia. This place was enchanting. Fuster is a Cuban native, he works with colored ceramic and literally has a whole neighbourhood decorated with his own ceramic art. The visitors also got to see El Callejon de Hamel, or the alley which is a space for Afro Cubans to perform and express their African folklore, exhibiting their art, performing old dances, and sing to traditional Afro-Cuban music.

The student's mission was not to romanticize the regime, but rather to appreciate the potential this country has, to excel economically through its culture, people, and arts. Despite the dictatorship they undergo, the Cuban spirit is one of survival. This trip left the students with one of the best undergrad experiences, inspiring me to write about it, and invite the readers to visit this unique country. Despite President Trump's allegations,

and the animosity this base attack revived, this should not discourage anyone from studying abroad and learning new cultures.

Dr. John Linantud, a Political Science associate professor, also leading next year's study abroad to Cuba at UHD, answered a couple of questions. The first one was if after this vocal assault, what would interest political science students and non-political science students to travel to Cuba? Dr. Linantud states that "Cuba is a great place to visit and witness the political propaganda, if you want to see what cold war propaganda looked like," and for non-Political Science majors he highlights that "It's also a great place to visit that is a Latin American

dictatorship, currently really poor but trying to change; so many things you can't see anywhere else, it is also great place to look at manifestations of working American-Cuban relationships"

Questioning

Dr. Linantud if there would be any impediments for UHD students to travel to Cuba, as the investigation

continues, and diplomats continue to be expelled, he suggested to look at the travel abroad UHD handbook, in which it clearly states that if a student traveling to a place where there is a "travel warning", the only thing at stake would be a travel award scholarship granted to those who qualify. Dr. Linantud states he is "optimistic that we will be able to go," affirming that everything is going accordingly for the next year 2018 study abroad in Cuba.

Trump's tragic allegations against Havana are reminders of what the cold war ambiance was like. Dr. Linantud confirms that this is nothing new, that similar attacks on government officials were frequent, and that the most feared threat was a nuclear attack during the cold war days. The last question for Dr. Linantud was if this aggression against Washington diplomats presents itself as a setback for the U.S and Cuba diplomatic progress? Answering that "as long as you don't downgrade the embassy back to just an interest section, like it was forty years ago".

Don't be persuaded by what the media and the Trump administration portrays of Cuba, don't give in to the false narrative that paints the Cuban Folks as anti-American. Trump blaming Cuba for the attack on government officials undermines the symbolic Obama visit to Cuba and his willingness to put cold war animosity aside, and start warming bilateral diplomatic ties. As a DACA student, there was significant risk to travel abroad to Cuba, and mountains of paperwork to fill out before traveling. The courage and lack of regret to travel to a country on tense relations with the USA provides encouragement to fellow UHD students who want to travel abroad during their education.



Photo by Paula Cano

UHD AID's/HIV Policy is Outdated

by Kara Moore

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At the University of Houston – Downtown, and really in the whole UH System, there is an explicit section about sexual exploitation in the Title IX policy. Within it, a sub-section defining one form of sexual exploitation as “Knowingly exposing a person to and/or transmitting a sexually-



Photo Courtesy of Dr. Hudson

infection or HIV/AIDS to another

person”. And while this policy makes sense in theory, in practice, it’s a little behind the times. With recent scientific and cultural changes, the policy regarding AIDS and HIV should be updated to reflect the most recent information and have all students in mind. Two recent changes culturally and scientifically involving AIDS/HIV make this policy just slightly outdated. First, California changed the penalty for knowingly exposing others to HIV from a felony to a misdemeanor. HIV was the only communal disease for which exposure was punishable by felony in California, and proponents of the measure state that by reducing the criminalization of it, it reduces a stigma which often stops people from even getting tested for fear of having to “knowingly” expose people to HIV. In the state of California, people were even charged under the felony punishment despite not engaging in physical contact with the other person. This is believed to have been based on stigma, where people believe you can catch HIV from simply being near a person with HIV. To be clear, HIV is only spread through some bodily fluids like blood, semen, pre-semenal fluids, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

Second, the CDC recently released a statement acknowledging that people whose HIV viral loads are undetectable have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV another person. This means that people who are on current HIV treatments cannot transmit HIV to their negative partners if the HIV is basically undetectable within their body. The study the CDC conducted spanned across “thousands of couples and many thousand acts of sex without a condom or pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)” at which not one time was HIV transmitted.

These recent changes highlight the issue with UH Systems own policy. The policy makes sense when a university is trying to reduce its liability, but it doesn’t ensure that students with HIV/AIDS are protected upon the required disclosure of their status to their sexual partners. Speaking with Dr. Hudson, head of UHD’s Center for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, he explained this issue in greater depth.

“When we were putting together the sexual misconduct response team, first thing is we have to know what the policy is” he said. “When I found that particular section on sexual exploitation, to me, when I read it, I could see

the implications and also understand how, from an attorney’s perspective... how they could write this without thinking about the implications.” The implication is that the person must disclose their status to any sexual partner, but the concern is over the stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS. Dr. Hudson explained that the stigma starts at

a high school level, because sexual education is not required by the state of Texas and many school districts don’t bother with it. Because of this, people don’t understand how HIV is transmitted and can believe people catch it from simple touch, or even being too close. People tend to think of it like an STI, and the associated stigmas of STI’s (promiscuity, dirtiness) then get applied to people living with HIV. “We’re asking 17, 18, 19 year olds, young people who may have only found out recently that they are HIV positive or maybe have known for a long time and are undetectable, we are asking them to disclose that to somebody. So, if they follow the policy and do the right thing according to the policy and disclose, there’s an extremely high risk of them encountering HIV stigma.”

How does Dr. Hudson think the policy should be changed? “Well my question then was what happens after that [the disclosure]? Are we prepared say in the dormitories with RA’s and residence hall directors who are bullying trained and knowledgeable with the best practices and most up to date information about HIV/AIDS and ready to put in workshops that are intended to reduce HIV stigma?” So, it is not so much about changing the policy as it is about reducing HIV stigma and providing the proper support to HIV positive students. Specifically, Dr. Hudson stated “We need to provide multi-layers of support and we need to see that those layers are put into place.” The one thing he would change? “If I were the one doing it, I would strike AIDS from item F, I would just say HIV... because AIDS is not an infection that is passed from one to another, that’s HIV.” A more detailed explanation of this is because the only way to get AIDS is to already have HIV, so the policy is inaccurate in that there is no way to spread AIDS as only HIV is transmittable under the terms defined in the sexual exploitation policy.

Why does this matter? Because policies should reflect the most recent scientific information, and because if we are going to have a policy which puts students at risk because of the stigma associated with their health-related issue, then the support needs to be provided for that student. Students with HIV deserve to feel a level of safety on campus as much as anyone else, and more support should be provided to them in the future. Hopefully, with Dr. Hudson working closely with the University, these changes in policy and support can be made.

The Monster Mash

by Archie Gayle

UHD students and faculty entered the Milam and Travis room in the Welcome Center on Thursday, October 26th at 7:00 pm. The room differed from what they would normally see in an event—cobwebs and skeletons hanging from the walls and ceiling, the ceiling lights off with the only source of light coming from the DJ's strobe lights in front of the dancefloor. Even before entering the room, students felt the bass through the hallways. This event was the 2017 Halloween Bash hosted by UHD's Campus Activities Board. Entering the room, students

were greeted to others dressed in costumes but there were several who didn't feel like dressing up and just wanted to party; everybody was equally accepted, costume or not.

Students came dressed in outlandish, unique, and store-bought costumes as well as creative homemade costumes. One student came in a Rocket's jersey and a dinosaur helmet and called himself 'the Basketball-playing Dinosaur.' This was a great example of enthusiasm; when asked about his costume he replied with lizard-roars and acted as if he was shooting a three-pointer. Other costumes included a professor who came with her three year-old daughter, both dressed as witches, a couple dressed like Harley Quin and the Joker with flawless makeup, and an array of students and faculty who came dressed as a burger, fries, and a giant bottle of Coke.

The DJ got the crowd in the Halloween spirit by playing spooky-themed music and Halloween classics such as "Monster Mash" by Bobby Pickett, which brought



Photo by Archie Gayle

the upcoming Halloween a bit closer. Even though it was Halloween-themed party, the DJ understood that it was still a party and knew to change the mood. Once a sizeable crowd of monsters, cosplayers, and students dressed like food showed up the atmosphere became lively with the DJ playing "Hot in Here" by Nelly. The crowd reacted positively and the party music continued throughout the night.

Halfway into the party, around the 8:00 mark, the crowd cleared the dancefloor to take breaks at the tables. But the music was still going. One volunteer, Nav Dhadral, did not like the empty dancefloor so he grabbed the mic and gave everyone to the count of three

to rush back to the middle. The DJ played some crowd favorites and the floor slowly filled back up. I spoke to Nav later about his reasoning for this. A transfer student from HCC majoring in marketing, he absolutely loves student involvement. The student ambassador for the Davies College of Business said that "if you are attending something, you cannot just go and stand around. If you are going to a party, you cannot go to creep and stare. You should be over there dancing. Just like if you go to a restaurant; you can't just go sit, drink a glass of water and leave. You have to eat and get full. We were at the right time and place, and that's why I was telling everybody to come and dance. It was a party, I was like 'come dance and have a good time.' Because that's what we were there to do. That's what it was all about." His efforts paid off. By the end of the night, each ghoul, monster, and food product left with great memories.

Fandom UHD Presents: Escape the Theater

by Chris Joseph

After months of planning and preparation, October 30th, was the day that Fandom UHD teamed up with the UHD Veterans to host Fandom UHD's last big event of the semester. Escape the Theater, a horror themed escape room, gave the students a good fright right before Halloween.

Fandom UHD originally hired monsters to aid them during their annual showing of a horror movie, but unbeknown to the members of Fandom UHD that the "monsters" that they hired were real! Killing one of their staff members, it was up to the students at UHD to wrangle up the monsters and send them back to where they belong, so Fandom UHD could show their movie.

In all seriousness, this was by far one of the most well done, thought out Halloween events that UHD had offered. UHD Fandom was professional in signing up the students for their event and they remained friendly and welcoming to many of the students who stopped by to admire the costumes of the performers. UHD senior Diana Perez said, "I had a fantastic time! I honestly didn't think that I would have this much fun, but I did. I really did, and I am going to come back to this event tomorrow and have fun all over again."

The very second you walk into the doors of the auditorium, the doors slam shut behind you and the fun begins. You're given a brief spooky story about how the monsters now roam free in the movie theater, and

then you are let loose to wander the auditorium and search for clues to quell the monsters. The "monsters" performances were so well done and quite frankly terrifying. They would wander around, follow right behind you, bang on the walls, and used every tool in their arsenal to terrify the students. These 'monsters' did, however, even though their goal was to scare the students they would still guide the students—while still in character—to clues when they would get stuck.

The puzzles themselves deserve some recognition as they were so complicated, yet simple. When an attendee finally figured out the puzzles, they felt an amazing sense of accomplishment because they were one step closer to beating the game. "I didn't expect the puzzles to be so hard, but when we started to complete one puzzle after another, it felt like a small weight was being lifted off my shoulders. I was so wrapped up in the puzzles and monsters, our time was up before I knew it," Perez said.

Fandom UHD did a fantastic job with this event, and although this is their last big event of the semester, you can still join their ranks and become a member of the Fandom UHD family and participate in future events. "Anybody who is interested about joining Fandom or curious about it, don't be afraid we are all very welcoming," said Carolina Ramirez, Vice President of Fandom UHD.

The Meaning of Thanksgiving

by Helen Martinez

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Houstonians have much to be grateful for this Thanksgiving. After the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, Houston has bounced back and is on its way to being stronger than ever. There is still work to be done, but morale is high after the Astros' historic win at the World Series. You can see the excitement as Houstonians proudly walk about with their orange Astros merchandise, a vast contrast to the sloped shoulders and terrifying uncertainty pervading the air in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. While we cannot forget the horror and tragedy that Houston endured during this natural disaster, we can be grateful for the compassion and helping hands that arose from it. One way to show our gratefulness is to pass on the compassion we received. It is immensely healing to help someone after receiving help. Someone once said, "One of the best ways to cope with your grief and anxiety is to help others." It is her words that resonate as Thanksgiving approaches, and calls for more people to spread that compassion and gratefulness beyond just saying grace in front of a plate of turkey.

Given its controversial history, Thanksgiving can be a conflicting time for many Americans. The story fed to children of the first Thanksgiving of the Pilgrims and Native Americans sitting together a table eating turkey and corn in peaceful unity is just that. A story. A story that stresses one moment of truce between two groups of people that ultimately resulted in the massacres of numerous Native Americans. People should not disgrace those murders and bloodshed by neglecting their existence. Too often, it is overlooked in favor of friendlier mythologized versions of the first Thanksgiving that oversimplify a complicated and blood soaked past for the sake of national pride. In fact, according to Britannica, Thanksgiving did not even become a national holiday until the civil war, when Abraham Lincoln thought it would help to spread a sense of unity throughout the nation. However, the bloody history of Thanksgiving does not capture the essence of Thanksgiving as experienced by many Americans today.

For example, even immigrants, who have no stake in the history of Thanksgiving, celebrate it. From one immigrant family, who knew nothing of Thanksgiving when they arrived in the U.S., "Turkey Day" is not about the mythology of the first Thanksgiving nor about the mistreatment of Native Americans. Elisa Martinez, an immigrant to the U.S. when she was 13 years old, explains "To us, we knew nothing. It was just Turkey Day, but we learned. ... Its more than just Pilgrims and Indians. It's about family being together and being grateful for everything that has blessed us this past year." Though the meaning of Thanksgiving has changed over the years, to many Americans today it has evolved to mean being grateful for surviving all that we have endured. It means finding comfort in food and family and hope for the future. It is a way for immigrant families to incorporate

American culture into their lives without letting go of their own identity. You can have turkey and stuffing next to tamales and rice. You can watch the Macy's Day parade and the latest football match. You can say grace and show your gratitude over a meal surrounded with friends and family in English and Spanish and Vietnamese and Arabic. It is this version of Thanksgiving, which emphasizes on being grateful and enduring, that can help push us through the sorrow and disappointment and truly horrific times from the past year to be considerate and compassionate and kind.



Best of all, these virtues can be kept year-round and give back beyond just Thanksgiving. Start small. Try using baby steps, instead of overwhelming yourself trying to save the world overnight. Talk to one person on how you can make the world a better place. Add one volunteering session to your schedule. Make it something you like or feel passionate about. Go with a friend or a group. There are

so many advocacy groups, non-profits, and volunteering opportunities for all causes under the sun, such as The Houston Food Bank for the hungry, the Beacon for the homeless, and Citizens for Animal Protection for animal lovers. There are so many people who need help. In the spirit of gratitude and remembering what has been endured and the help received, take the time to consider showing thanks by giving back beyond one day a year. "Turkey Day" is for tasty food, good company, and memories, good and bad; use the other 364 days to show our thankfulness.



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Advice from Your Typical Student

“So lately I have been feeling pretty down. I don’t have as much free time as I would like to hang out with friends. I mostly do homework all the time and when I finish one thing I have another thing to do. My friends have complained that I don’t want to spend time with them, but that isn’t true. My friends don’t go to college so they think I make up how much work I have to do. How do I explain to them that I would love to spend time with them, but I barely have enough time to do all of my school work?”

Thanks for the question! Life is the ultimate balancing act and it can be difficult to stay the course when the wind is pushing you in different directions. Trust me, I get it. Sometimes a strong gust of wind will push me towards my bed for a nap and who am I to disobey direct orders from the wind? However, that same wind does not consider the fact that I probably have an assignment due sometime that week.

The direction of your wind seems to be at odds with those closest to you. I am gathering that you would like to spend more time with your friends, but you also value your education. It also seems as if your friends have different values since they do not attend college, which can be tricky. College is hard enough without having to deal with pressure from those who may feel neglected in your personal journey to obtain a degree. I could give you several examples of ways to break it to your friends that you are floating in a sea of never-ending work (a reality

that many college students have experience with), but I would like to challenge you to find an explanation that is authentic and resonates with you. How do you feel when your friends say that you do not want to spend time with them? Let that feeling guide you.

Communication is very important. Your friends have communicated their concerns to you and you should let them know that they have been heard. However, don’t forget to honor your own feelings. In doing that you may find it easier to speak with them about the issue because you know that it’s the truth and the other 14,251 students at UHD also know that it’s the truth (the workload at UHD is no joke).


On a side note, college is hard so kudos to you for managing to stay afloat. I can’t verify that it gets easier as life goes on, but practicing self-care might be something to look into. Sure, it’s important to spend time with friends, but it’s even more important to take care of yourself first. My own personal self-care is to lay on the floor in the middle of the living room while wrapped in a blanket as my sister passes by, shakes her head, and steps over me.

Questions? Comments? Do you also lay in the middle of the floor in a blanket? Let me know at typicalstudentadvice@gmail.com.

Signing Off,
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