

GATOR WALL GIVES UHD AN URBAN BRANDING



by Darci McFerran
 Staff Reporter

The University of Houston Downtown celebrated its 40th Anniversary this year. In fact, they hosted their very birthday party on the south deck to commemorate the very special occasion. As a part of the days' festivities, UHD unveiled the new Gator Wall, which is a mural on spray painted on both side of the warehouse that sits on Lot 3 parking. Eyeful Art, a local company, featuring the work of Sebastian Boileau, completed the project. Boileau has lived in Texas for 27 years and was originally born in Versailles, France. He launched Eyeful Art in 1992 in Paris and relocated to Texas in 1998. For the last 15 years he has served hundreds of clients and has recently become notorious in Houston for his powerful murals all over the city, especially Midtown.

One of the biggest benefits of the University being located downtown is that it has high visibility to residents and visitors, especially from the freeways that interweave on all sides of the city. With this fact in mind, the university contacted Boileau to make use of the blank canvas walls of a warehouse on campus. Boileau pointed out to me that, "Metrorail riders headed southbound toward downtown Houston have an incredible view of the mural." Ed-u-Gator is shown in bold green against a beautiful blue backdrop, which really highlights the gator himself. I was impressed by how modern and edgy the design ended up being which, in my opinion, better reflects the student body that he stands for. "The intent was to go bigger, more detailed and try to push yourself and what already exists-we wanted to do something powerful!" Boileau has other notable murals around the city and, in fact, it was at the unveiling of a mural on Fannin that Diane Summers and Mark Cervenka began to envision a mural for UHD. "Other than the idea of the gator, they pretty much left it up to me to come up with some designs, they didn't want to dictate too much and I think that's smart

because artists do better when you trust them and let them do their thing."

As a part of the commission, Eyeful Art also hires a dedicated photographer/videographer to document the progress. From inception to ending the entire mural process has been captured and posted on a website, uhdgatorwall.com, along with its own dedicated hashtag...#uhdgatorwall. A second mural was done on the opposite side of the building that was not a part of the original design plans. Boileau explained that, "The other side was an afterthought that I proposed and they totally saw the value in it." It displays the UHD logo and tagline, "Major Opportunity." Boileau also let me in on some undisclosed information, "We also have plans for another mural on the end of the building but it is a secret." He did tell me that it will reinforce the image and branding that the Ed-u-Gator wall establishes, explaining, "Lets just say that it will be a single item that will be visible from very far."

Very often UHD gets confused with U of H and there is a large majority of Houstonians that do not realize that there is a difference between the two campuses. The intent was to give our university its own unique identity that people will easily be able to recognize. There will no longer be confusing our gators for their finicky feline neighbor. I think that Sebastian nailed it when he mentioned that, "This is going to become part of the identity of the school for sure, its unique, its urban, its cool and it's a big deal." I personally think that Eyeful Art did an amazing job giving our mascot a modern makeover that we can be proud of as students and alumni. The artist has taken great care to ensure that the mural will stay with us for a long time by prepping and finishing with high quality paints and protectants, "We have a clear coat product that turns the mural almost to something like glass; it's an industrial coating that's just incredible." So no matter where you enter downtown from, Ed-u-Gator will be there to greet you.



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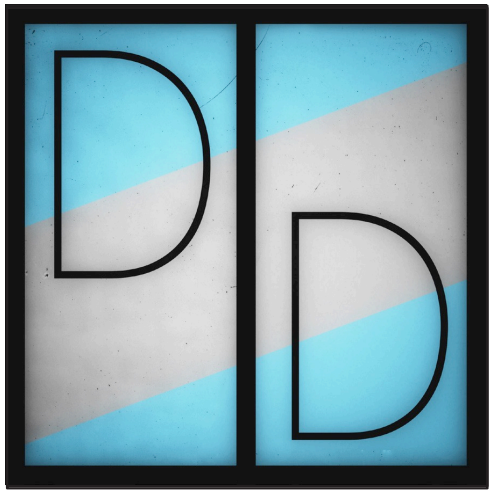
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FREEWAY ENTANGLEMENTS MAY LEAD TO A DRAMATICALLY REDESIGNED UHD

by Jason J. Rivas
Staff Reporter

Houstonians may in the not-too-distant future witness the fall of the iconic I-45 ‘Pierce Elevated’ that skirts along the western edge of Downtown. This would come about as part of a massive TXDOT project to re-route I-45 around the downtown area, a project that is expected to lead to significant improvements in traffic flow through the area. As part of this project the I-45 current of traffic would run alongside a realigned I-10, the currents of which join with those of I-45 to stream north of UHD’s Shea Building in a flood of concrete. TXDOT’s \$6 billion project is still in the early phases of gaining full approval, but one thing appears certain: UHD’s proposed plans for future development of the physical campus will have to be altered.

According to UHD VP for Administration & Finance David Bradley, UHD has long desired to purchase additional land north of the current campus to enable campus expansion. UHD has viewed the land in this area – directly across Main St. from the Shea Building, as an ideal location to build the future STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Building. Throughout this spring UHD representatives have been meeting regularly with state legislators to request funding to build the much-needed STEM Building. This building would provide more classrooms, computer labs, and research facilities for both students in STEM fields and professors

working on research, and open the door for additional degree programs in the STEM fields.

In addition, the existing Campus Master Plan calls for a new and larger Student Recreation Center and student parking garages on the targeted land, and a Student Union building which could be constructed built where the current Student Life Center now stands. The Recreation Center and Student Union buildings would provide students with space for recreation, gathering, social interaction, and relaxation. While those plans are reasonably concrete there is also discussion about the idea of possible Aadditional construction afterwards which could may lead to the rise of a new theatre, with smaller venues built to provide black-box style performances.

Flooding has always been an issue for downtown Houston, leading to discussions about the construction of a by-pass channel that would run along Wood Street and improve the water flow where White Oak Bayou flows into Buffalo Bayou. Such a channel would improve the flooding situation in downtown, and particularly around UHD. If UHD were able to purchase the property north of campus the improved flooding situation would mean that land initially usable only as green space; for the planting of trees and other flora, and fields for intramural sports, , could become available for future construction projects.

As all of this plays out there will be many challenges but also many opportunities. Once the proposed freeway realignment project is complete

(keeping in mind it could take several years), the removal of the existing I-10 overpass near UHD could lead to more real estate opportunities for the university. The obvious challenge is that the re-routed I-45/I-10 freeways would run right across the parcel of land to the north that UHD has long looked toward as space for further expansion. The university would be in a bind if it purchased this land only to have much of it taken away by freeway construction.

The costs to carry out the university’s campus master plan –however it turns out– may require an increase in student fees, with those increases first having to be approved through a student referendum. Tuition and fee rates at UHD have always been well below the state average, which has been a major selling point for potential students. As TXDOT moves forward with its ambitious plan to reroute freeway traffic around downtown Houston, UHD’s Major Opportunity for campus development will be impacted. Time will tell whether UHD will be successful in developing its vision of a modern, pedestrian-friendly urban campus, but one thing is clear: UHD will continue to examine all ideas aimed at helping to better serve the students, professors, and faculty.

For more information regarding the TXDOT freeway realignment project, search:

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/transportation/article/Massive-I-45-project-would-remove-Pierce-6217572.php#photo-7867313>



After Winning Lawsuit, HERO Still Faces Uncertainty



by Elisa Gonzalez
Staff Reporter

After Winning Lawsuit, HERO Still Faces Uncertainty
In just a year of existence, Houston's newly issued equal rights ordinance, also known as HERO, has survived a flurry of attacks from the religious right.

HERO, introduced by Mayor Parker in April of last year and approved by city council last May, extends basic civil rights protections against discrimination toward the LGBT community, a cause that many of Houston's Christian conservatives have considered an infringement on their religious freedom. The ordinance's most recent victory was a lawsuit in which a jury and judge both ruled that a petition submitted by the law's opponents did not collect enough valid signatures for repeal referendum.

Early in the lawsuit, Mayor Parker issued a subpoena for the sermons of five of the pastors leading the coalition against HERO. When news of the subpoenas broke, Parker's actions were considered an act of censorship and a gross violation of first amendment rights. It was explained later, however, the subpoenas were an attempt to determine whether the instructions given for collecting signatures were in line with city policy, and whether or not those collecting signatures were deliberately disobeying that policy. The subpoenas were withdrawn but the damage was done. In the eyes of the conservatives behind the petition, HERO had become, in addition to a violation of their morals, an attack on their constitutional right to free speech.

In February, one of the pastors publicly leading HERO's opposition, Steve Riggle of Houston's mega-church Grace Community Church, reportedly issued the statement, "We have known from the onset that we would have to be committed to standing strong and taking this all the way to Austin before the Texas Supreme Court."

Riggle's website describes his decisions to move from San Francisco to Houston thirty years ago. In a blog post, from last year, concerning the equal rights ordinance he concludes, "[My wife and I] can tell you, since we came here from San Francisco, that we don't want Houston to become San Francisco." He was referring to the fact that San Francisco has the highest population of LGBT residents than any metropolitan area in the nation.

The anti-HERO alliance has promised to appeal the ruling, and continue to insist that the only fair course of action would be to leave the ordinance up to a vote by Houstonians. If left up to a vote, however, the fate of Houston's LGBT rights lies in the hands of the largest city in one of the most notoriously conservative states. In a blatant display of the extent of Texas' conservatism, On April 24th, Senator Ted Cruz filed two bills that aim to protect states' rights to prohibit gay marriage.

While Houston is one of the first cities in the U.S. to have elected an openly gay mayor, it is also, unfortunately, one of the last large cities in Texas to adopt LGBT non-discrimination legislation. Together, these two courses of action illustrate HERO's uncertain future.

TEXAS POLITICIAN MOLLY WHITE IS STILL CONTROVERSIAL

by: Kara Moore
Staff Reporter

It's no secret that Texas is a Republican state and most politicians who represent it are of varying Christian faiths. It comes as no surprise then that Texan politicians tend to lean toward the conservative side and hardly ever vote for stereotypically "liberal" issues.

What might come as a surprise is one particular politician, first year politician Molly White who represents Belton TX, refuses to see constituents whose views she disagrees with.

It all started on January 29th, which is Texas Muslim Capitol Day. It's a day that has been set for Texas Muslims to meet their Representatives since 2003. This year though, Muslim Texans were not only met with protestors outside the capitol but opposition within. According to the

Texas Tribune, Molly posted a message on her Face book stating:

"I did leave an Israeli flag on the reception desk in my office with instructions to staff to ask representatives from the Muslim community to renounce Islamic terrorist groups and publicly announce allegiance to America and our laws. We will see how long they stay in my office."

Later, she apologized with two separate posts stating she accepts anyone that obeys American laws and that all constituents are welcome in her office to meet their Representative.

It seems that still not all are welcome though. In the beginning of April, the Associated Press reported that White's staff told Frank Carlson of Equality Texas (the biggest LGBTQ+ group in Texas) to "drop of your literature and leave." The Chief of Staff even said to Carlson that speaking to White about LGBTQ+ rights would be a "waste of time." This sort of senti-

ment was doubly expressed to the Texas Freedom Network, which was unable to schedule an appointment with White to also discuss LGBTQ+ issues. The Texas Freedom Network, which has a chapter here at UHD, is a "organization formed to protect religious freedom, defend civil liberties, and strengthen public schools in the State of Texas." The Texas Freedom Network does usually work to match their lobbyists with their representatives in order to ensure Texans politicians are hearing directly from the people who can vote for them. Members of UHD's Texas Freedom Network went to the Capitol only to find that she wouldn't meet with any of the TFN representatives because they were advocating in favor of LGBTQ+ rights. UHD students who were on the trip said that she her staff expressed the same "waste of time" mentality regarding meeting with them as she did with Equality Texas.



By: L. A. Bonté

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TED SHULL PASSING ON

THE EDITORIAL TORCH

by JhaRe' Scott &
Terrance Turner
Staff Reporters

The Dateline Downtown editor-in-chief spoke excitedly about his new career path and his time with the paper in an interview at his office on March 17. He talked at length about an acceptance letter from Texas A&M's Bush School of Government, which offers Master of Public Service. He hopes the school will help him achieve his dream of becoming an embassy press spokesman or diplomat with the State Department. But he also waxed nostalgic, remembering the nearly three-year whirlwind that has brought him to this point.

In August 2012, Shull re-entered the education field by enrolling at UHD. He had spent over a decade away from college, working his way up the business ladder and eventually becoming a hotel manager. But restarting his collegiate career was frightening. "I was so scared that I only took two classes," he said, noting that they were Saturday sessions. But he wanted more campus involvement, and he found it at Dateline.

After responding to an ad he saw via Gatormail, Shull applied for the role of a staff writer and was hired to cover a Social Science Lecture series and external news in June 2013. Later that year, he began a nine-month internship, writing official communication for the office of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee. "I loved working for the congresswoman because I got so much exposure," he said. "It was fabulous." But when offered the role of editor-in-chief for the paper in July 2014, he knew he had to leave the post.

What is it like to be EIC of a student newspaper? "Print weeks are extremely hectic, and that's something nobody knows except for me and the assistant editor, and the design person," he said. "During print week, we talk on the phone roughly 10-20 times a day – me and the assistant editor, and the printing people...I'll get phone calls at ten-o'clock at night from the printer, and if they say something is wrong I have to fix it, so print week it's very involved."

Planning weeks are more laid-back, but print weeks mean late nights and early mornings.

It seems to be worth the effort, though. Shull is very pleased with the paper's first issue. "I think it's got so many diverse topics," he says, "and it's got a lot of important news, but it's got our first-ever story in Spanish and English." He feels that the current issue's stories are the most impactful of any issue to date. He wants to improve the black bins that the papers are distributed in and paint them with the Date-



line logo. "They're in bad shape; some of them are falling apart," he laments. "Maybe an intern from the art department or someone can paint them as an internship." He would also like for UHD to retain the podcast that he initialized while serving as editor. "We really would like the university to take it more seriously," he said, noting that the presidents of both SGA and the university have made appearances on it.

What is most important for an aspiring Dateline writer? "Sense of timing, and courage to ask the tough questions," Shull responds – "the savviness to know when to ask them and the courage to go through with it." He urges writers to focus on their passion and write from there. But above all, he advises, never give up.

BEHIND THE CRIMSON FRAMES

by Terrance Turner
Staff Reporter

Upon walking into the second-floor office of Dateline Downtown, one might encounter Joshua Burgman, immediately recognizable due to his striking choice of eyewear. But behind the blazing red frames lies an equally memorable assistant editor: blunt, open, disarmingly candid.

What were his thoughts on Issue 4? “It was good. I feel like it could’ve been better, but then again I’ve always felt like each issue could be better than the last issue.” He admits to being very critical of his work, a quality that likely extends to the paper – in addition to daily meetings with editor-in-chief Ted Shull about who’s writing what, he also reads every article that goes into the paper.

“Our goal, always, is to be entertaining and informative,” Burgman says. He reiterated Shull’s statement that college students often don’t keep up with the news and that Dateline is meant to fill that void for them. Burgman added that the paper runs biweekly and therefore has to be selective with the stories it includes. (A 24-hour news cycle renders two-week-old stories irrelevant.)

What does he most value in a reporter? “Probably their honesty,” he says. “Whether or not they’re truthful with their stories and whether or not their stories matter.” Work ethic is also something Burgman prizes. He emphasizes that the ability to write well is subordinate to the ideals of hard work and integrity. When asked if there have ever been any controversial issues or articles for the paper, Burgman says he can’t think of any. I remind him that when UHD powerlifter Kenny Nguyen set a national record last year, the Dateline article headline generated some attention, and not all of it was positive. (The headline was “Student Sets National Record, Yet Another Reminder For Rest Of Us To Do Something with Our Livcs.”) Burgman emphatically denies involvement.

“I had nothing to do with that,” he says. “At that time I was just

a staff reporter, so I had nothing to do with what went into that. I want that to be very clear.” He admits to having been shocked when he saw the paper: “I picked it up and was like, ‘Who? Who did this?’ I’ll never forget that, ‘cause I even called Ted and was like, ‘What the hell?’”

On a more positive note, he notes that the design of the paper has improved over the past few issues. He hopes to further develop the podcast that is a hallmark of Shull’s career at Dateline. Burgman feels the podcast is very valuable but could be expanded: “If we did a visual podcast, I feel like students would be more receptive to it.” Only time will tell if he is proved right.



Nuestras Conversación

by Joshua Burgman
Assistant Editor

This fall the University of Houston - Downtown applied for re-accreditation, and as a result of that, the University drafted a QEP, or Quality Enhancement Plan; which is required in order to gain re-accreditation. In it, the University outlines its vision for enhancing student learning and community engagement.

In the process of drafting the document, the University reached out to faculty and students alike. University professors were consulted, and their feedback highlighted a disturbing trend in the lack of sufficient writing skills among 21st century college students.

Since the release of the QEP, I have been very interested in what the school is trying to achieve. My interest drove me to reach out to several university professors on my own, and each of them pretty much told me the same thing; that 21st century College students struggle with writing, and are sometimes not prepared at the time they first enroll. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to be granted an interview with one of my professors concerning the topic.

This year I enrolled in Elementary Spanish, and my Professor, Carmen Parron-Salas, has been instrumental in guiding me through the minefield that is learning a second language. She agreed to sit down with me for an interview; always seeking to provide a learning opportunity, she agreed on the condition that the interview was conducted in Spanish. Since it is beginning Spanish, my proficiency is limited, and so were the questions I asked her, but thankfully she was patient with me. The following is what we discussed:

Dateline: muchos profesores en la Universidad creen que los estudiantes escriben mal. Cuál es tu opinión al respecto?

Professor Parron-Salas: Bueno! Yo creo, que los estudiantes hoy tienen un problema de déficit de escritura. Este es problema que tienen de antigüedad de hace veinte a veinticinco años. No solamente en los Estados Unidos, sino también con otros países como España y en países Latinoamericanos. Es un problema de las escuelas y es un problema también que vienen de la familia de los padres en casa.

Dateline: Puedes explicarme la ventaja de saber dos idiomas?

Parron-Salas: La ventaja de usar, hablar, y escribir en dos idiomas, especialmente escribir, es que tienes mucha más facilidad de hacer una comunicación efectiva. Nosotros queremos que los estudiantes estén bien preparados y queremos para trabajar en contabilidad en bancos, en ciencias, en economía, en química, en medicina.

Dateline: En todos?

Parron-Salas: En todos!

Dateline: Cual es la mejor manera de aprender un segundo idioma?

Parron-Salas: The best way today; to learn the language, para aprender español como segunda lengua, es contacto! Un contacto, directo de hablar. No importa si hay errores si hay problemas, no importa. Lo más importante es contacto. Cuando hay errores tienes armas para corregir, “to correct”. Si no hay errores, si no hay exposición no hay procedimiento. There is no procedure to correct, and gain more and more of the language; this is a cycle. Es muy importante hablar!

I enjoyed sitting down with Professor Parron-Salas, mostly because she was very patient with me. Also, because her insight into, what I believe, is a very serious problem; sheds light, outside of the QEP, on the perspective of a professor. During our interview Parron-Salas mentioned the need for students to be very well prepared for work after college, and that writing plays a crucial role in securing future employment. I’m inclined to agree with her, and so is the University; and the QEP represents that.



by Darci McFerran
Staff Reporter

In April several crime alerts were issued within a short period of time to notify the UHD community of crimes occurring on campus. However, there was one in particular, concerning an attempted rape that was not immediately disclosed to students. Campus administration eventually did send a notification stating, "Because the assailant was apprehended, there was no legal or policy requirement that the University issue a notification (per the Clery Act, which addresses campus crime reporting)." A questionable action that even administration admits, "In hindsight this was not the best decision." I was completely unaware of the incident until our local television news station aired a segment praising a professor for thwarting a rape at University of Houston-Downtown. Being a young female, I immediately took notice but wondered why I was hearing it from an outside source first.

On April 10th around 7pm a white male entered the university and hid in a woman's restroom located on the 3-North Floor. The suspect was carrying a knife, which he would use later to threaten his intended target. To respect the privacy of the female student I will refer to her as Ms. Survivor. Ms. Survivor had remained on campus late to see a production at the O'Kane Theater and had originally planned to see the show with her mother, who was unable to join her. Surprisingly, the theater was full of patrons waiting for the show to begin, who had no idea what was taking place around the corner. As Ms. Survivor recounted the events for me during an interview she recalled, "I immediately felt that something wasn't right and should have

ATTEMPTED RAPE ENDS WITH A HERO

checked the stalls when I went in." The suspect was hiding in a stall, so she could not immediately identify the danger. This allowed him enough of an opportunity to surprise her so that she could not escape. Using the knife to threaten her, he pulled her into the stall with him and locked the door. Shock and fear prevented her from immediately crying out for assistance but this young lady wasn't giving up without a fight.

Ms. Survivor's screams could be heard all the way into the nearby O'Kane theatre and fortunately by the ears of patrons and of one very important professor. Professor Frank Vela, Associate Professor and Technical Director, immediately reacted to the urgent cries, scrambling to find their source. Fortunately, Professor Vela was able to intervene before Ms. Survivor was physically harmed. Instinctively he ordered the suspect to drop the knife and release the girl but then the suspect attempted to leave and Vela stayed right on his heels. As the suspect exited the bathroom and attempted to make his way to the front doors of the One Main building, Vela followed him. Authoritatively commanding him to stop and then forcibly restraining him until the police could arrive. "The whole time I was telling him to stop walking right now and he wouldn't listen, so then I became aggressive," Vela recalled. Fortunately, thanks to Professor Vela's quick thinking, the suspect was apprehended and immediate danger removed.

The aftermath of these events can have a profound impact on the people involved as well as the community that surrounds them. We can debate endlessly the things that should be done to prevent crimes such as this one, but ultimately they will continue to find their way into our lives. Professor Vela is a reassuring example of how we can control the crime in our community. When you see something suspicious or hear a cry for help, don't stand by and look for the hero...be the hero. This story ends with two, the young woman who never gave up and the professor who answered her calls.

ANNE FRANK ILLUSTRATES PAST TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

by Jason J. Rivas
Staff Reporter

Recently, the O'Kane Theatre showcased their production of the "Diary of Anne Frank." Those who were fortunate enough to attend saw a glimpse of some basic elements that make us human: To live, to protect, and to believe in the goodness within ourselves. During the run, a group of eighth grade students from a nearby charter school attended the production, not only to visually see what they had learned of the struggles of those persecuted during WWII, but to experience the performing arts for the first time.

Amigos for Vida is a public charter school that serves the crowded Gulfton community near the Chimney

Rock and Westpark area. The area's public schools are overcrowded so Amigos was established to serve those in need of a quality education. It spans from Pre-K to eighth grade and serves a primarily Hispanic community. In fact, 99% of the school's population is Hispanic, with 92.4% classified as Limited English Proficient. In spite of this, the school has received acclamation from the Texas Education Agency for its exceptional work and care for its students.

This past winter, school's eighth graders devoted a portion of the semester to the Holocaust, led by Emil Niz, their teacher. In December, the students read *The Diary of a Young Girl* (also known as *The Diary of Anne Frank*), the autobiographical account of a Jewish girl who spent two years hiding from the Nazis, with her fam-

ily and their acquaintances. In April, the students visited UHD to attend an interpretation of the story, featuring some of UHD's most prominent actors.

The play also offered the students the opportunity to experience the fine arts for the first time. According to Niz, "Most students (at Amigos) haven't left their environment and this was their first experience in the theater." Niz is a graduate of UHD and a former student of Dr. Thomas Lyttle, the director of the theatre department. Dr. Lyttle hopes that the students' visit will open their horizons to the world of fine arts, while visually seeing the message Anne Frank offered, which was, "Despite the struggles to overcome persecution and tyranny by others, we should never lose hope in the genuine goodness of humanity."

THE QUESTION OF MY OBJECTIFICATION

by Darci McFerran
Staff Reporter

The media has latched onto the feminist concept of “rape culture”, a term that was born from the feminist movement in the United States. Wikipedia defines it as, “a concept within feminist theory in which rape is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender and sexuality.” The application of this idea has now been related to many things that are rampant in our technology driven age of entitlement. While I pondered the increase in crime activity on campus, I couldn’t help but consider what role society plays in the acts of sexual violence or, for that matter, what role a woman plays in it. Perhaps it seems ridiculous to consider that a woman has fault in her own rape, but it’s actually considered more often than is should be. There is a category for that very subject within the study of rape culture, it is called victim blaming. For anyone who spends any amount of time on social media, this is not a new topic of discussion. In fact there are campaigns’ currently running to stop promoting to females the lesson of “how not to get raped”, and instead focus on teaching boys not to rape. However



simple that concept might seem to you, the dialogue over sexual behaviors in our society gains momentum every day.

Even in 2015, we are steadfastly a patriarchal society where sexism and misogyny reign over cultural norms. Just the effort it takes to comprehend the depth of these ideas becomes a rather intimidating process. Where does it begin, much less end? The sexualization of women is saturated into every facet of modern day life. It goes beyond what behaviors are expected from someone who was physically born a female, into a standard to which no normal person could uphold. Photoshop, cosmetics and surgery are so common place that we no longer even question when or why they became important. Women have

become desensitized to how offensive it all actually is? Why should any woman be ashamed or feel incompetent because of standards that aren’t even real? These are the questions that you start with but when the realization that there are no answers, begins to sink in, another layer of questions are laid on top?

So, what role do women play in their rape? None. Not even if she is a woman who enjoys her sexuality. Until we stop asking this question altogether, we will not evolve past the “rape culture” stigma. The continued objectification of women not only damages the female gender within our culture, it also damages the males. Society has so clearly defined what gender norms are acceptable and within those norms we tell all young men that they must have sex to be a man. Period. That is not a question in which the answer can be anything other than sex. Obviously, nothing applies to everybody and there are people who can digest the daily onslaught of sexualized females and rigid gender norms and still grasp the sort of gray area called normal. If we could adapt to evolving gender norms the way we adapt to new social media platforms, we could start asking new questions.

US MILITARY TRAINING EXERCISE JADE HELM 15 HAS CONSPIRACY THEORISTS AND OPPONENTS OF PRESIDENT OBAMA IN A FRENZY

by Ted Shull, Editor-in-chief
JhaRe’ Scott, Staff Reporter

I was somewhat amused and dismayed as I watched CNN’s Barbara Starr report on Texas Governor Greg Abbott’s comments and concern over protecting the states citizen’s Constitutional rights in light of a multi-state military training exercise called “Jade Helm 15”. Governor Abbott has ordered the Texas National Guard to keep an eye on the upcoming special operations exercises after the website Info Wars published a supposed map of the operation, which labeled parts of California, Utah and Texas as “hostile territory”.

Texas Senator and Presidential candidate Ted Cruz even stoked the conspiracy flames as he told Bloomberg News that he understood the reason for citizen’s concerns, a “persistent mistrust of the Federal Government”. This is perhaps the most enlightening statement of all, evidence of a deep-seated hatred and mistrust of all things relating to President Barack Obama.

I was especially disturbed that some Houston area pastors had jumped on the fear-mongering train by telling their congregations that this was the first step in the implementation of martial law, and the end of the sovereignty of the Lone Star state. Echoing the sentiments of Texas Representative Louie Gohmert last Sunday, some pastors said that the folks in Washington have intentionally listed Texas as “hostile territory” because it has “Republican majorities, clings to their guns, religion,



and believes in the sanctity of the United States Constitution”.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter responded to Cruz’ official inquiry into the intentions of the U.S. military, “I know you think highly of our capabilities. Why else would you advocate for a short war with Iran? If indeed we are that powerful, we could probably launch an attack from any of the 15 U.S. military bases already within Texas borders.”

Perhaps what is most disturbing is the questioning of the 49 other states not mentioned, and their belief in the sanctity of the U.S. Constitution, let alone the men and women who work everyday in our federal government, including our Commander-in-Chief.

The Defense Secretary concludes his letter with a comment on the political rhetoric that conspiracy theory minded politicians have latched onto. “If Senator Cruz, you believe that the U.S. military is a political tool of its civilian leadership, you have reached a conclusion unsupported by fact, history and good sense. The troops swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States. To besmirch their loyalty to the country, even in the service of making hackneyed political points in the Republican primary, does not make you a patriot, but a partisan. Even a Princeton and Harvard Law man should know the difference”.

MAMMA MIA AT THE HOBBY CENTER

ARTS

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

The global hit, *Mamma Mia!*, opened Tuesday, April 14th for its four-day run at The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. The musical, which features music from ABBA, the Swedish pop group from the 70s, has been running on Broadway since 1999. There's a reason it's been a hit in 40 countries, on six continents, and translated into 17 languages, the show is just F-U-N!

The lights dimmed and a disembodied voice issued an ominous warning to all "sensitive viewers" that "platform boots and white spandex are featured in this production." The audience burst into laughter and excitement filled the room as the curtain rose on Act I.

The plot revolves around Sophie and her mother, Donna, who run a hotel on a Greek island. Sophie is getting married and wants her father to give her away; however, she's never met him and her mom refuses to speak of him. Sophie

finds her mom's old diary and learns that there are three possible candidates for her paternity. Someone call Maury Povich because this is muy escandaloso! She sends wedding invitations to all three men, forging her mother's signature, with the hope that she will recognize her dad when she sees him. Of course, it doesn't turn out to be that simple. Antics ensue as Sophie searches for the answer to the question: Is it Sam, Bill, or Harry?

It's a story of young love, lost love, self-discovery, and the unbreakable bonds of friendship. This dramedy will take you from the verge of tears, the roar of laughter, and the brink of breaking into your own personal dance number because the best part of *Mamma Mia!* is the music. The cast performs "Dancing Queen," "Super Trouper," "SOS," "Lay All Your Love on Me," and "Take a Chance on Me" in an acid trip of flare pants, sequins, iridescent spandex, ruffles, and rhinestones. Just, yes, yes, and more yes!

By the time the cast reached the three-song encore, the crowd was

on their feet, dancing, singing, and waving their hands in the air. This is the reason this musical is the eighth longest running show on Broadway and has kept fans returning year after year. Sadly, the show will end its sixteen-year run in September 2015.

Sad the musical is ending? Alas, there is still hope for all the die-hard *Mamma Mia!* fans, but it's going to cost you some "Money, Money, Money." According to former ABBA member Bjorn Ulvaeus, a restaurant themed version of the movie will open in Stockholm featuring the music and actors interacting with the staff and patrons while performing scenes from the musical. Holy Ikea, Batman! Pack your feather boa and platform boots but leave your dignity at home because now you can fly to Sweden to witness what it's like to eat dinner inside of a disco ball.

If you missed *Mamma Mia!*, there are plenty of other musical snacks scheduled for the 2015-2016 season so check out www.thehobbycenter.org for more information.

IS THE WAR AGAINST WEED COMING TO AN INEVITABLE END?

by Shannon Wright
Staff Reporter

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, neurosurgeon and CNN correspondent, recently released a three-part series called “Weed” that documented his investigation into the medicinal properties of cannabis and the stigma associated with its use. Dr. Gupta discovered that there’s no credible evidence to support claims that marijuana is addictive; however, there is overwhelming evidence that the plant possesses “legitimate medical applications.”

Dr. Gupta admits we have all been “terribly and systematically misled” by past biased medical research and governmental claims that marijuana is highly addictive, dangerous, and has no medical use. He now believes that all previous claims about weed were wrong and, more importantly, our government is aware of it.



Dr. Roger O. Egeberg, the Assistant Secretary of Health in the 70s who recommended marijuana be labeled as one of the most dangerous drugs in the world, stated in his recommendation letter that “Since there is still a considerable void in our knowledge of the plant and effects of the active drug contained in it, our recommendation is that marijuana be retained within schedule 1 at least until the completion of certain studies now underway to resolve the issue.”

It was labeled as a schedule one drug, which means it has a high abuse potential and no medical use. However, the Government obtained a patent on the medical use of marijuana in October of 2003. US Patent 6630507 states, “Cannabinoids have been found to have antioxidant properties.” The cannabinoids are found to have particular application as neuroprotectants, for example in limiting neurological damage following ischemic insults, such as stroke and trauma, or in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and HIV dementia.” Why, then, is marijuana still illegal? More importantly, why is it still classified as a drug with no medical benefits?

Marijuana, like alcohol, was once a legal substance. It became very popular in the 20s and 30s until lawmakers noticed a spike in violent crime involving immigrants who were high on marijuana. As part of a control effort, the drug was illegalized in the late 30s and listed as a schedule 1 drug in the Controlled Substance Act of the 70s.

The U.S. witnessed a massive crime wave when alcohol was illegalized in 1919. Organized crime flourished with the manufacturing, sales, and distribution of alcohol. Similarly, the illegalization of marijuana provided a market for Mexican cartels that make more than 60 percent of their profits from marijuana alone and control distribution networks in more than 250 American cities.

The legalization of alcohol created countless jobs and generated billions in tax revenue. According to Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron, the “average annual trade in marijuana is estimated at \$113 billion, which represents nearly \$45 billion in taxes slipping through our fingers.” What would the legalization of marijuana do for the U.S. economy?

The weed featured in the CNN documentary is medical marijuana, usually specific strains that are low in the psychoactive ingredient THC, and high in CBD, the component of the plant with medicinal properties. The legal marijuana industry could be the “fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy.” It grew 74% in 2014 to \$2.7 billion and is predicted to top \$4 billion by 2016, according to the ArcView group, a cannabis investment and research firm.

Today, medical marijuana is legal in 23 states plus DC and recreational marijuana use is legal in Colorado and Washington State with Oregon and Alaska soon to follow. On March 2nd, Texas Rep. David Simpson filed a bill to end marijuana prohibition in Texas. Simpson’s stated, “Current marijuana policies are not based on science or sound evidence, but rather misinformation and fear. All that God created is good, including marijuana.” Simpson’s ideology will surely be shot down in the ironfisted state of Texas, but the important point is that a conversation has started about ending the prohibition of marijuana and the dogma that shrouds it.



Dr. Gupta asked President Obama if he supports an end to the war on medical marijuana. The President said that he supports the use of medical marijuana, and we should “follow the science as opposed to ideology.” Whatever your political or moral stance, one thing is certain—the times they are a-changing, and on the winds of change there is the faint but distinctive smell.

OPINION

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