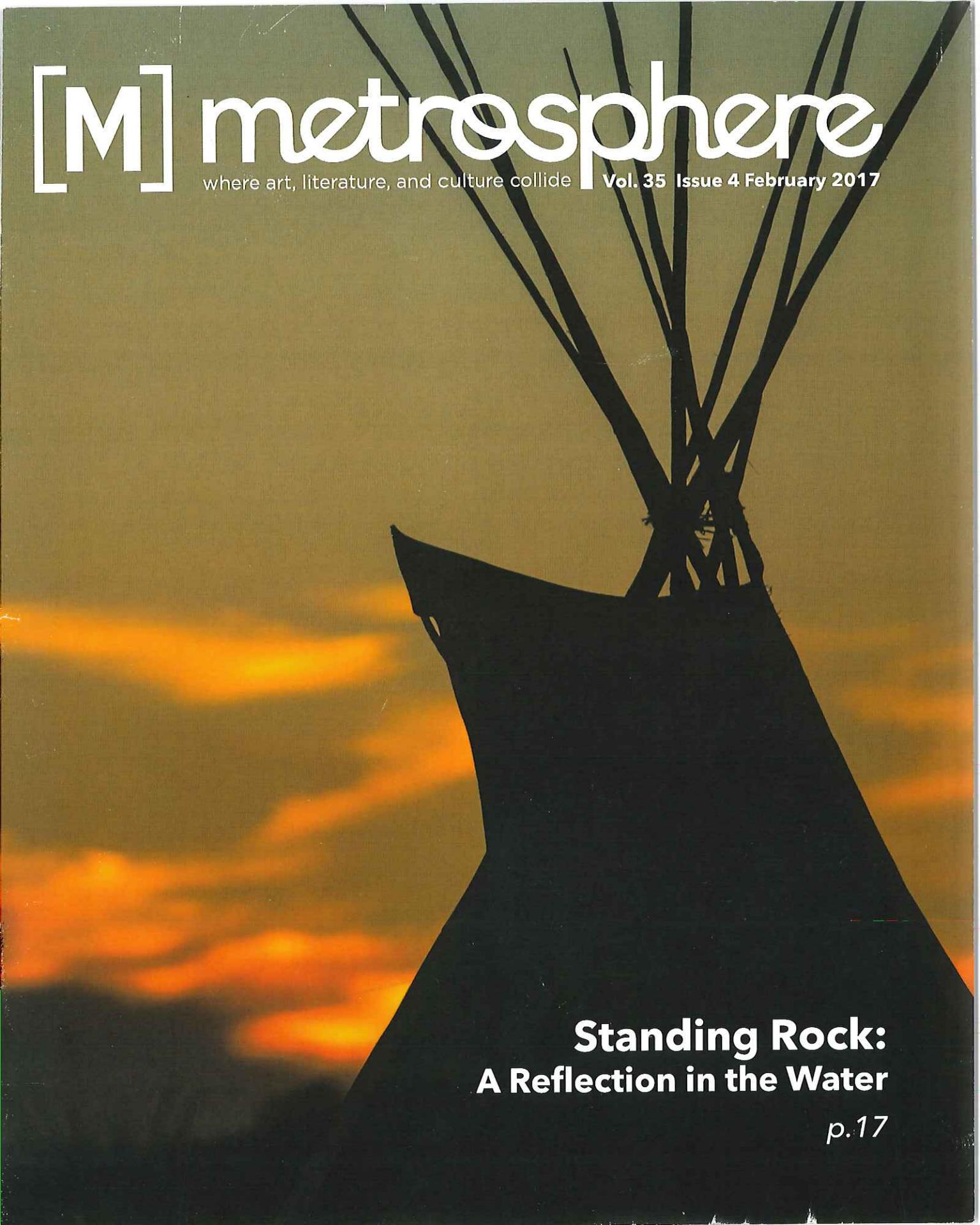


[M] metrosphere

where art, literature, and culture collide

Vol. 35 Issue 4 February 2017



**Standing Rock:
A Reflection in the Water**

p.17

Reformation *noun*

ref•or•ma•tion

/rēf'or'māsh(ə)n/

1. The action or process of reforming an institution or practice

Letter from the Editor



@dhirschnews



@dhirschnews



/dhirschnews

We're only a month into 2017 and many of us are already exhausted. Donald J. Trump is now officially the president of the United States. For some that is a victory, for others it's still a bitter pill to swallow. Regardless of whom you voted for, last year's election and news cycle left most of us feeling beat up and beat down. Whether it was by social media rants, time spent arguing around the water cooler with colleagues, or around the kitchen table with Aunt Edna, it seemed like no space was safe. For some of us it still feels that way.

Personally, it's been a daily struggle between balancing my need to stay informed and engaged as a journalist with my need to stay sane and spiritually fit as a human being. I find myself either trying to practice media moderation or fasting from the news altogether, two tactics that have failed me when applied to diet, but seem to have served me when it comes to consuming information.

Even though the information coming at us these days is a lot to digest, we all still need to come to the table. Our leadership has changed, but the problems we face at the end of the day are about people, not politics, and they require collective attention. Jobs; affordable housing; health care; food deserts; potable water; the environment; racial, gender and income inequality; justice; education; safety and security – show me an issue and I'll show you the personal story behind it. That's my job as editor-in-chief, and that's what we try to do with every

issue of Metrosphere. We use the personal to tell the universal. Hopefully in doing so we're not only feeding you information but providing some degree of nourishment. After #fuckyou2016, I think we all could use more of that.

In this month's METRO you'll learn what nuanced leadership looks like through the lens of a local business in *Spiritual hospitality: Prodigy Coffeehouse*. We take you back to Standing Rock in INTERSECTION with *A reflection in the water*, and to the stories behind the faces and flags. You'll meet the Beautiful bodies of burlesque in IMBUE and see self-love in a whole new light. *In a wardrobe far, far away...Star Wars comes to the DAM* in TECHNOSPHERE shows you how out of this world costume design has the power to connect even the most skeptical. Finally, in THREADS you'll get to know this month's *Tastemaker: Blogger Vanessa Samuel* and see the positive side of social media.

Politics at its best is service, hope and faith. At its worst, it's selfishness, pessimism and fear. The same can be said of journalism. With this issue and our commitment to the theme of Reformation, we pledge to keep serving you – the student, the reader, the citizen – the very best we have to offer. And while some days may feel exhausting we promise to rest, but never quit.

Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deanna Hirsch".

Deanna Hirsch

Editor-in-chief, Metrosphere

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With nightfall turning tipis into silhouettes, campers protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline settled in for some rest. The next morning brought early wake-up calls for action. A loudspeaker in the center of Oceti Sakowin Camp called out to individual tribes, urging them to start smoking their pipes and saying their prayers. "We're on red alert, we don't know what will come next. Remember, we are here for a reason. You have slept long enough!" Photo by Sara Hertwig

Met Media

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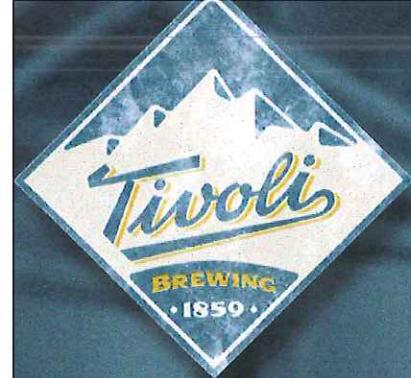
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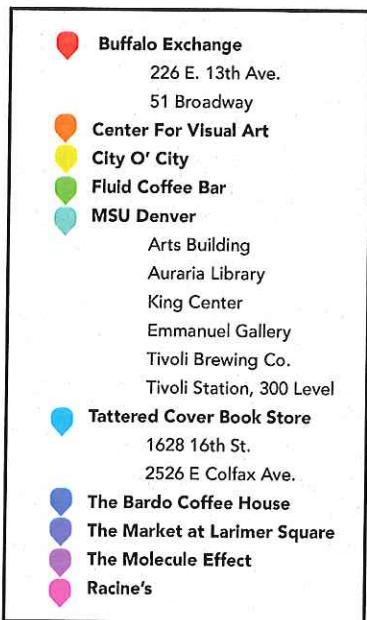
Golnar Adili, 8+9 (detail), photo collage, 2015

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Spiritual hospitality: Prodigy Coffeehouse

By Dayna L. Himot



Prodigy

Coffee Art by Maddi Troisi

Nestled in the southeast corner of the Globeville, Elyria and Swansea neighborhoods in northeast Denver, there is an innovative form of social change being made via local apprentices and a nonprofit craft coffeehouse called Prodigy. This particular intersection, across from the Northeast Park Hill and Clayton neighborhoods, has had an outcry for economic opportunity to be made available to its deeply rooted community members. Prodigy offers a space for locals to work, build wealth and not be forced to leave their community. It also is a welcoming space for young adults ages 16 to 24 that offers a unique approach to experience nuanced leadership.

MSU Denver senior Emilia Cano, 22, has worked at Prodigy since its opening last August as a founding apprentice. Cano, majoring in business management, is a native of northeast Denver. She takes pride in her Native American and Chicana upbringing.

"I am all relations, all people; I am everything; everything is part of me," Cano said. At her baptism, she was given the name "Quetzalli."

Cano was initially drawn into Prodigy by the vibrantly colored mural of the Guatemalan quetzal bird on the southside of the building. Her cousin had suggested that she would like the coffeehouse, and when she drove by the East 40th Avenue and Harrison Street location, she knew she belonged there.

"Prodigy is more than just a job; they are trying to help us build as people," Cano said. She described Prodigy as a safe place to work and voice her needs about what she wants from a work environment.

"Prodigy exists for the purpose of social impact," said Steph Frances, founder and executive director of the nonprofit. It has the look and feel of a traditional coffeehouse, but the revenue generated from the coffeehouse and fundraising goes back into supporting its apprentices.

The jobs created at Prodigy are for young people in the community, to help cultivate workforce development opportunities and positive youth opportunities. The founding



Photo by Dayna L. Himot

Prodigy Coffeehouse:

3801 E 40th Ave. in Denver
Open daily - 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

prodigyventures.org



@coffeeprodigy



@prodigyventuresinc



@prodigyventures

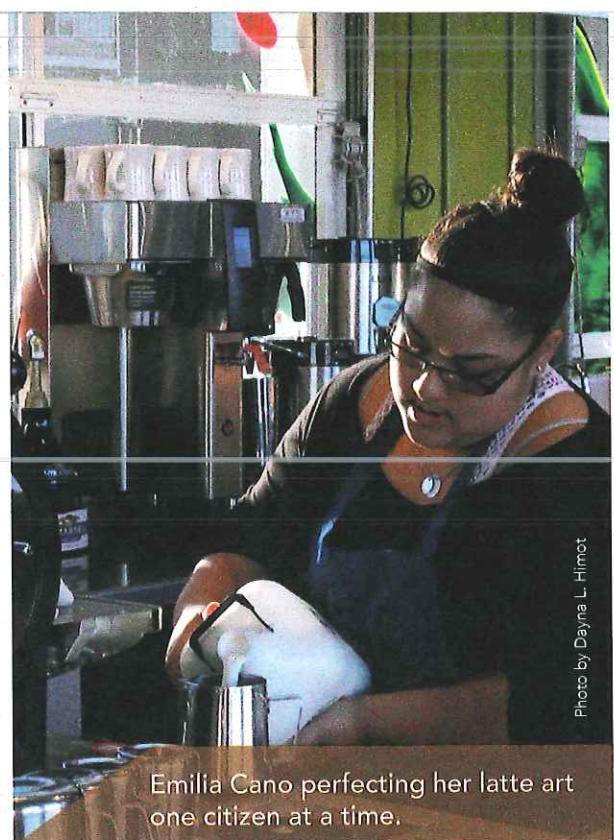


Photo by Dayna L. Himot

Emilia Cano perfecting her latte art one citizen at a time.

apprentices went through a lengthy two-week, deep learning experience before Prodigy opened its doors. It allowed them as a group to identify their personal visions and traits. Then, they implemented them during the daily training sessions.

"The point is not to be a great barista; the point is for Emilia and the other apprentices to build a basis of a mindset of ways of interacting with other people, the skills of professionalism that will transfer to whatever career she is passionate about," Frances said.

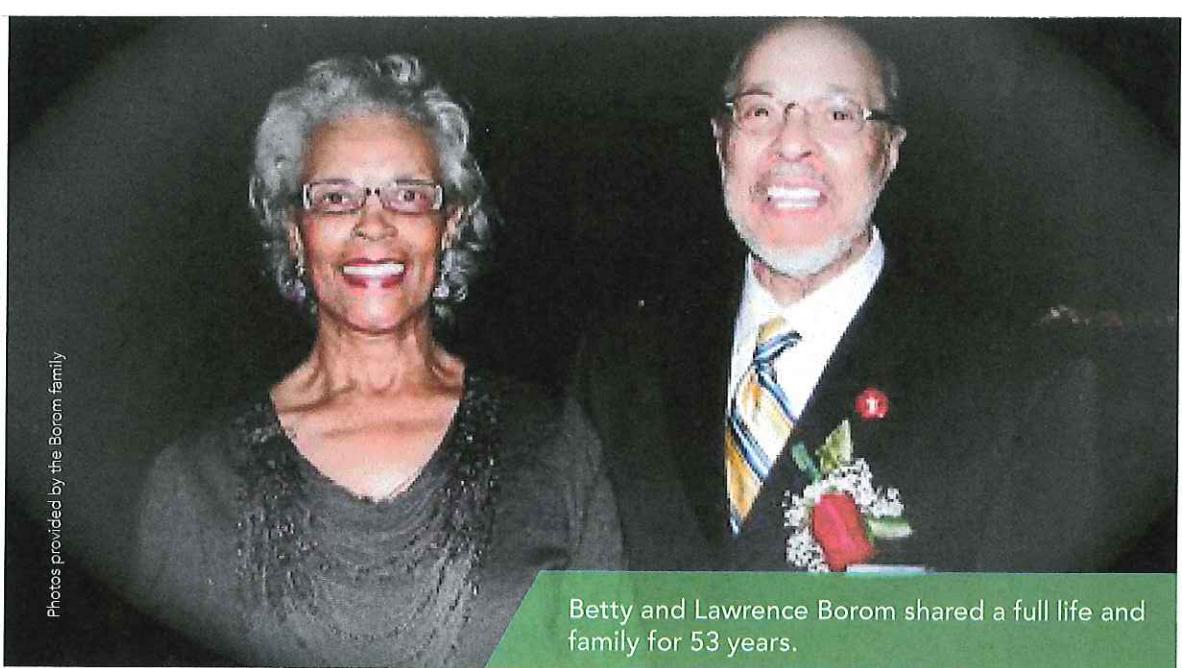
While working for nearly a decade in youth career development alternative schools, Frances noticed a gap between what young people were receiving and what they needed to be successful in the careers they are passionate about. Primarily focusing on the talent of young people in the margins whose potential was not being activated, she took her realizations to the next level. What was once a wish, to be their

employer, is now a reality alongside co-founders Hillary Frances, Jeffrey Knott and the board of the nonprofit. In this competitive world of traditional employment models, Frances drew inspiration from Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles and Street Bean Cafe, a faith based coffee roaster in Seattle. "Prodigy is a space where people can be fully and authentically themselves," Frances said.

Prodigy founders are interested in going beyond job readiness and technical skills, and have taken this on by providing an interplay of an exciting and motivated atmosphere of learning while embracing each individual. "We are not trying to run the most efficient business; we are trying to run a business that exists for the social impact. We do a lot more training than a traditional coffeehouse might do," Frances said.

Cano intends to graduate from MSU Denver in spring 2017 and is interested in entrepreneurship. She is finding the foundation for these passions at Prodigy.





Photos provided by the Borom family

Betty and Lawrence Borom shared a full life and family for 53 years.

The loss of a legend: Professor Lawrence Borom

By Mattye Crowley

Lawrence "Larry" Borom, an affiliate professor at MSU Denver, died on Oct. 20, 2016, at the age of 79, from a brain hemorrhage. While his sudden passing came as a shock to students and those who knew and loved him, his contributions to uplifting the black community live on.

"I attended the Homegoing Celebration for the life of Larry Borom at Park Hill United Methodist Church, where the impact of his life was much in evidence," said professor Jacquelyn Benton, of MSU Denver's Department of Africana Studies. "The church was filled with people whom Larry had touched in some way, government officials, community leaders, activists, educators, students-and tributes to him that we heard had come in from around the country."

Born and raised in Youngstown, Ohio, Borom grew to be a community leader and activist. He attended Youngstown State University, where he earned a B.S. in education, M.A. in urban studies from the University of Mankato State College in Minnesota, and a doctorate in sociology and race relations at the University

of Colorado Boulder. Borom also served three years in the U.S. Army and was a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity for over 50 years.

During the early years of his career as an activist, Borom worked for the Urban League in Minnesota, serving as the director of community development, and as the director of the Minnesota Governor's Human Relations Commission.

In 1976, Borom moved to Denver and became the first president and CEO of Denver Urban Leagues, serving from 1976 to 1991. During his tenure, Borom and a staff of roughly 50 people produced television and radio programs.

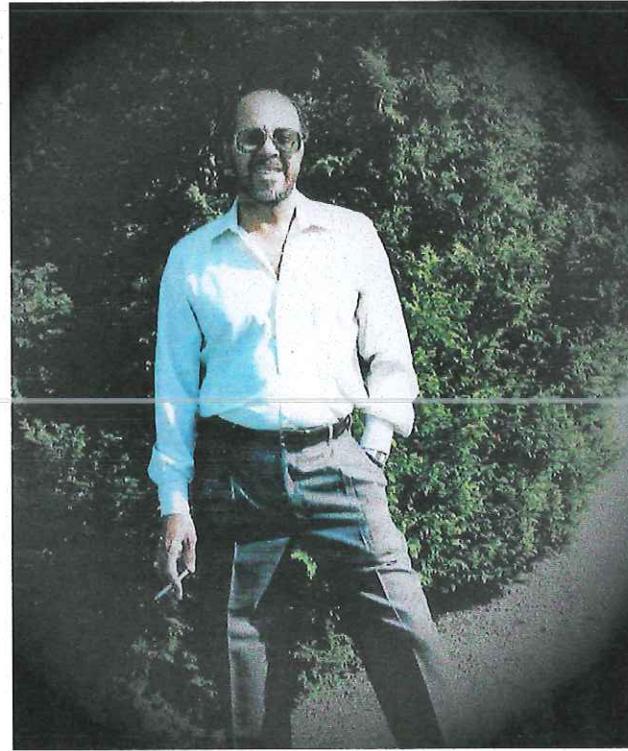
Borom was the co-founder of the African-American Leadership Institute at MSU Denver, the One Hundred Black Men of Denver and the Black Directors Council in Denver. He was a member of the Colorado Black Roundtable, the Black Education Advisory Council, the Denver NAACP, the National Association of Black Veterans and the Urban League of Metropolitan Denver Guild.



He served as the director of Denver's Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations from 1993 to 1996. Borom was also chairman of the Black Education Advisory Council and advocated against systematic discrimination in Denver Public Schools, which caused a decline in the number of African-American teachers in the district. In 2009, he filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor accusing DPS of discriminatory practices.

From 2008 until his death, Borom taught several courses in the Africana Studies department. During his time as a professor he taught his students the value and contributions made by African-Americans in the context of American history.

"Professor Lawrence 'Larry' Borom was a wonderful and very warm colleague who was very popular with both students and faculty in the Africana Studies department at Metro State University of Denver," associate professor Douglas Mpondi said. "Always a jovial and likable person, Larry's passing has left us poorer, and



the Africana Studies department and the larger MSU Denver community will dearly miss him."

MSU Denver alumna Shah Love echoed Mpondi's sentiments. "He was a great professor. I enjoyed his class. RIP," Love said.

Borom and his wife, Betty, were awarded the Sebastian Owens Community Service Award in 2012 by the Denver Urban League, and in 2014 he received an honorary doctorate degree from the Denver Institute for Urban Studies for his public service.

"He was an advocate of black history and politics and was loved by many," she said.

Memorial services were held for Borom on Oct.

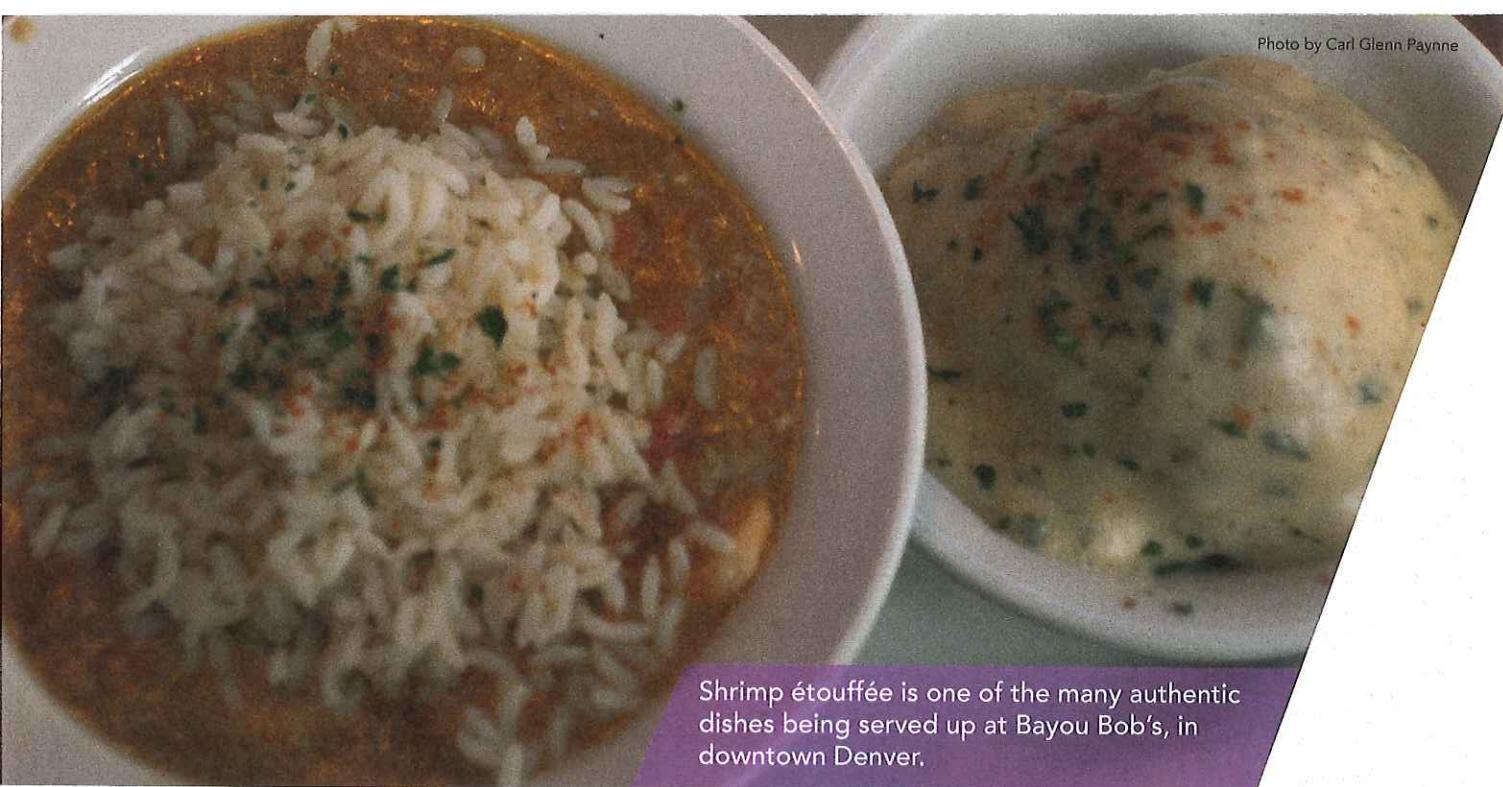
29, 2016, at Park Hill United Methodist Church, where over 300 community members gathered to pay homage to his legacy and honor his contribution to the reclamation of greatness.

"We all have people behind the scenes that pour into our lives," said Eddie Koen, a friend of Borom's. "Lawrence was one of them for me."

m

*"We
all have
people behind
the scenes that
pour into our lives.
Lawrence was one of
them for me."*

– Eddie Koen



Shrimp étouffée is one of the many authentic dishes being served up at Bayou Bob's, in downtown Denver.

A study in spice: Bayou Bob's

By Christopher "Wilson" Schaaf

Colorado isn't generally known for its Cajun scene, but there are a few hidden gems in our area serving up that famous Louisiana flavor. Bayou Bob's is a Denver classic. Half bar, half restaurant, Bob's has been family owned and operated since 1986. Bob Hoffpauir himself was gracious enough to give a quick interview about his restaurant and had some sage words about Cajun cooking in general.

Tell me a little about yourself and what brought you to Colorado?

We'd come for skiing several times in the winter, but we'd never been to Colorado in the summer, and we just fell in love with it. We rented a house. I went

"Never understood the big giant plate, big prices and the little bitty portion thing."

— Bob Hoffpauir

back home and moved all my stuff up here. Didn't even have a job. I came up and I worked for Village Inn for about three weeks. We went around to some other restaurants that were supposed to be serving Cajun food and it was awful. It was not even close to real Cajun. So, in December of 1985, we opened a little food court over on Stout Street in the Rio Grande building. We had that place for about 3 1/2 years, just a little lunch counter and stuff. Then, in 1991 we opened around the corner. It was an old Kenmore building. But we've been here [next to the Paramount] since December of 1995.

I heard there were other locations. Did they close down?

Yes, unfortunately. I used to have one out south, but I had to close that one down. I actually sold

it in 2001. For about three years, I had one in the panhandle of Florida. Right out south of Pensacola. It was touristy and stuff; I didn't like it.

What is it you do here that makes your food super authentic?

We cook it up the old-fashioned way. We cook all of our roux in-house and make our own ketchup and dressings. We have 12 different seasoning blends: for catfish, for chicken, shrimp and alligator. These meats taste different, so we treat them different. All of our grilled, fried and blackened items are done to order. We don't pre-batter anything. So, when you order it, it's battered and fried right then. I get as much stuff from back home as I can. This is the food I was raised on, so it's very easy for me to cook it myself. These are my wife and I's recipes; one or two of them are family recipes. But I must say, those family recipes are just giant. Another example is peeled and deveined shrimp. Once they're frozen they don't act the same; it's hard to get that "opaque" look out of them. They taste funny too; they have that little rubbery texture. Because of that, we peel and devein them ourselves.

I heard you mention you had alligator on the menu? Tell me about that.

It really is alligator tail. We serve it two ways, fried or blackened. The trick of alligator tail is cutting it the right way. If you don't cut across the meat fiber grain it gets incredibly tough. It looks pretty, you have that whole loin and stuff, but that's the worst thing you could do with it. It's a pretty big seller.

Do you do any events in the Denver area?

We do Taste of Colorado. This coming year's going to be our 20th year. For that we sell right around a ton of alligator tail in four days. We also serve crawfish, etouffee and fried pickles. For the pickles, we use up 33 to 35, 5 gallon buckets. But people appreciate that we cook the food right there for them. They recognize the difference.

Bayou Bob's:

1635 Glenarm Place, Denver

Monday-Thursday, 11a.m.-9 p.m.
Saturday 11a.m.-10 p.m.

303.573.6828

Menu: urbanspoon.com

Was a lot of starting up this restaurant an investment on your part, or did you get the banks to help you out?

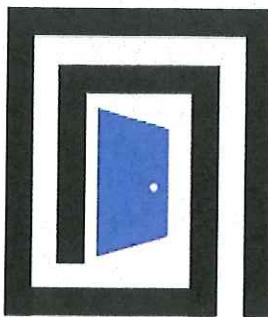
Actually, we've never had bank financing. Always paid for things in-house. I was lucky I had a bit of cash to start from, but we try to cash flow all our stuff. Whenever you're buying something from us, that money goes right back into the food. Debt load is much less too.

If that's so, and you've survived in this location for so long, the food here must be good then.

Oh, it is, and that's a hard thing to do. You see all these new places come in with big fancy buildings and tiny portions. It's hard to not want to reinvent yourself to be more like them, but I learned a long time ago: "Do what you do, and do it well." Never understood the big giant plate, big prices and the little bitty portion thing.

It's always interesting talking about Cajun flavor as well, simply because it seems like it's always changing and how one cook does his work is always different from another. What would you say is your favorite dish to cook here?

Now that's a hard question. I don't mean to be evasive, but I don't really have one. I just enjoy the whole experience, you know? Doesn't matter where I'm at or what I'm cooking. I'd rather be in the kitchen than anywhere else though. 



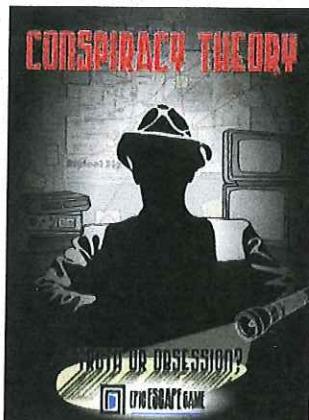
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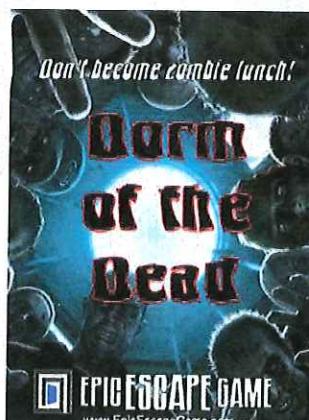
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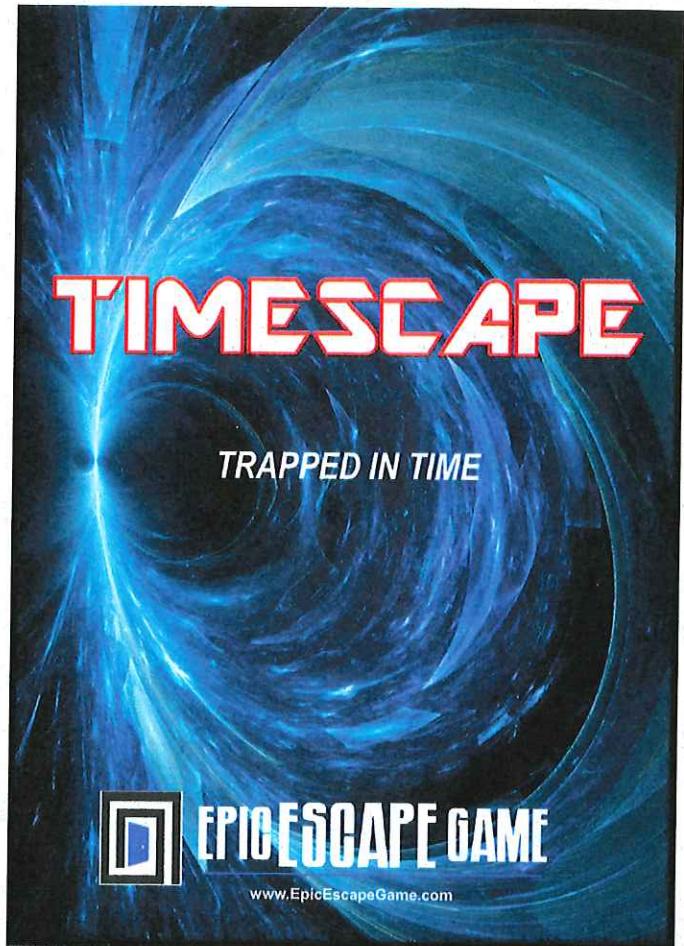
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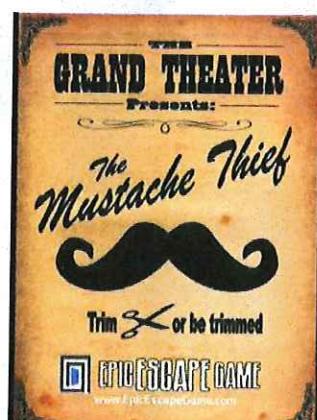
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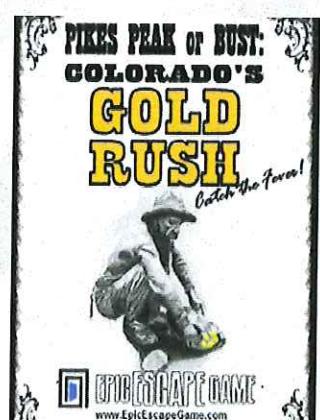
Dorm of the Dead



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Colorado's Gold Rush



Feminists, let us in

By Cheyenne DeChristopher

Long, frizzy hair cascades down bare backs as fingers adorned with chipping polish clutch homemade cardboard protest signs. Pink shirts and canvas satchels are covered in pins and buttons sharing images of vaginas and slogans like, "Fight Like A Girl" and "Pussy Power." Chants of sisterhood and reclaiming feminine sexuality rain out, meaning to induct participants into their feminist family but instead effectively outlining who does not have a place in this movement. What happens when you are a feminist but not a woman?

To be fluid in gender identity and expression while still being targeted by sexism creates a difficult space to live in. Personally, my gender identity cannot be contained within Western notions of binary systems. I am not just man or woman, straight or gay. I am both and yet something entirely different.

"Gender fluidity is not really feeling like

*"Let us
be not your
sisters, but
siblings in the
feminist family."*

you're at one end of the spectrum or the other. For the most part, I definitely don't identify as any gender. I'm not a guy; I don't really feel like a woman, but obviously I was born one. So, I'm somewhere in the middle, which – in my perfect imagination – is like having the best of both sexes," said Ruby Rose in an interview with Elle magazine.

Rose, an actor on the TV show "Orange is the New Black," is perhaps one of the most well known people to identify as genderfluid. Like Rose, I do not feel fully comfortable as masculine or feminine genders, instead I prefer muahu. For us Kanaka Maoli or Native Hawaiians, this is our term, which traditionally is used to describe a person who embodies both feminine and masculine spirits.

Regardless of my personal identity, however, I am still targeted by sexism as I am experienced by others as a woman. Therefore, I identify as a feminist and with the movement.



"Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression," wrote author, feminist and social activist Bell Hooks in "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center."

From this definition of what feminism is, one can also take note of what it is not. Feminism is not exclusionary.

Yes, the movement to end sexism began to help women and girls who were experiencing prejudice and discrimination based on their sex and gender; however, they are not the only group to face this.

Non-binary, genderqueer, fluid and others who do not necessarily identify as a woman are still experiencing oppression. Male dominance and patriarchal ideals continue to be normative and widespread in their influence on mainstream society.

We are all fighting against the same outdated and violent ideals that create the glass ceiling, rape culture, and contribute to the high murder rate of our black trans sisters. Our community needs just vary depending on the intersections of our identities. A white heterosexual woman will have different concerns from a queer person of color. It is in these differences, however, where exclusion occurs.

A discourse has been created within the

feminist community to continually celebrate vaginas and breasts as symbols of femininity. A group who also uses cisnormative language of "women" and "girl" to describe its members pushes me out. Not all women have vaginas, and not just women experience sexism.

How can I join this fight if I am not welcomed in by its participants?

Yes, often in my gender expression I receive passing privilege, which is to say that I pass as a woman. Often I can go undetected in these spaces if I say nothing and allow myself to be misgendered by those who constantly preach words of encouragement and community support, and then I can join the movement.

This, however, is not right. Not only is it violent and unacceptable to misgender rightful participants, but also those who do not have the same ability as myself cannot be pushed out of the movement.

So I ask feminists, our sisters, to create and hold space for us. Try to expand narrow, heteronormative and cisnormative definitions of womanhood that have been used since the beginning.

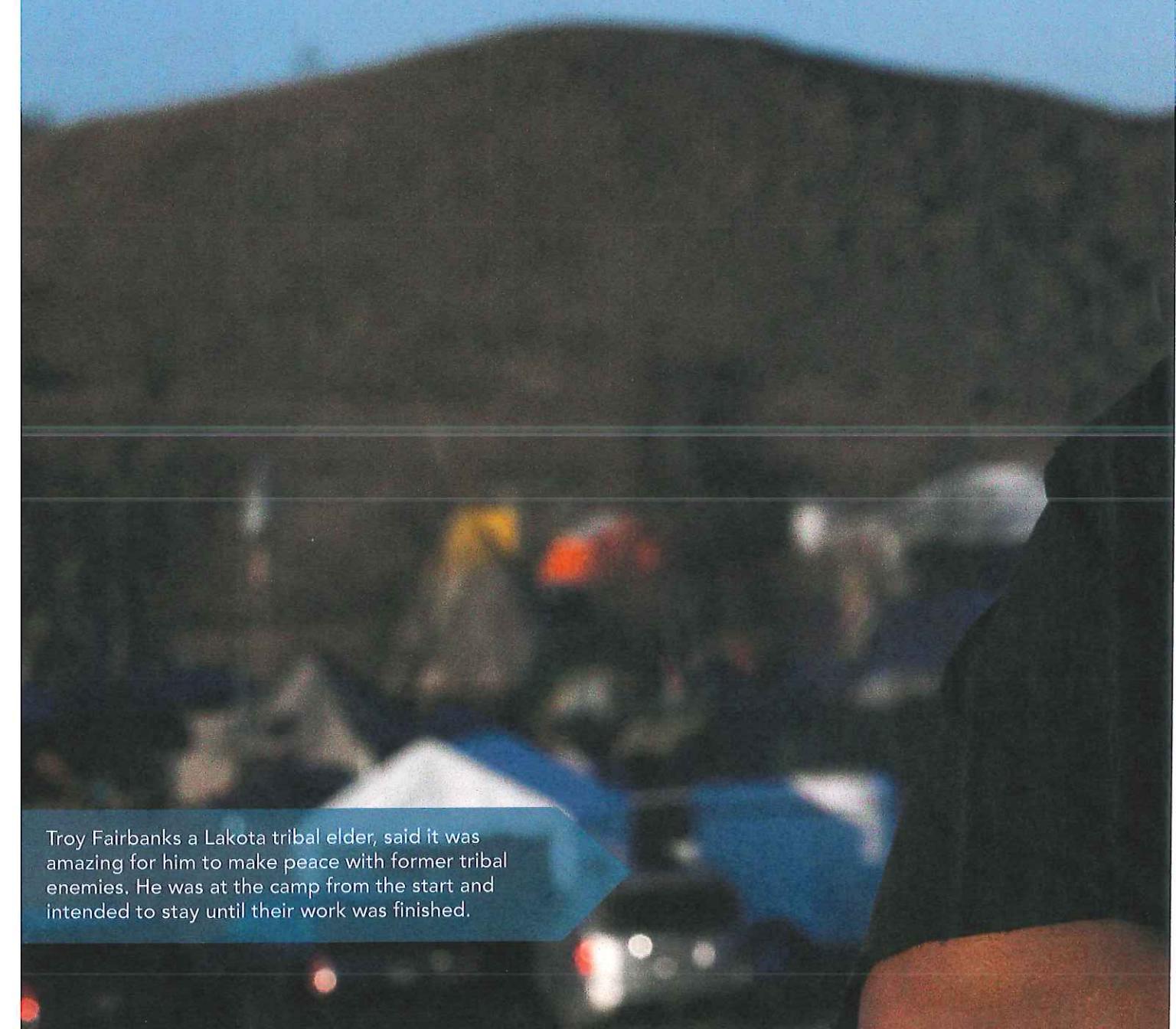
We belong in the movement and have just as much right to fight for the injustices we face as fluid people. 

STANDING ROCK

A REFLECTION IN THE WATER

By **Jasmine Krapf**

From April to December of 2016, various Native American tribes, military veterans, celebrities and ordinary citizens stood in solidarity near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline. During the course of two weeks in November, four Met Media journalists covered the event. This is their story.



Troy Fairbanks a Lakota tribal elder, said it was amazing for him to make peace with former tribal enemies. He was at the camp from the start and intended to stay until their work was finished.

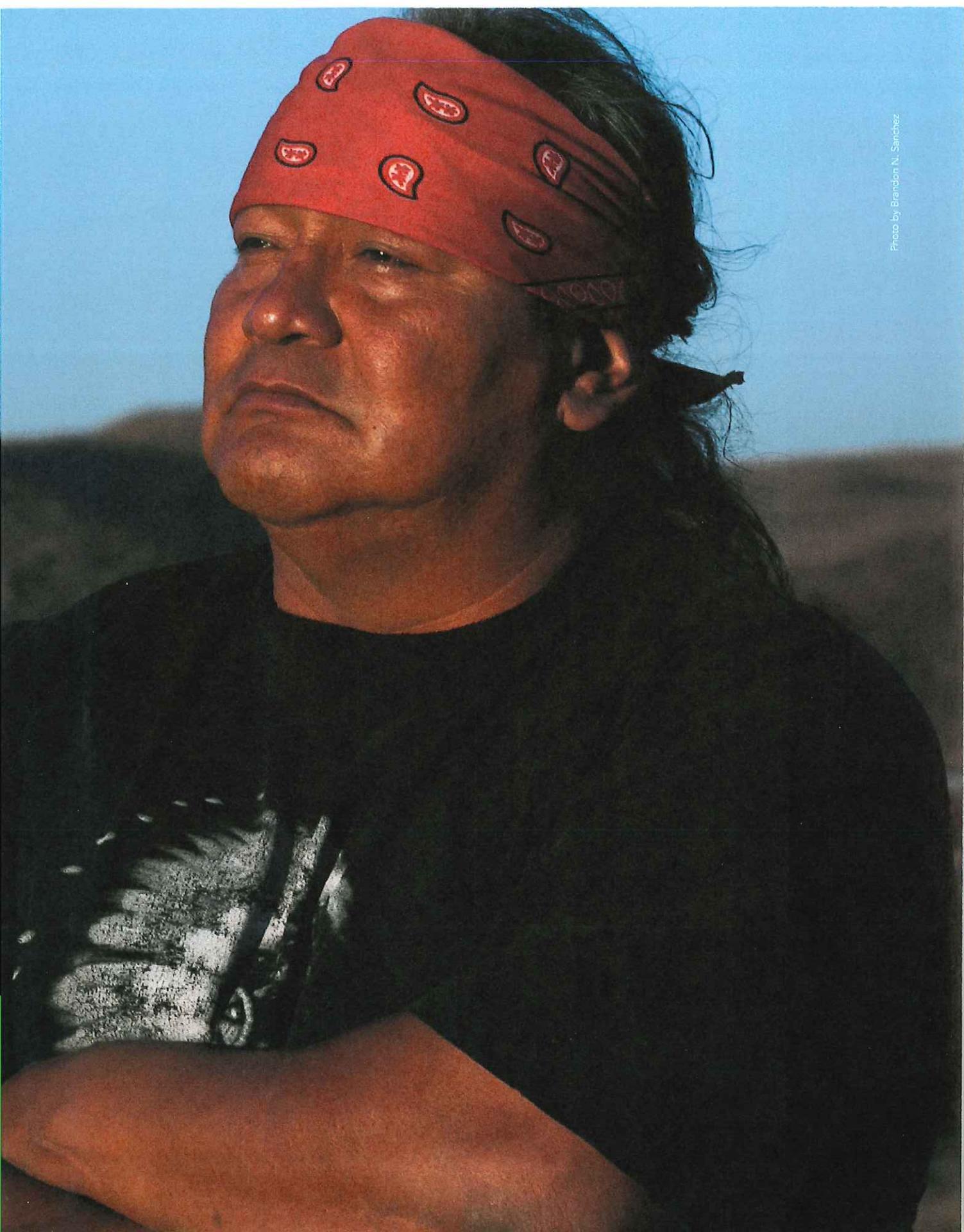


Photo by Brandon N. Sanchez

THE SEVEN LAKOTA VALUES:

Prayer. Respect. Compassion. Honesty. Generosity. Humility. Wisdom.

It happened just a day's drive from Denver where the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and their native and non-native allies resisted the Dakota Access Pipeline – aka killing The Black Snake. According to many, including news outlet NPR, it was the most significant indigenous mobilization of Turtle Island. Many, including Harold Monteau of Indian Country Today, considered it to be "environmental racism," an example of a specific type of discrimination in which people of color are expected to endure and accept unsafe or harmful living conditions for capitalism's business as usual. This simply furthered the point that the brown bodies of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation were being valued less than the white bodies of Bismarck. And when the Standing Rock Sioux decidedly set up camp to protect the water and defend the land, their voices were continually suppressed by media blackouts and heavily militarized police force.

Days and nights passed while planes and helicopters continuously circled overhead. Horse hooves moved through the brush kicking up dust. We fed wood into the mouths of fires to build heat and made jokes to lighten the heaviness in our hearts. My first day in camp was spent taking the nonviolent direct action training with Robert Chanate, a Denver resident and indigenous trainer with the Indigenous Peoples Power Project who offers NVDA trainings in the Denver area. Chanate recently said to me, "I believe we all have talents and skills to bring forth when we confront

"Days and nights passed while planes and helicopters continuously circled overhead."

Protesters stood on a hill in an act of civil disobedience on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2016, at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.



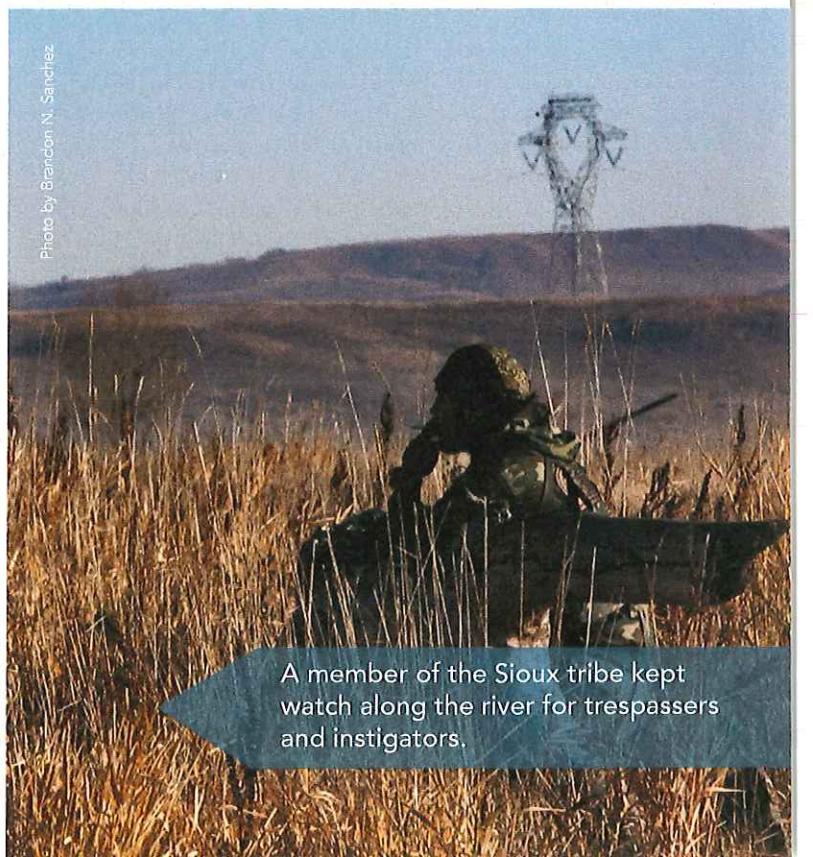
injustice. We can all take action to make positive change in our communities."

I stayed in the Očhéthi Šakowin (Seven Council Fires) ceremonial camp with the midwives of the ever-evolving Mni Wiconi Midwifery Field Clinic. Like many, I ate canned food and fell asleep late in the night after all the voices began to finally hush. Every morning just as the sun was about to rise, we woke to the sound of a booming voice: "Good morning, Warriors!" There at Standing Rock, corporatocracy and state-sanctioned violence were met with overwhelming hope, courage and relentless, fire-breathing resiliency. While this specific movement was one of the most high-profile indigenous resistances in North America, it was nothing new, nor an isolated event.



Photo by Carl Glenn Payne

I sat by the fire outside the midwives' yurt nearly every night lost in thought. My winter coat was stained with black ink from hours of screen printing large patches for protectors to wear on the front lines. The sound of crackling firewood and the scents of cedar and sage hung in the frigid air of the high plains of what is now known as Cannon Ball, North Dakota. I felt honored to contribute to the ever-expanding midwifery clinic, even if in small ways like organizing medical supplies or labeling herbs. The clinic was founded by midwives Melissa Rose, Carolina Reyes and Nicolle Gonzales, three powerfully determined indigenous women and activists. I was lucky enough to be invited to the blessing ceremony for the yurt alongside five other women staying there, all midwives. Although I personally was there to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux and not necessarily to offer my women's health services, I felt incredibly fortunate to share space with these women, Rose and Reyes being the



A member of the Sioux tribe kept watch along the river for trespassers and instigators.



Photo by Sara Hertwig

two whose presence was unwavering in times of desperate medical need in camp.

From my lens, the land was not being occupied by violent rioters as some conservative media outlets touted; it was being rightfully reclaimed by the original inhabitants of Turtle Island, the name some indigenous groups use for North America. Native people were being called trespassers on land that is historically and ancestrally theirs, long before the Sioux were forcibly corralled onto reservations like Standing Rock. Article 3 of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie clearly states: "the United States bind themselves to protect the aforesaid Indian nations against the commission of all depredations by the people of the said United States, after the ratification of this treaty." This means that the U.S. government swore to protect the Sioux (and other nations specified in the treaty) from devastation or destruction once the treaty was official. Yet here we were.

Throughout history, indigenous people have resisted the bulldozing effects of

imperialism and the perpetual pathologies of colonization. At Standing Rock, the sacred indigenous ritual of prayer and ceremony brought immense strength and softness to the resistance, reminding many of our shared humanity.

Perhaps most notable about Standing Rock was the powerful unity of hundreds of tribes standing in solidarity for the first time in over a hundred years. What was infuriating, though not surprising, was the barbaric force employed by way of the police state motivated by the private corporations involved, like Energy Transfer Partners and Sunoco Logistics.

Rubber bullets, water cannons in freezing temperatures, concussion grenades, pepper spray, batons and other aggressive tactics were used against people who had "the right to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Many experienced chronic stress simply from relentless surveillance. The construction site flooded the camps with every light from across the water at



Photo by Sara Hartwig

night, a constant reminder of the pipeline's looming existence. Police lined the hills with binoculars waiting for protectors to mobilize. Even in prayer and ceremony, people were dehumanized and terrorized. Some were irreparably injured, including a young woman's arm, by way of concussion grenade.

Water protectors and independent media, like Unicorn Riot, West Coast Women Warriors Media Cooperative, Digital Smoke Signals and Indigenous Environmental Network (to name a few), documented these types of confrontations with police. Journalists were arrested, their drones and cameras confiscated. Morton County police were joined by multiple state police agencies, and private security contractors were hired to protect the vested interests of these corporations so they could forcibly continue their relentless agenda, despite valid concern for clean water and sacred sites. I received no response from the Morton County Sheriff's Department after several attempts to contact for comment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued

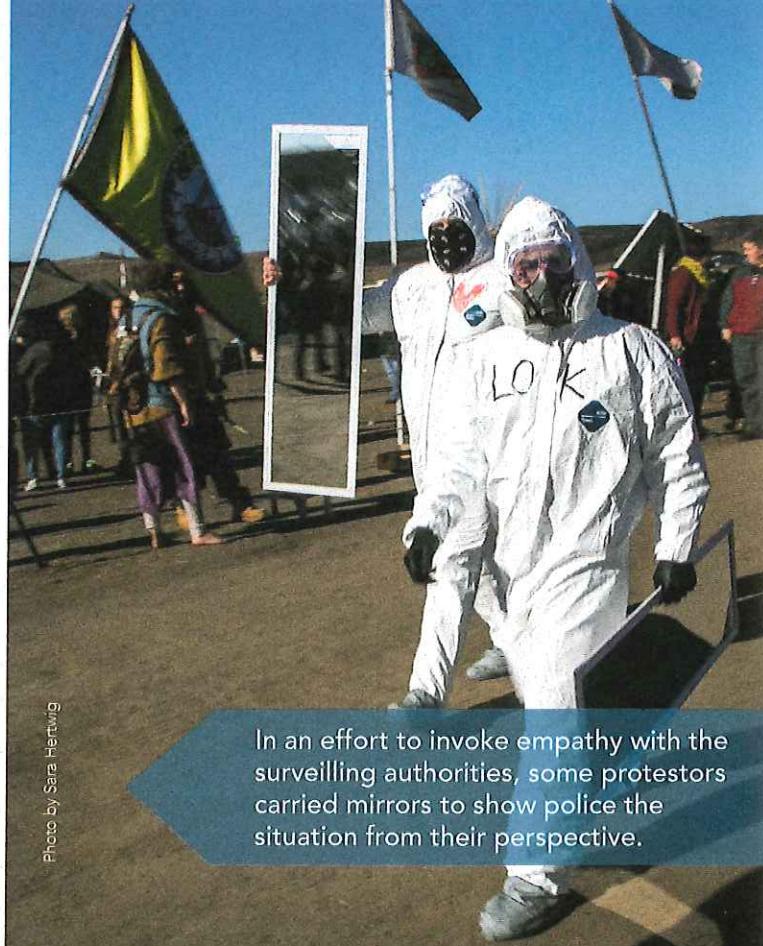


Photo by Sara Hartwig

In an effort to invoke empathy with the surveilling authorities, some protestors carried mirrors to show police the situation from their perspective.



Photo by Brandon N. Sanchez

Tribal flags from various native groups flew along the main road of the Sacred Stone Camp in Cannon Ball, North Dakota.

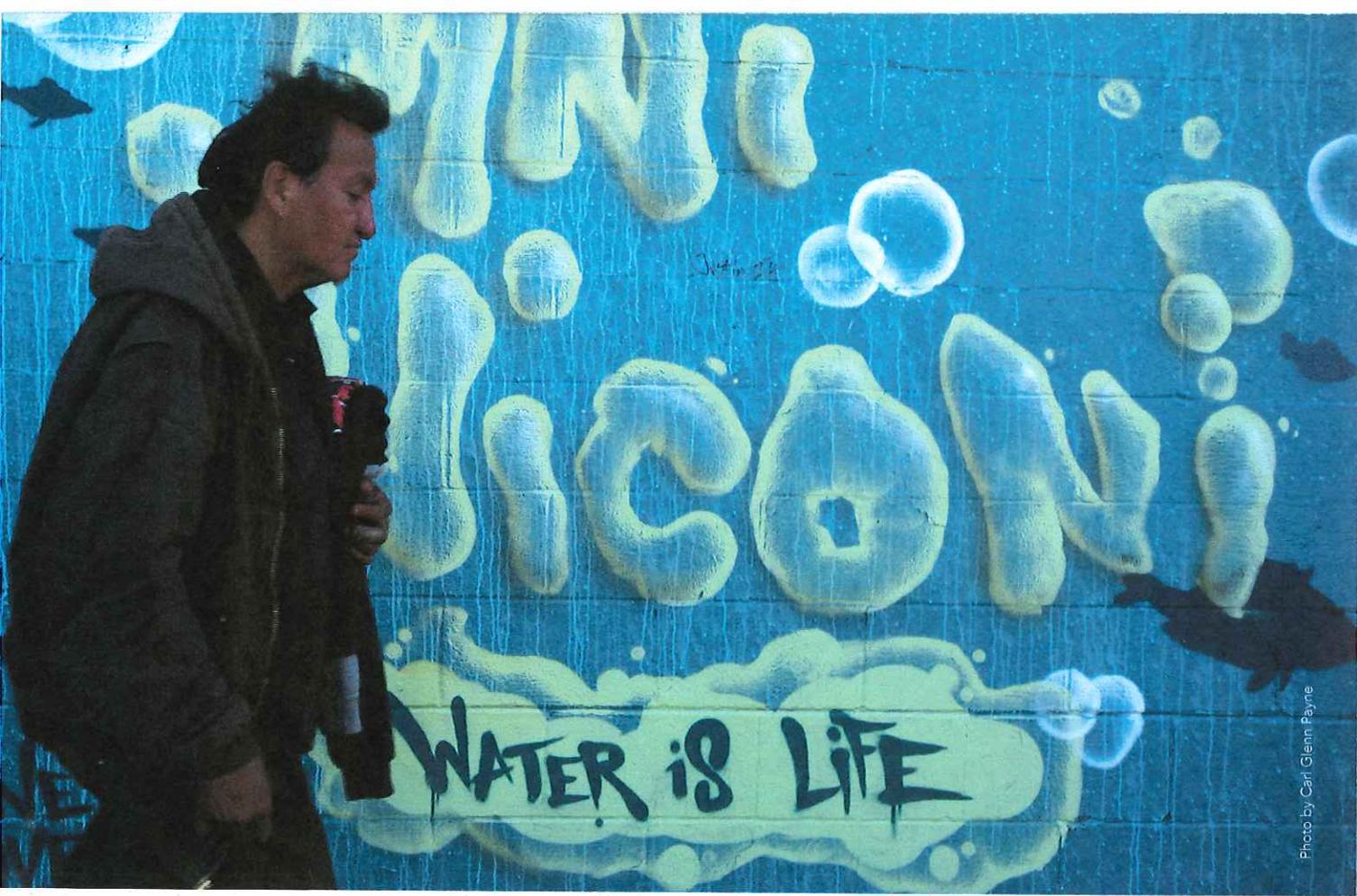


Photo by Carl Glenn Payne

a statement of plans to evict the camps on Dec. 5. Yet, after cohorts of U.S. military veterans showed up to stand in solidarity, easement of the pipeline crossing was surprisingly then denied on the 4th, just a day shy of a threatened eviction. It was a cascade of celebratory events and skepticism that took place during a white-out blizzard on the high plains. Even with the easement denial, some fear this is still only the beginning. ETP and Sunoco are on record as being committed to completing the project.

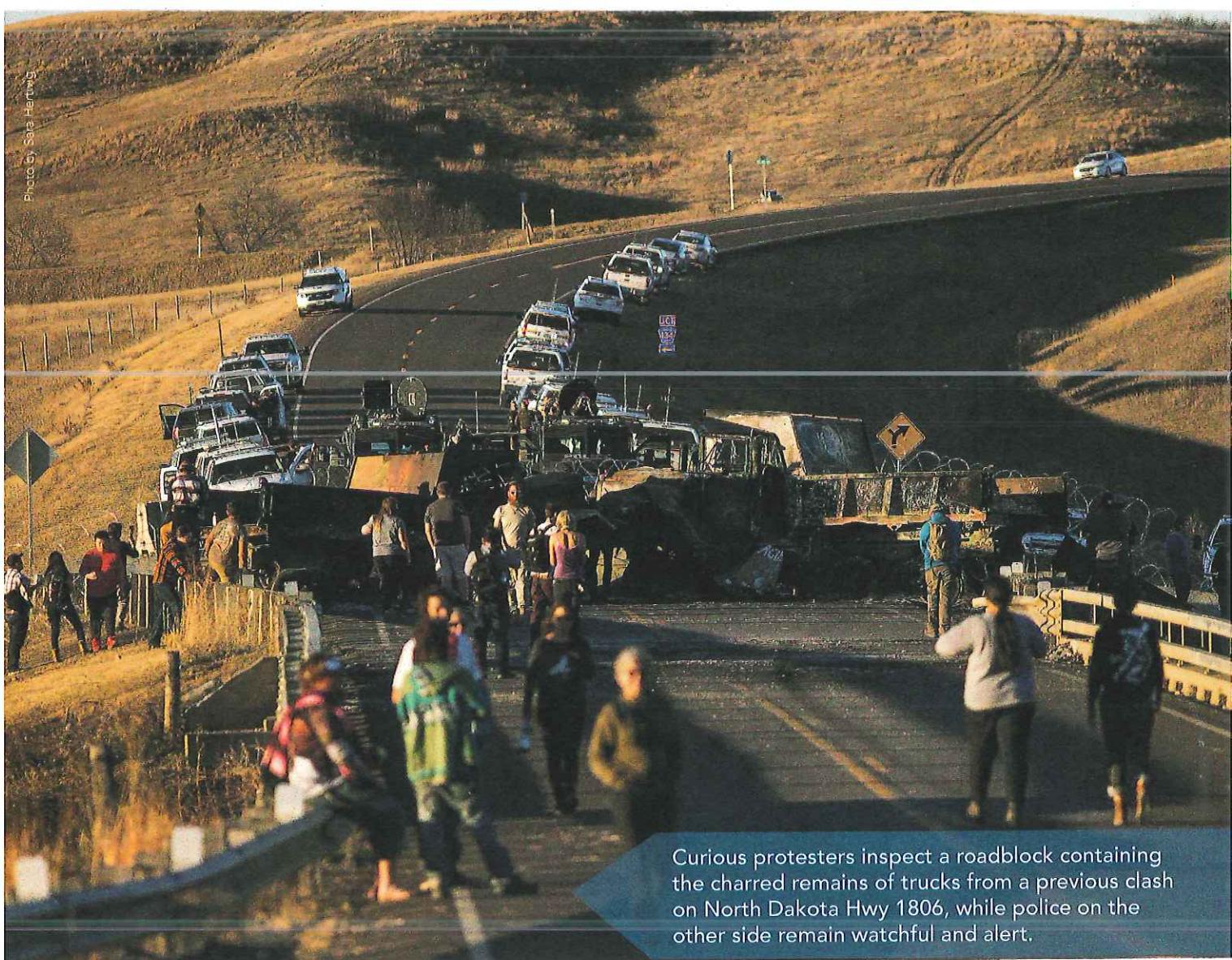
With the start of the new year, and the pipeline failing to be operational by Jan. 1, shipping companies were scheduled to reevaluate their investment contracts,

leaving the pipeline in serious financial jeopardy. Many were concerned that the Trump administration would reverse the decision to proceed, despite the Army Corps' denial of easement.

On Jan. 24, with only a few days into his presidency, Donald Trump signed two executive orders aimed at advancing the Dakota Access Pipeline and reversing Obama's rejection of the TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline.

The pipeline resistance originally encompassed issues of human rights violations and a history of broken treaties, but in its wake brought a whole new level of awareness to the urgent need for active analysis and

"When we reflect back and look at the sprawling radiance of North America, we notice that every major pipeline must cross indigenous land."



Curious protesters inspect a roadblock containing the charred remains of trucks from a previous clash on North Dakota Hwy 1806, while police on the other side remain watchful and alert.

solution-driven critiques of the entire fossil fuel industry. Yet some still seem to believe that crude oil is our only legitimate energy option for the foreseeable future, including a pipeline worker, Jordan Cook, who said, "The pipeline is the safest way of transportation of the crude. When done via trucks and trains, they can crash, derail and kill many people in the process." When I mentioned the high potentiality for leaks and the devastating effects of oil contamination, he simply said, "I have more pipe to blast and paint so it can go to the line."

Although the people of Standing Rock stood strong against the pipeline, other projects have been approved and permits granted, like ETP's Trans-Pecos and Comanche Trail pipelines, which were authorized

just last year. Both pipelines will cross the border into Mexico and are proposed to be installed beneath the Rio Grande River, causing significant and irreversible impacts on water and indigenous land, not unlike the notorious Dakota Access.

According to many tribes, we are existing within the fabric of a prophesied reality now. Many cultures, including the people of Standing Rock, are a mix of prayerful resistance and steadfast defiance. As humans, fire is our mantra and water is our right. When we reflect back and look at the sprawling radiance of North America, we notice that every major pipeline must cross indigenous land. And that is but one of the many reasons this fight is far from over. **m**



Photo by Brandon N. Sanchez

Photo by Brandon N. Sanchez



Traveling 1,400 miles over eight days, a convoy of four vans and five young runners arrived in Cannon Ball, North Dakota. The group, from Prescott, Arizona, ran in an effort to raise awareness and to join the NoDAPL protests. Their journey was organized by 15 year-old Riley Ortega of Hopi and Navajo heritage.

Photo by Sara Hartwig

The gay's gaze: Bedding the dead

By Adam Barnhardt

Last year was an interesting time for films, to say the least. 2016 saw the release of several taboo film themes, and one striking and hilarious outlier on necrophilia. For those who are privileged enough not to know what necrophilia is, it's sex with a corpse. Now, I know what you're wondering; Why is a gay-oriented column in a college magazine talking about necrophilia? How could the two possibly coalesce? Well, I'm here to tell you that not only is this a reoccurring theme in many queer films, but also it has erupted into the mainstream like a zombie from the grave.

"Swiss Army Man" by directors Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert is a film starring Paul Dano as Hank and Daniel Radcliffe as the dead body, Manny. This film follows a stranded runaway attempting suicide on a desert island when he is met by a flatulent, magical corpse. This corpse can talk, has a series of amazing abilities, including starting fires, purifying water and becoming a human Jet Ski. In their travels to find civilization, they talk about a multitude of personal topics ranging from dating to masturbation.

The two reenact Hank's failed attempts at wooing a girl, and these performances build a palpable romantic tension. At another point, the two fall into a lake and Manny the corpse

"Taboo is something queer people understand better than most."

begins to sink. Hank struggles to save him until the two of them kiss and miraculously begin to breathe underwater. This deep and powerful moment is shortly interrupted by the both of them rocketing to the surface on the wings of an almighty fart delivered by Manny.

Another film is "The Neon Demon," by director Nicholas Winding Refn. This film follows the character Jesse, played by Elle Fanning, as she climbs the supermodel ranks in California. She enters a Mean Girls-esque hierarchy of the modeling world, making assorted frenemies along the way. It is apparent throughout the film that something grotesquely sinister is bubbling under the surface of this beauty-obsessed landscape.

Jesse meets Ruby, a makeup artist who develops an obsession with her. Her infatuation is made ostensible when she sexually assaults Jesse. I should also mention that Ruby moonlights as, you guessed it, a mortuary makeup artist. So, naturally, Ruby begins to take out her sexual frustrations on her dead customers, all the while fantasizing about Jesse.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You think my judgment has been corrupted by smut. Let me explain: Taboo is something queer people understand better than most. Be it a wincing face at our displays of affection or a critical eye on our appearance as a whole. For years, queer filmmakers have used taboo to tackle



Graphic by Ethan Casady & Maddi Troisi

these issues, like John Waters' "Desperate Living" or Bruce LaBruce's "Otto: or Up With Dead People." Both films utilized shock to build a narrative around what it's like to seem repulsive by normative society.

The Boy-Scout-fever-dream that was this year's "Swiss Army Man" used the taboo subject of necrophilia to talk about mortality. It is, ultimately, a movie about suicide. This story follows an isolated person whose suicide is postponed by a dead body who becomes his trusted ally. You can read the character of Manny as being a literally magic dead body, or a reflection of the protagonist's decision to kill himself. Hank showed Manny the deepest facets of his nature and loved him for it, regardless of his condition.

"The Neon Demon" is different. This film uses necrophilia to paint a terrifying picture of

obsession. Ruby has sex with corpses because she desires a living bedfellow in Jesse. Her obsession ultimately culminates in the form of exocannibalism, or the act of eating one's enemy to gain their powers. The causalities of the beauty industry are on parade in this film, namely women and the culture that imposes its unattainable standard of beauty on them.

In the most unwholesome, cringe-worthy and NSFW manner, these films managed to enter some very subconscious territory, be it in the form of feeling isolated from society, or in the way our culture and society dictates our perceived value. Characters in both films grappled with homosexuality in its rawest forms. Though neither of these portrayals is necessarily affirmative, they both display an intangible struggle between our perceptions and our realities. 

Truth about love: Vera Valentine

By Dayna L. Himot

Growing up, Vera Valentine felt muzzled, suppressed and alone. She began writing her pain out at the age of 12, but the poet pen name Valentine would not manifest itself for another 25 years in 2013. Birthed from the author's feelings of betrayal when her husband left her for another woman, and abandoned by love, Valentine's words began to bleed out via ink on paper. From the depths of her shattered heart, a voice began to speak on behalf of the darkness within. Valentine insists she is closer to strangers than her own blood-related family. Through her words, Valentine has helped other members of the broken hearts club, all while giving herself permission to feel again.

Valentine feels that her poetry represents people who are hurting and on a journey to find their self-worth. Her goal is to validate people's pain from narcissistic abuse. "Vera makes people feel safe to express their emotions they might otherwise repress. She has helped me discover my own self-worth, and she has helped me love myself," Valentine said of her poet persona.

If one looks closely, he or she would see that Valentine has at least three or four journals

in every corner of her home. Writing poetry consumes her at all hours of the day and night. Her passion to write out the pain and heartbreak even commands her to break sleep patterns and write what she refers to as dream poetry, which is inspired by spirit guides.

Over the years, Valentine has built a large fan base on Tumblr and Instagram, and she has over 30,000 followers on Facebook. She writes about pain and catastrophic heartbreak, and when in love, she writes about love. "Vera has given me a voice...a voice that I have always had a hard time expressing," Valentine said.

In addition to the dramatic forces at play in love and loss, light and dark, Vera also draws her inspiration from deep, dark bassy electronic minimalist music. She is a photographer and a source of creative inspiration to people in emotional pain all over the world. After three years of a diligent daily writing practice, she is self-publishing a collection of 50 poems on heartbreak and emotion on Amazon titled "Hemorrhaging Ink," to be released in February 2017. **m**

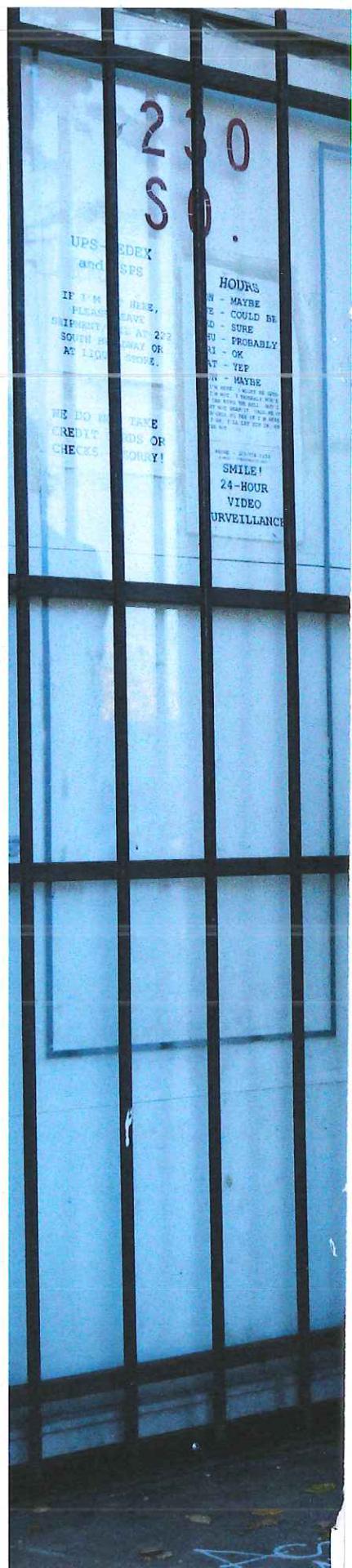




Photo by Dayna L. Hirsh

I TRIED TO WRITE THE ACHING FROM ME

Til my fingertips were numb
And my bones hollowed
But you were obstinately lodged
Inside my flesh
No matter how often I tried to
purge you
You taunted me with memories
Etching your name
Into my bones
Like lovers names on a tree
Reading do not forget me
-Vera Valentine

MY OFFER

Is off the table
And I feel relieved at your absence
I can't save you
I won't
Flee if you must
But don't run to me
I am shining on my own
And I don't need your shadow
Looming over me
-Vera Valentine

DWELL

I have spent over 3 months in solitude.

I have immersed myself in my own darkness, healing wounds that continually bleed.

Like a cat I soothe and clean my cuts.

With the scritch scratch of sandpaper tongue, I whittle down the hurt until it is polished like a tumbled stone.

The pain is ebbing; but will dwell eternally in my bones.

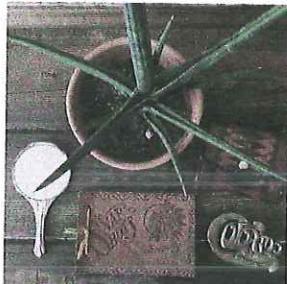
-Vera Valentine



/Veravalentinethepoet



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Beautiful bodies of burlesque

By Maria Muller

Upon entering the comfortable-looking bar with its worn wooden tables and chairs, and beaten up barstools, one might completely miss the unassuming stage that sits right next to the front door. But only if the show hasn't started. There is no ignoring the beautiful bodies that perform at Tennyson Tap in the show "Punk Rock Burlesque." Dancers of every body type dressed in elaborate costumes take to the stage to captivate the audience. Each member of the troupe has a different stage presence, but all have an empowering confidence that ensures every eye will be on them.

"It's about embracing self-love and knowing there are other standards of beauty."

– Squeaky

Every first, third and fifth Tuesday of the month, the performers are allowed four minutes to express creativity, political views, feminism and self-love...and they do this with a vengeance.

Squeaky, named for her high-pitched, unique voice, assembled the troupe, bringing them to Tennyson Tap over two years ago. She is the producer, emcee and choreographer.

"We started out once a month," Squeaky said. "It went well and they wanted us once a week."

That was a little too much for the single mother of three, who works other jobs as well, so they agreed on every other week.

Leonard Apodaca, the general manager of Tennyson Tap, is always impressed with the shows and the time and effort put into them.

"There's a misconception that compares burlesque dancers to strippers, but this is a real art form," Apodaca said.

"They come up with so many themes, you can see the same girl do a different dance and not realize that was her until the end."

The troupe performers choreograph their dances

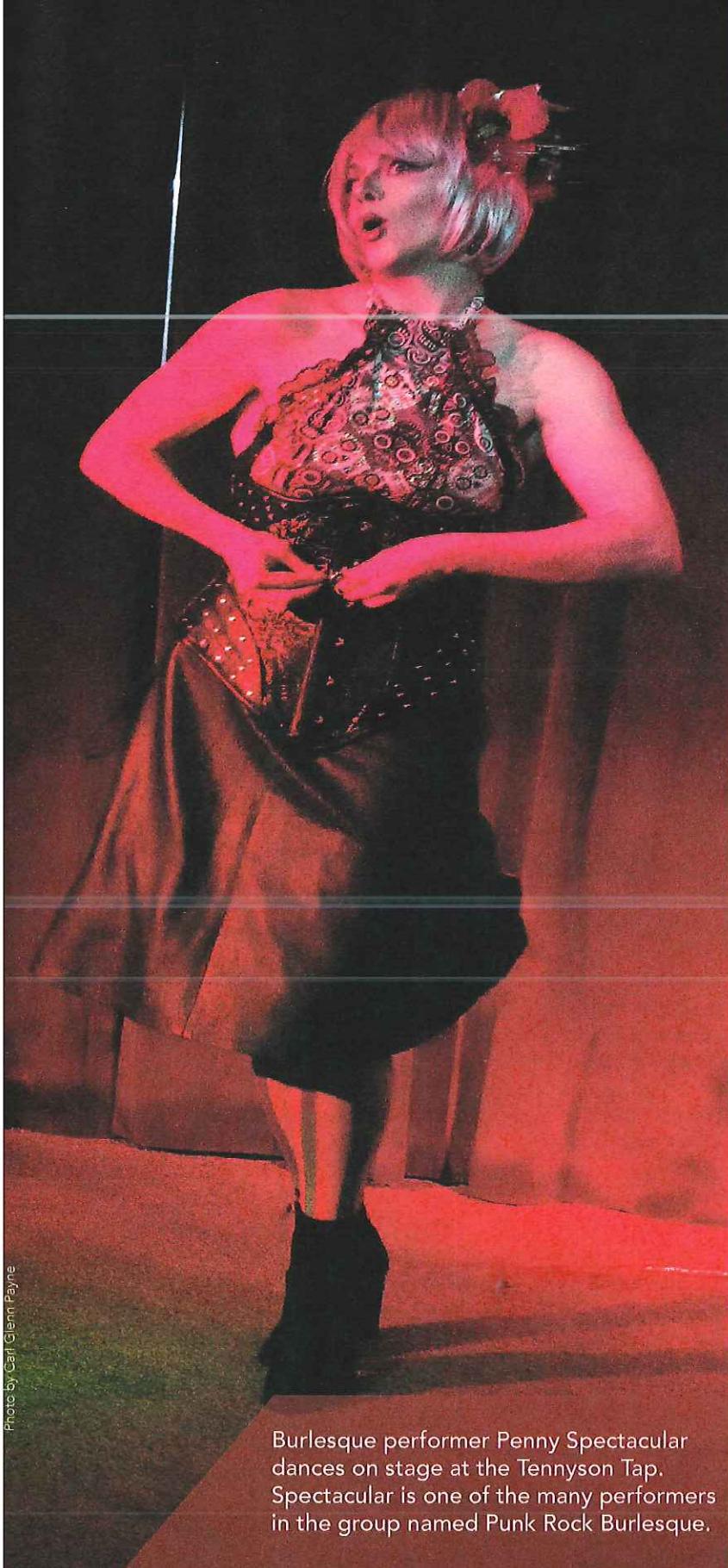
and make their own costumes, sharing ideas and encouraging one another. The dancers are as much a family as a troupe. There is no body-shaming. There is no judging size or gender. There is only the freedom of boldly showing off every part of themselves through dance and ideas. Some of the dances make very serious statements, tackling subjects like cancer, conspiracies, violence and Donald Trump.

Expression is very empowering for these dancers. Squeaky, who began as a dancer, said that this art form made her feel more confident in her 30s than she had ever felt in her 20s.

"'Punk Rock Burlesque' is for 'Every Body,'" Squeaky said. "It's about embracing self-love and knowing there are other standards of beauty."

At the age of 54, Sugar Monroe proves that age does not define beauty or limits. The audience shouts their love as she shimmies seductively out of her coat, revealing a red, naughty Ms. Santa outfit beneath. Monroe, who started dancing three years ago, watched her friend perform and thought it was beautiful and artistic.

"I thought, I can do that," Monroe said. "I think burlesque is super personal. It's about accepting



Burlesque performer Penny Spectacular dances on stage at the Tennyson Tap. Spectacular is one of the many performers in the group named Punk Rock Burlesque.

*Tennyson Tap is located at 4335 W. 38th Ave. in Denver
Hours: weekends, noon-2 a.m. & weekdays, 4 p.m.-2 a.m.*

ourselves and where we are and how we feel about our bodies."

Monroe doesn't always feel stage ready but the sound of the crowd gives her motivation to go on.

"There are days I'm not feeling super sexy, and I still get nervous before each performance, but when I hear my name, I'm just on. Being on stage makes me confident," Monroe said.

Many of the performers have a background in theater and dance. Parker Go Peep, who does guest performances at Tennyson Tap, shows off her skills in an energy-infused dance reminiscent of "Flashdance." She studied classical dancing, ballet and jazz, eventually integrating burlesque two years ago. In a flurry of bends and twists she hits the floor with the splits, and then bounces right back for an erotic shower.

"I'm not a small girl - ballet is not for big girls, and I've felt crappy about myself," Go Peep said. "I saw these people performing at the Clock Tower and they were moving themselves every way and they were all different sizes, and I wanted to do that."

She reached out to Squeaky and began doing guest performances at Tennyson Tap. "She's shown me so much love. The troupe is like family. When a troupe member is having a bad time or needs something, they're there for each other," Parker said.

For this troupe, there is no skinny-shaming or cattiness. It doesn't matter what size, age or gender. Everybody is received the same, and a beautiful body is defined by confidence, acceptance and the happiness that radiates from it. **m**



Photos by Carl Glenn Payne

Artist Spotlight: **KEATON OSTENDORF**

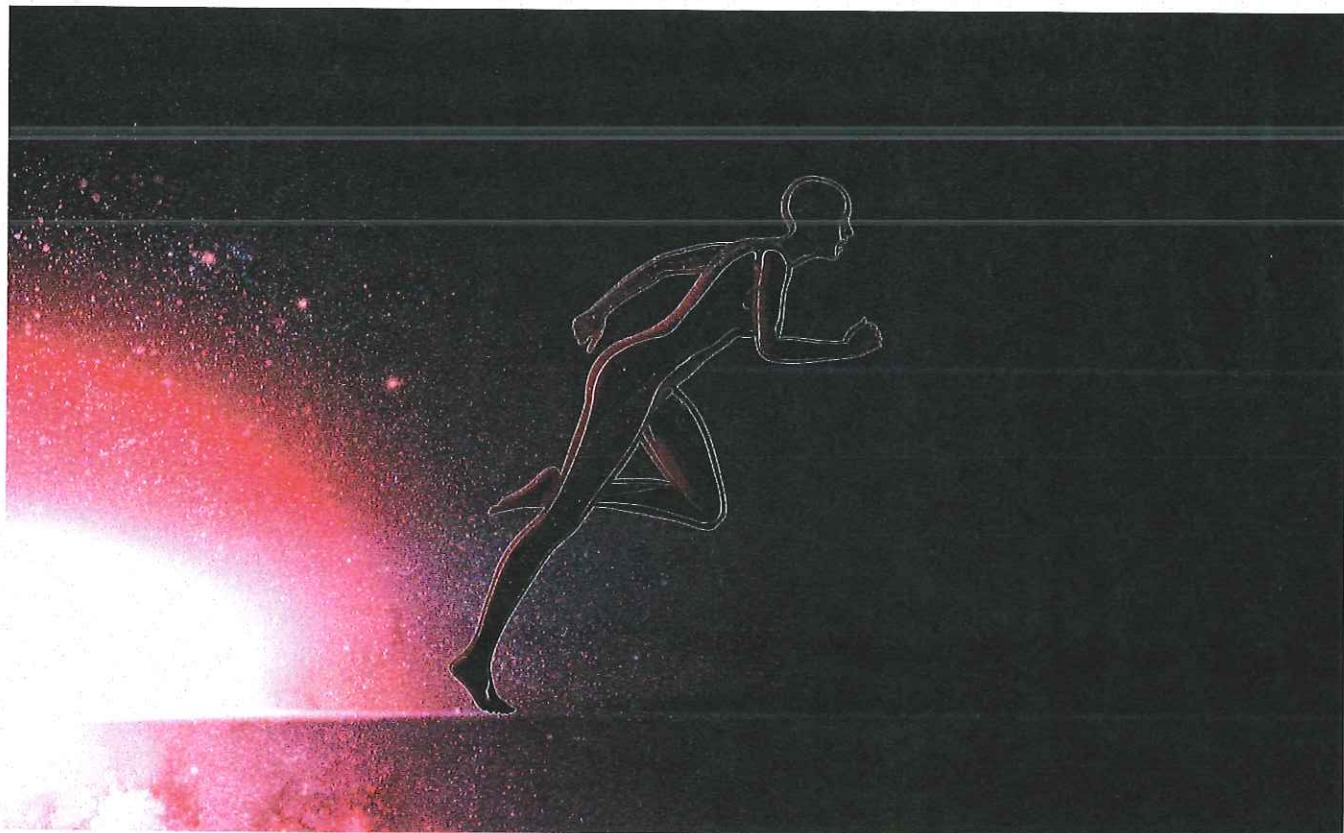
Plexus (detail) Displacement Series,
5.5" x 16.5", 2016





Top: Plexus Expanded, Displacement Series, 5.5" x 16.5", 2016

Bottom: The Runner (detail) Displacement Series, 5.5" x 16.5", 2016





Bottom: Desolate Space (detail) Displacement Series, 5.5" x 16.5", 2016

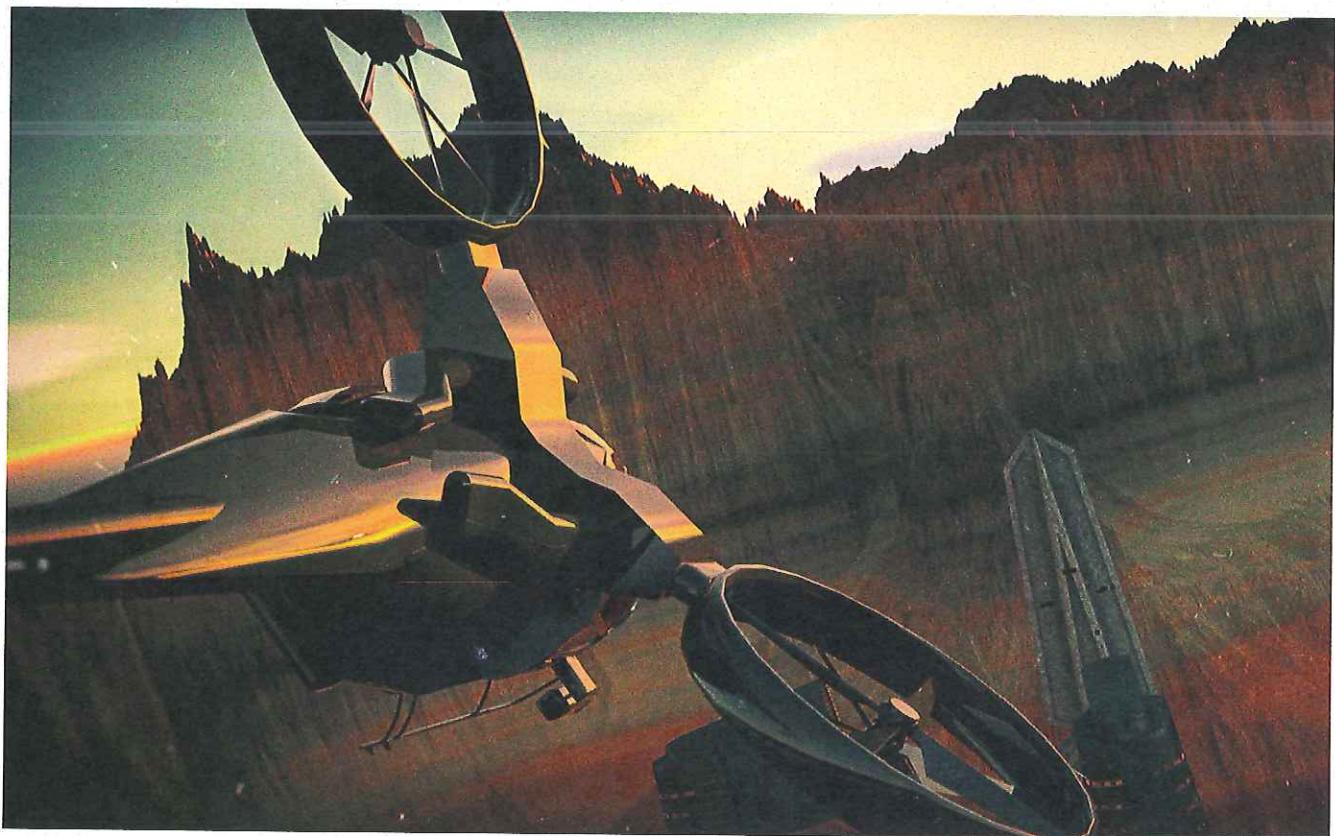
Art by Keaton Ostendorf

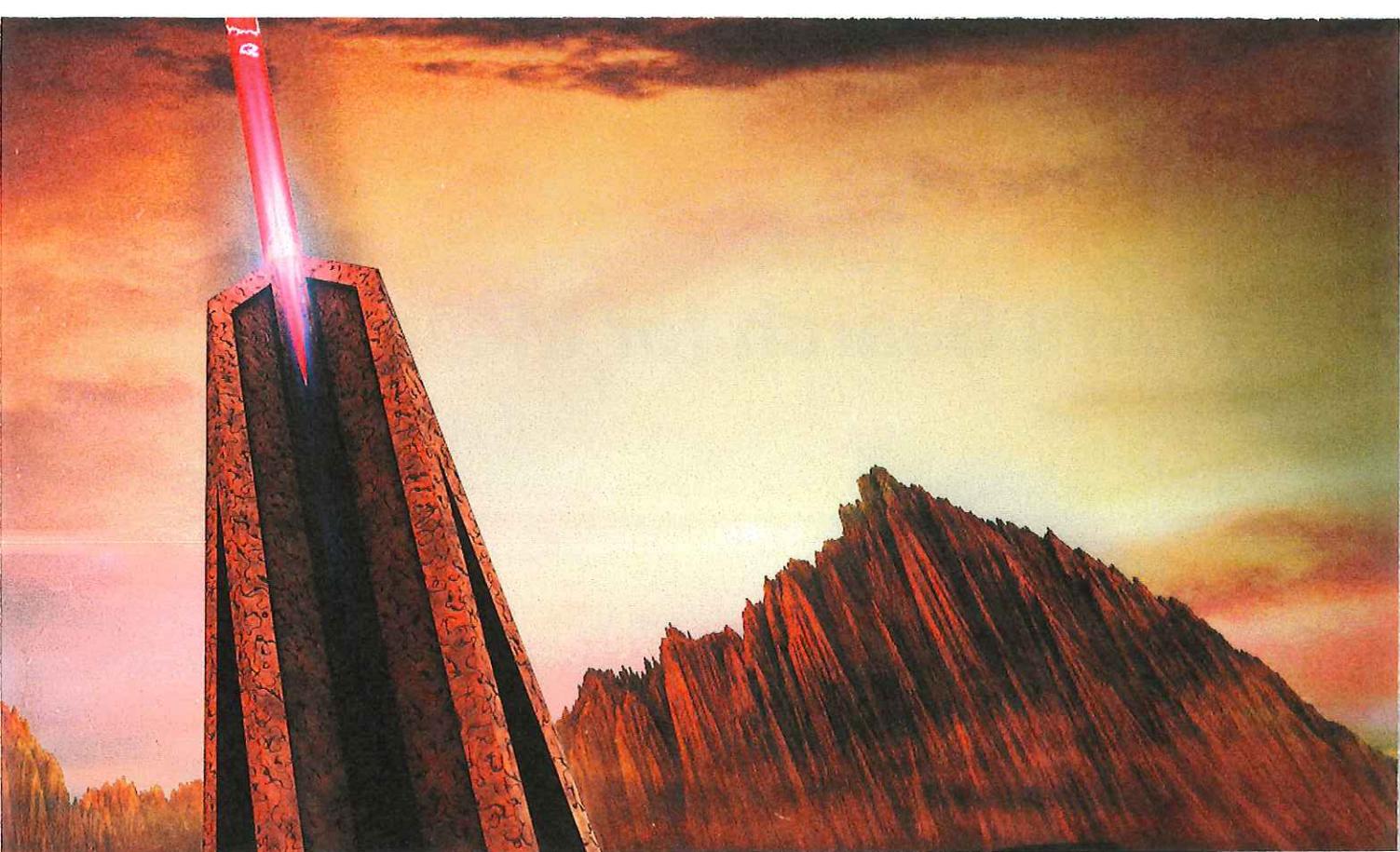




Top: Escape, Tome II Series, 5.5" x 16.5", 2016

Bottom: Birds Eye (detail) Tome II Series, 5.5" x 16.5", 2016





@k_ostendorf



/kostendorf

“ The work I chose to submit came from two projects I created for a Communication Design course, Zeromile and 'Zines I. The first four pages are cropped details of images taken from Displacement, a zine created as a series of style frames showing a loose progression through time and space as an android searches for a nebulous object intended to hold untold amounts of data and sensitive information. Displacement, was created as an exploration of form and meaning through the design of representational and non-representational structures. The last two images are details from the second edition of Displacement where the story is continued on Earth. These projects served as an opportunity to expand my digital illustration skills by integrating 3-D modeling applications into my workflow. Programs used consist of Cinema 4D, World Machine, Daz Studio, Mandelbulb and Photoshop. ” - Keaton Ostendorf

Imbue review: “Man’s Search for Meaning”

By Jenni Rukavina

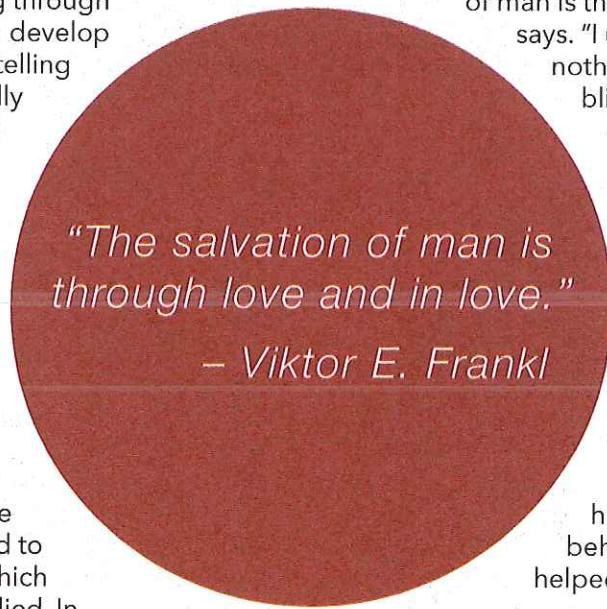
In “Man’s Search for Meaning,” author Viktor E. Frankl teaches readers his philosophy for spiritual survival and how his experiences living through imprisonment helped him develop his theories. Frankl’s storytelling is powerful and emotionally moving while maintaining an analytic tone.

Written in 1946, the book is a reflection of the torrid times in World War II. The first half of the book walks the reader through what Frankl experienced in the Auschwitz concentration camp, decisions he made and ways that he managed to survive, and the ways in which others either survived or died. In this way he reveals his philosophy on why some people survived and others didn’t. Ultimately, Frankl credits his survival to his wife and his desire to be reunited with her.

The idea of her kept him going in times when he mentally, emotionally and physically felt he couldn’t hold on any longer. “The salvation of man is through love and in love,” Frankl says. “I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment.”

This showed him that the ultimate goal that a person can aspire to is to have love because it gives the soul the strength and purpose to survive. Another thing that kept him going was the desire to finish his book and the work that he had been pursuing prior to being taken to the camp. The aspiration to complete his work, accomplish that and leave behind something important also helped keep him going.

The second part of the book follows the studies of Frankl after he was liberated from the concentration camp. He discusses the psychology of the prisoners being released



“The salvation of man is through love and in love.”

—Viktor E. Frankl



Graphic by Maddi Troisi

and trying to assimilate back into a society that had exiled them and left them to the conditions imposed by the camp.

He discusses the difficulty for the survivors to face everything that they had been clinging to in their minds and memories that helped them to survive and realizing that it was not possible. Their loved ones, homes, businesses. Everything was changed or gone and could never be as they had pictured it would be for so long. Facing this reality was yet another debilitating hurdle that many struggled to overcome and survive. This idea and his continued studies led Frankl to develop his method of Logotherapy, the theory that human nature is motivated by the search for a life purpose.

Frankl explains his theory that a person can overcome nearly anything in their life if they are able to distinguish something in their life that gives it meaning. Whether it's love, family, work, a goal, determination, etc., the options are endless and open to interpretation.

Frankl's book is not only a moving story about a man's powerful search for the meaning in life that helped him to survive the torturous conditions of the Nazi concentration camps. It also can be a powerful tool to help others to find the meaning in their own lives. It can help people who are suffering from depression or a difficult time or even offer fresh perspective for improvement if they are not. There is never a bad time to examine life and find tools and perspectives that can lead to a fuller and more meaningful experience. 



Photo by Victoria Edsted

In a wardrobe far, far away... “Star Wars” comes to the DAM

By Victoria Edsted

During most weekdays peace and quiet take over galleries at the Denver Art Museum. Only an echo of someone's steps disturbs the overall solitude, but not this day. Today and every day since Nov. 13, 2016, the halls of the museum are filled with impatience, suspense, laughter and affection. The long-awaited “Star Wars and the Power of Costume” exhibit is finally up and running.

“The creative process behind crafting the world of ‘Star Wars’ is part of a pop-culture phenomenon that we are thrilled to bring to the Rocky Mountain region,” said director of the Denver Art Museum Christoph Heinrich in the news release. There are more than 70 original costumes, sketches of those costumes, maquettes and other multimedia materials that depict how Princess Leia, Anakin Skywalker, Chewbacca and other beloved characters became who they are.

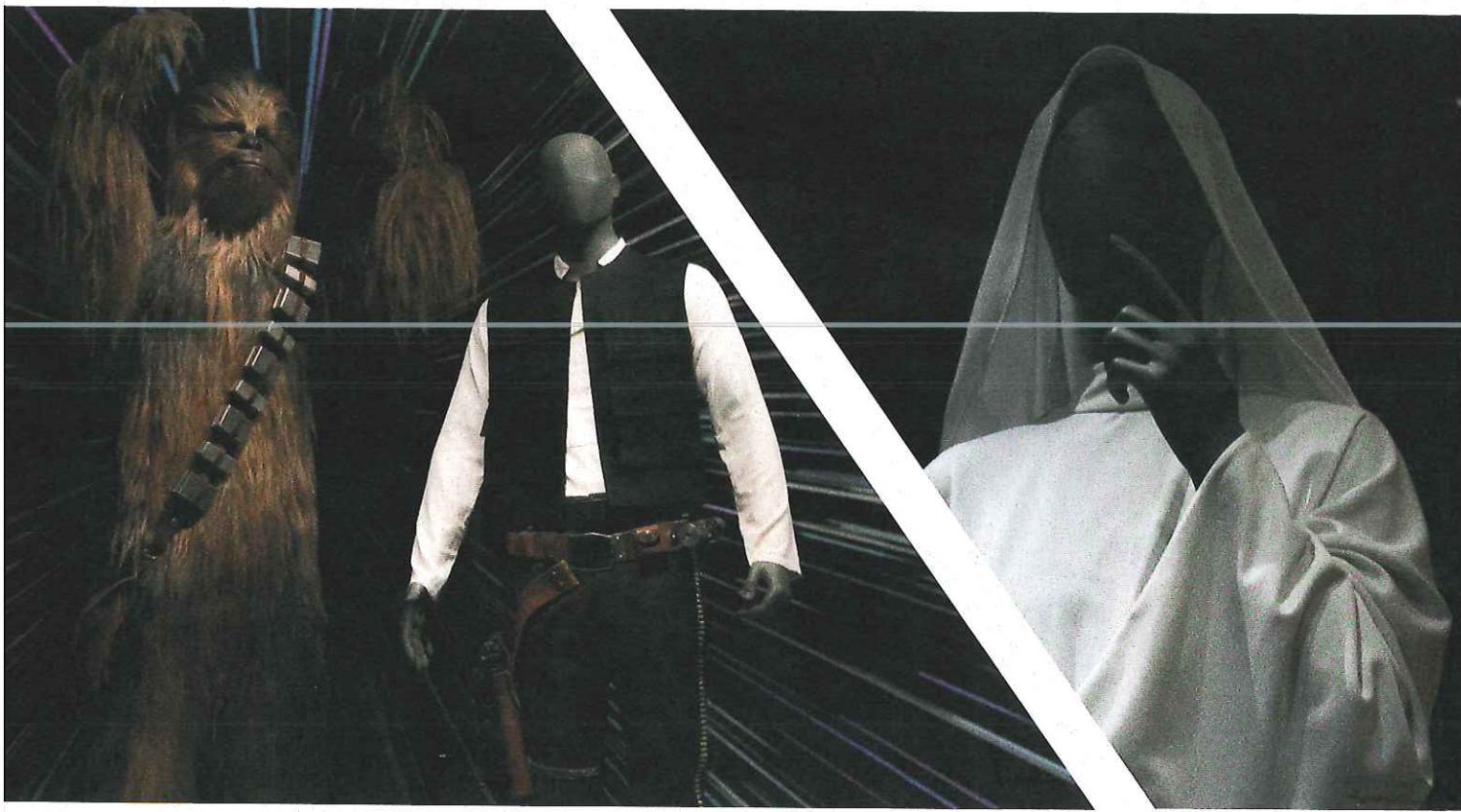
This exhibition is more than a show for entertainment. It's a thorough analysis of

complex relationships between fiction and reality. Every costume is a collaboration of different visions. Researchers, artists, designers and actors all have contributed to invent something that has never been seen or felt before based on what we experienced and shared as humans throughout history.

“Everyone has their own relationship with Star Wars,” said Stefania Van Dyke, the museum’s senior interpretive specialist for textile art & fashion and special projects. “But I think lately, especially, visitors have been particularly drawn to Princess Leia’s costumes. Losing Carrie Fisher profoundly affected a lot of people (“Star Wars” fans and non-fans alike), so seeing her costumes is a way of feeling closer to her as a person.”

The nature of sci-fi saga creatures, their diverse appearance and spirits are unique yet similar to the Earth life we know. It's hard to believe, but a deadly Sith lord, Darth Maul, was intended to be a shaman in long robes. His prototype





is often found in mythology around the world. Queen Amidala's astonishing dresses come from traditional women's clothes in Asian culture, and even Darth Vader's look was inspired by Japanese samurai warriors.

If Chewbacca, the loyal companion of Han Solo, ever reminded you of an intelligent dog who suddenly stood up on its feet and started walking, you are right. The original Wookiee is nobody else but George Lucas' furry Alaskan Malamute, Indiana. Well, not quite. According to Lucas, as the concept grew the Wookiee evolved into "a combination of a monkey, a dog and a cat."

These are just a few examples of the behind-the-scenes workflow that "Star Wars and the Power of Costume" showcased. What truly makes the exhibition special is an opportunity to walk into a new realm whether you are a devoted fan, cinematic enthusiast, designer or someone who just likes costumes.

"We have received a tremendous amount of positive feedback from our visitors about

the exhibition," said Jill Boyd, director of visitor services at the museum. "People of all ages are delighted and moved by it – and not just die-hard "Star Wars" fans. We've heard from a number of visitors who loved the exhibition's focus on costume design and the artistic process."

Bring the whole family or enjoy an audio tour on your own. You will be immediately absorbed by the enormous amount of different colors, fabrics, shapes and forms. Dive deep and explore every aspect of it, but also try to simply celebrate creativity and mindfulness of those who brought a whole galaxy alive. At the exit, though, don't forget to take the advice from a legendary Jedi master, Yoda. "Much to learn you still have. ...This is just the beginning!" 

Tickets: Buy in advance through April 2, 2017

Price (with audio): \$28

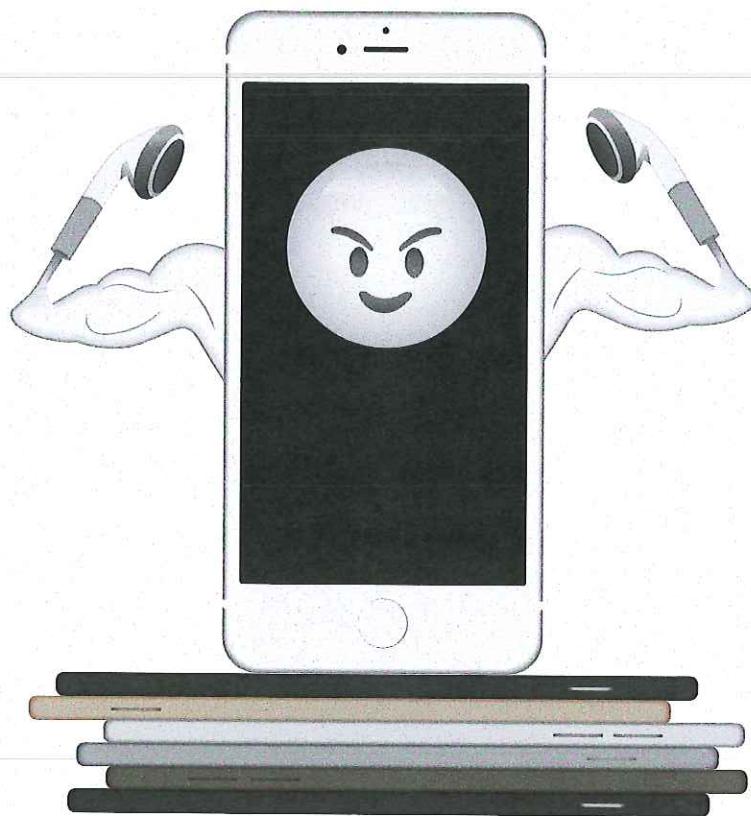
Address: 100 W 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver, CO 80204 (Hamilton Building - level 2)



Photos by Victoria Edsleet

Talk tech to me: Does iPhone 7 stack up?

By Kaitlin Benz



Graphic By Maddi Troisi

February 2017 marks 10 years since the first iPhone was released. Steve Jobs put mobile technology at the fingertips of billions of consumers across the globe, providing a means of communication the world had seen very little of in 2007. The most powerful phones on the market at that point were the Nokia N95 and the Motorola RAZR2.

Soon the iPhone became the most popular cell phone on the market because it was more than just a means for communication. The iPhone swept in an era of personalized technology that catered to each individual.

The power of calendars, maps to anywhere in the world, alarm clocks, and notebooks at the touch of the fingertips took the world by

storm, and that storm has not subsided since. Communication quickly turned into collaboration as the app store opened and lured users from around the world in creating a space for sharing.

Fast forward to September 2016 with the release of the highly anticipated iPhone 7. Several years had passed since the last iPhone was released and much longer since a new iOS software update. After several tweaks, Apple has produced its most powerful phone yet. Longer battery life and a higher quality camera were among the new features.

The battery life can last 13 hours on 3G, LTE and on Wi-Fi internet and, if so inclined, you can talk on the phone for 21 hours before it dies.

With a 10x digital zoom, getting a high definition picture of Rocky Mountain National Park has never been easier. Body and face detection software, partnered with wide color capture, allows for group photos that find everyone's best angle, even at the top of a mountain after a long morning hike.

There was a strong pushback from loyal Apple product connoisseurs about the removal of the headphone jack in the iPhone 7. People stated that this was not a move the late CEO Steve Jobs ever would have made. Some believed that it was just a scam to make more money since now users are forced to purchase headphone adapter plugs or Apple Air Pod wireless

headphones. After more than 1 billion phones sold over the past 10 years, this was one of the first times people were hesitant to upgrade.

*"Does
the iPhone
7 live up to the
expectations of
the late Steve Jobs?"*

Does the iPhone 7 live up to the expectations of Jobs? No one can tell for sure. In its first quarter of sales, the iPhone 7 and 7 Plus accounted for 43 percent of total iPhone sales in the United States, which are wildly successful numbers despite the pushback it got from consumers online.

Users have been pleased with the small changes that have been made, which produced a large impact in productivity, user-friendliness and fun. Does the iPhone 7 stack up? It's a yes from me. 

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Branded: Denver Fashion Truck

By Alysha Prieto

After three years of navigating Denver's narrow streets, the mobile boutique, Denver Fashion Truck, has found a home base. Married owners Adrian Gallegos and Desiree Gallegos-Barragan have taken a few detours on their journey to their dream of owning a brick-and-mortar shop, and it's been one hell of an adventure.

DFT opened its doors to the Sunnyside neighborhood in late September 2016. Though Adrian grew up a block away from their storefront, and Desiree four, their decision to settle down at 2343 W. 44th Ave. was serendipitous. A U-Haul full of boxes and a "For Rent" sign in the window caught their attention and their bid. "A lot of our followers, they know that we're from this neighborhood because we talk about it a lot with posts and stuff. They think that because we're here it was a conscious decision," Adrian said. Conscious decision or not, they think it has brought their business full circle.

DFT was one of the first mobile boutiques in Colorado and currently operates a converted school bus and food truck. They carry handpicked vintage clothing, local and non-local clothing, home decor and art. A brick-and-mortar was a natural progression for the business owners. Adding another vehicle to the retail fleet would have been tough in maintenance, everyday operation and foresight. Seemingly minor tasks like scouting locations and events take place at least a month in advance. Parking, traffic and driving in risky weather are constant but unavoidable pains too. A brick-and-mortar eliminates those obstacles.

"We open the door and everything's there. We don't have to touch anything," Desiree said. "You walk in, turn on lights, put on some music and you're good," Adrian added.

Customers can expect the same styles of merchandise in the shop that they've grown accustomed to in the mobile boutiques, but with more options and variety. The extra space allows them to offer more of a designer's collection as well as larger items that don't fit in the vehicles. Without the fear of a potholed ride, they can also carry fragile items like glassware. "With the mobile shops, both of them are constantly works in progress. We've gotten better at displaying and carrying certain things on the vehicles. That's how it's going here too," Adrian said.

Desiree and Adrian are adjusting to reeling customers in rather than driving to locations. The couple makes it a point to brainstorm ways to bring awareness to their shop. Aside from social media, they have found events to be the most useful and fun. "We just had the fashion show and that worked out well. People were drinking and having a good time," Adrian said. Intimate gatherings and collaborative events with local vendors like Boulder-based Strong Water Spirits & Botanicals are options they are considering making a regular thing.

With a demanding business, full-time job with the city of Denver for Adrian, and two daughters, taking it easy can seem like a foreign concept for Desiree and Adrian. To stay motivated, the couple spends time together reflecting on their

Partners in work & life, Desiree and Adrian are the owners of Denver Fashion Truck which features two mobile boutiques and a brick and mortar shop.

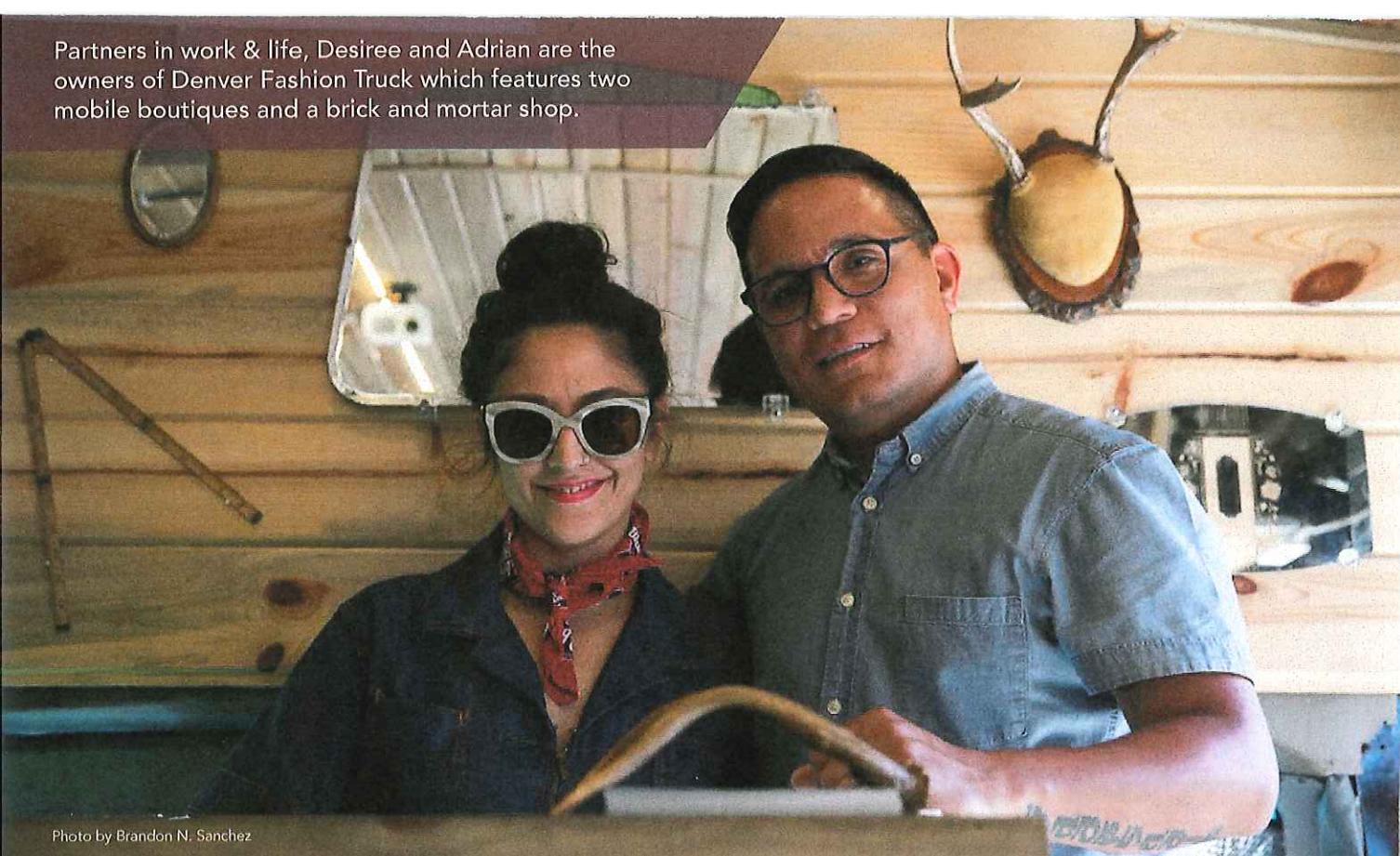


Photo by Brandon N. Sanchez



Photo by Carl Glenn Payne



Photo by Carl Glenn Payne

purpose and goals. Caffeine-fueled walks around their shop's neighborhood allow them to share ideas and hash out DFT details in an organic way.

The duo has made drastic changes in their professional and personal lives since starting out and attribute their success to working hard and effectively.

"If you are interested in something enough, you are just going to have to work your ass off. That is one thing that just is a must," Adrian said.

"And steps," Desiree added. "Adrian and I took steps to get here. This is something that we wanted like nine years ago and it took about six years to even get started, in that time," she said.

Adaptability has steered Desiree and Adrian in unfamiliar and exciting business directions during their time as owners of DFT. They continue to use their initial idea as a guide for their shops and know that it's not the destination, it's the ride. **m**

Address: 2343 W. 44th Ave.
Denver, CO 80211

Phone: 720-299-0795
denverfashiontruck.com

Hours: Mon: closed
Tues-Fri: 11a.m.-6 p.m.
Sat: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sun: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Online shopping with a side of anxiety

By Bianey Bermudez

After a long day of adulting, there's only one thing that can truly cheer me up: sitting at my laptop, adding fabulous items to my shopping cart and hoping I have enough money in the bank to purchase it all. It's like my birthday every three to five business days when I receive that lovely package on my doorstep.

For many it's a great alternative to normal retail shopping. Dr. Anna Ropp, a psychology professor at MSU Denver, shared her thoughts on the convenience of e-commerce. "Online shopping can be great for people who want to dress in ways that aren't normative for their gender," Ropp said. "A male cross-dresser, for example, can find high heels in a size 12 on the internet more easily than in a store. He can also buy the shoes without risk of an embarrassing interaction with a store employee or other shoppers."

Anxiety concerning online shopping is real for many people and I asked around campus to find out why. Angela Hoenshell and Karen Young, both mothers and full-time students, had to overcome their apprehension before discovering the wonders of shopping online. Hoenshell admitted that she'd rather buy from online stores she'd shopped at in real life than buy from an unknown seller. "I stay away from Craigslist and even eBay still," Hoenshell said.

Young found that ordering online was challenging because of vendor size

"We're all terrified of buying something online and waiting weeks for it, only to find it doesn't fit."

variations and the inability to try on items.

Joana Gomez, a 19-year-old film major, rolled her eyes at the idea of online shopping. She considered it but had seen too many "online shopping gone bad" pictures on her social media feed to gather the courage to try.

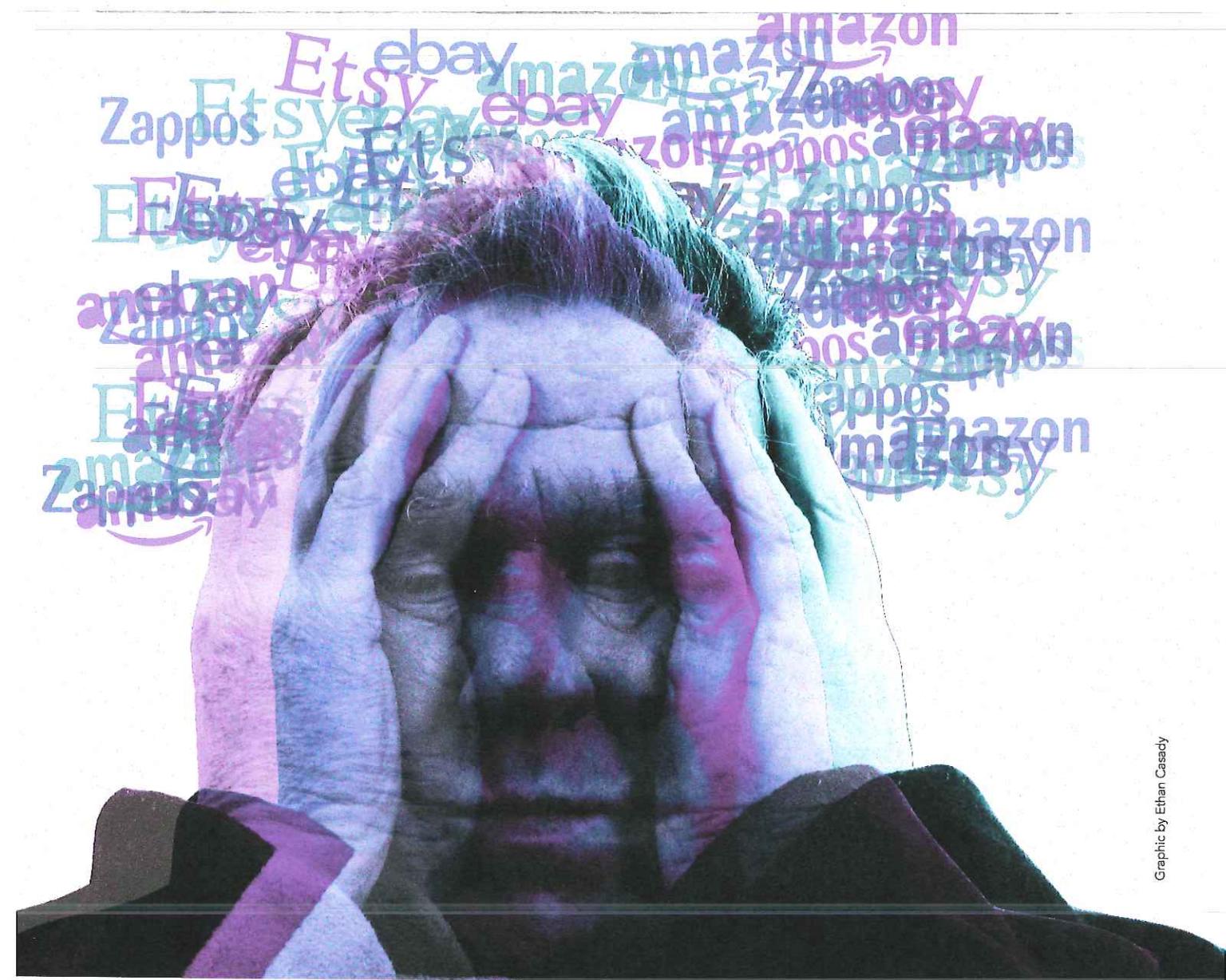
While online shopping is risky, it's still the fastest-growing retail market in North America, and the options are limitless. If you find yourself relating to the anxiety of buying online, keep reading for a few pointers to get you on the right path.

Not all that glitters is gold

The biggest mistake novice online shoppers can make is to shop with sellers they've never heard of without doing their research. Rosegal.com for instance, has amazing designer-looking items for a unbeatable prices, but one look at the reviews and comments and you know the quality is a nightmare. The site has had 318 complaints filed against them according to BBB.org. Play it safe and dig around the website before you buy.

Broke college students rewarded

Everyone knows college can be rough on your budget, and student discounts are the world's way of saying, "Sorry you have to pay so much for education." Most students don't know about student discounts that can lead to huge savings. Luckily, there is an entire site dedicated to giving students discounts at a variety of trendy online stores. Unidays (myunidays.com) does all the work for you, offering discounts from buyer



Graphic by Ethan Cassidy

favorites like Apple Music and Urban Outfitters. All you have to do is sign up and shop.

Size matters

We're all terrified of buying something online and waiting weeks for it, only to find it doesn't fit. In this case, it's very important to read the full description as well as the customer reviews. Item descriptions often include the models' sizes and measurements, so it's important to know yours as well. If the sizing is still off, make sure you know the companies' return and exchange policies, including extra cost that may be associated.

Is that cashmere?

If you're looking to save some cash on designer labels, check out online consignment stores.

Sites like therealreal.com and thredup.com give you designer merchandise at affordable prices. Instead of shopping on eBay for used designer clothes from shady sellers, these shops act as mediums to make the process easier. They have a team of experts that clean and inspect every item to make sure everything is real and in good condition. You can score big, name brands at half the price. The best part: You can consign your own items, scoring you a clean closet and extra cash.

Online shopping doesn't have to be a scary experience. Remember to relax and enjoy the process. When it's all paid and done, you'll have a pretty package waiting at your doorstep, and your fingers itching for more. 



Photos by Corey Anthony

Tastemaker: Blogger Vanessa Samuel embraces being bold

By Kayla Klein

At her day job as an electrical engineer, Vanessa Samuel's co-workers rarely understand her bold clothing choices. They called the 25-year-old fashion blogger a "maid" when she wore a denim overall dress, and they cast looks of confusion in Samuel's direction when she donned velvet shoes. Since working in a less than modish environment limits what Samuel can wear, she's lucky to creatively express her style on social media, through her Instagram, blog and YouTube channel.

Growing up, Samuel loved fashion and math, and while she studied engineering at the CU Colorado Springs, she felt as though she was neglecting her stylish side. When Samuel started documenting her styles as a hobby, she had no idea that fashion blogging is like owning a business.

A typical fashion day for Samuel is packed full of meetings with brand representatives, to

organize collaborations, and creatives, to discuss the redesign of her website and re-imagination of her social channels. Her blog, vanessalandlt.com, was scheduled to relaunch at the end of January.

As Samuel's social reach continues growing, more established brands are itching to collaborate with the spunky blogger. In fact, one of Samuel's upcoming meetings is with Coach to discuss a collaboration with the luxury brand.

Aside from learning just how much work goes into a fashion blog, Samuel's emotional journey since launching her platforms has been equally taxing. "I think I've learned a lot of how I deal with things on my own. With a blog, it's like you're starting all over, and literally creating a business and a brand," she said.

Regarding her style, Samuel offered three words: "Bold, classy and daring."



Photo by Corey Anthony



Photo by Corey Anthony

She draws inspiration from places like New York, Paris and Italy. She adores European style for its effortlessness. On the other hand, she applauds New Yorkers for bold choices in clothing and makeup. Samuel tries to incorporate a bit of both into her ensembles.

It's important for Samuel to post outfits that push boundaries but are fit for everyday too. Not every occupation gracefully welcomes sleeves as big as New York and heels as high

as the Empire State Building, no matter how gorgeous the trends appear in photos.

"I like to bring a bolder, classy, edgier side of fashion that is still wearable. So, I feel like people can still relate. It's not too out there, like 'I'm never going to wear that,' but it still draws attention," Samuel said.

While Samuel thinks her unique approach to elevating everyday-appropriate fashion keeps her followers coming back for more, she's also ascertained a few other methods to attain and retain her following. "I think it's a lot of posting, a lot of engagement," she said. "If people like it, great. If they don't, well, that's alright."

Upon starting her blog, people told Samuel to stay true to herself. "Being yourself is kind of a process because you have to learn actually who you are and figure out what it is that you like and don't like," she said.

With such pressure to maintain a certain image often comes discouragement. "It's easy to play the comparison game," Samuel said. "There are so many people, but you have to have a really good, strong grounding with yourself to make sure you're not comparing." What works for one blogger's image may not play in favor of another.

If Samuel could offer a piece of advice to her followers, she would take a page from her own lesson book. "I would say to focus on honing in on who you are. Spend some time alone, learning by yourself, and figure out who you are."

Once one knows oneself, it's easier to chase a calling. "As silly and cliché as it sounds, if you have a dream and a goal, work toward it," Samuel said.

Samuel's ultimate goal is to make her blog a full-time job, and with that type of self-assurance and work ethic, that dream is close within reach. **m**

ABOUT TOWN

Street style

Photos by Nikolai Puc'



GOT THE GOODS?

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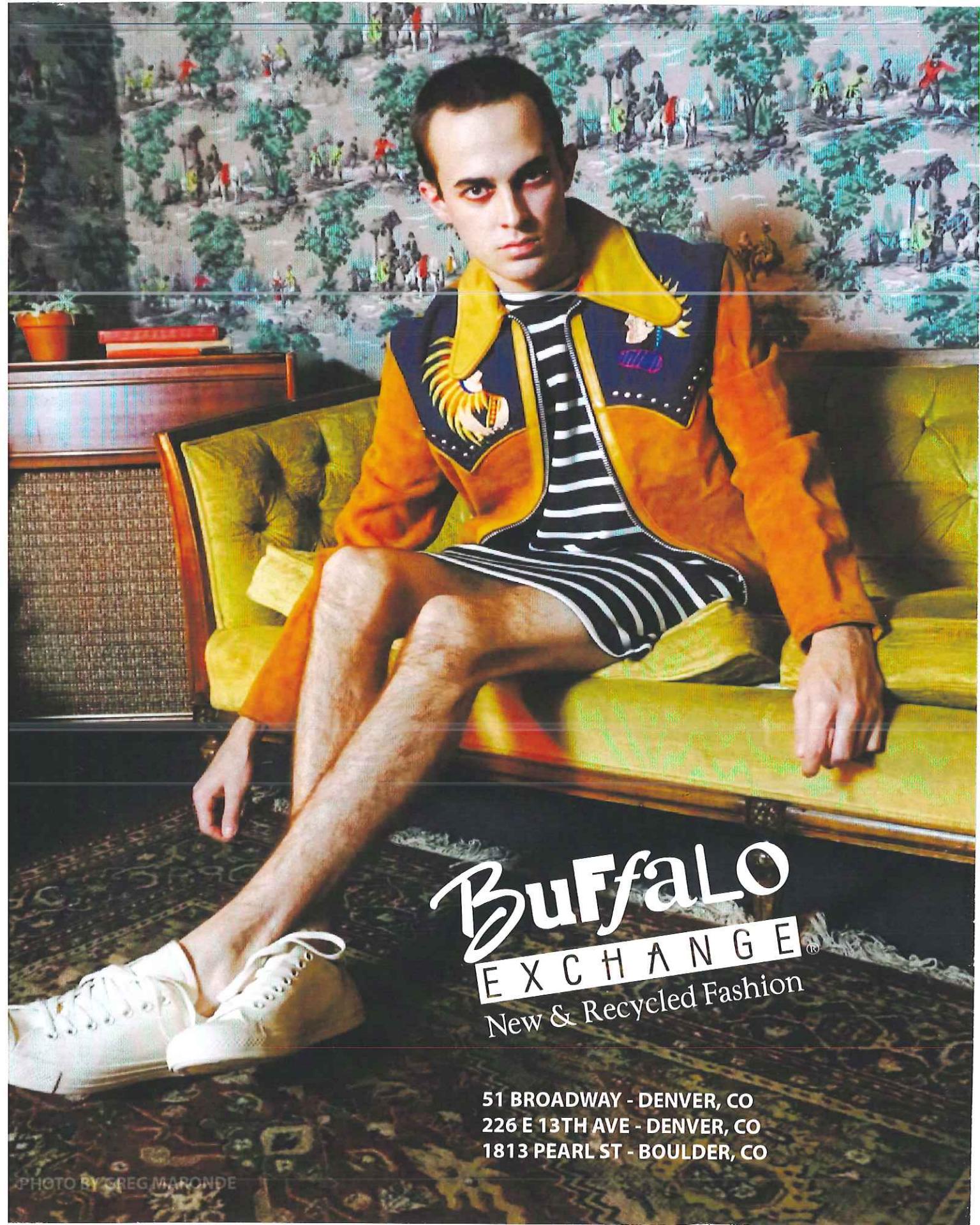
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