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Second Issue

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Dear Readers:

It is with great pleasure that we share with you this second issue of "Bridges." This online magazine aims to give students with limited fluency in English an opportunity to use their skills in a real communication situation. The topics of the articles address current controversies.

In this issue, three of the articles focus on what we do to our bodies with tattoos, body piercing and food. Other topics covered are curfew and gay adoption rights. Students researched the subject from various perspectives and conducted informal surveys and interviews among University of Puerto Rico community members to report on their beliefs and opinions. The pieces represent students' first attempt at academic research report writing in English. In addition, the last three pieces "Sunset", "The Experience of the Freshman", and "The Visit to Heaven" earned recognition from the judges in our English Department 2008 Literary Contest – Basic English Level- in the poetry, essay and short story categories.

We congratulate the students involved in this project for their effort. We also want to acknowledge our editing board, Dr. Vanessa Irizarry and Dr. Mark Wekander for their valuable insight and cooperation, the CRET personnel for their collaboration, and the Dean's Office of the College of General Studies for their support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Ann Camara,
Bridges Coordinator and Editor

Prof. Madeleine Hudders,
English Department Director

TATTOOING ISSUES

Tiffany Sanchez & Jaiza Rodriguez Cornelio

In a survey and informal interviews with 44 students at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, we found how students feel about tattooing. Some liked tattoos because it is an art and look attractive while others do not like them because of religious and/or health reasons. It was evident that students had different opinions about tattooing.

The results of this survey were the following:

- 73% female students 17 to 25 years old like tattoos; while 82% of female students 26 years old and up dislike them.
- 82% male students 17 to 25 years old like tattoos; whereas 46% male students 26 years old and up dislike them.

To understand this issue it is necessary to consider emotional, psychological religious and health aspects connected to tattooing.

One of the reasons why people like tattoos is because of the emotions they provoke. We interviewed Osvaldo from Lares who has a total of 26 tattoos. He told us, "I totally like tattooing. I consider that it's an art because it's something made by humans; it communicates. If I could mould every stage and experience of my life in my skin, I would do it." We asked him: "Is there something on your skin you don't want would you get rid of it?" He answered "I don't think I would like to erase it because from every experience in life you have something good to remember" (O. Ríos, personal communication, October 9, 2007).

Vergara (2007) presents a psychologist's thoughts about tattooing. She says that it has become a high paying practice which is causing a rage among adolescents and the not so young as well. More than a form used to decorate the body, tattooing has become a means of expression in today's culture. In general, this occurs during adolescence because this stage has the

characteristics of crisis, but some psychologists, in a more positive sense indicate it is a time to break bonds, to detach themselves from parents and find new forms of identification. It's a way of saying "this is me, look at me". In one interview it was clear that some people tattoo their bodies when they are young but when they become older they regret it. Moisés Delgado has a tattoo on his right arm. He said: "Now, I don't like tattooing, but when I was younger I used to like it. People change with time" (M. Delgado, personal communication, October 13, 2007).

Psychologists have reached the conclusion that in general the practice of tattooing responds to identifying issues and experiences encountered in life. People go through different crises in life. Many choose to reflect their feelings toward problems by using something they can feel and touch on their body. By having a tattoo, people try to make a statement about themselves.

Within all domains, there are gender differences and tattooing is not the exception to this rule. For example, a flower tattoo is associated with femininity as the dragon is to masculinity. To women tattooing is a statement of sexual liberation linked to a liberal display of their bodies. This is the reason why they usually begin by tattooing erotic zones such as the breast, the lower back, abdomen, shoulders or the neck. However, for men it is more of an act of virility since the procedure is linked to the pain received in the act of tattooing. Pain is an experience which integrates them into a group and, on the other hand, pain develops a clearer consciousness of their own existence, which in turn becomes a different way to experiment new sensations.

However there are people that don't like tattooing. These people based their opinions on religious beliefs and health reasons. For example,



Jonathan Gonzalez, a twenty-four year old student from Caguas, said: "I don't like tattooing because our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. A tattoo stays with you for a lifetime. That's why to kill the desire of having one, I just draw it with a pen so later I can remove it and not regret it" (J. González, personal communication, October 7, 2007). A leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints, Elder Moreno, was interviewed. He mentioned that "The body is not a piece of paper to draw on. God has told us in his scriptures that he doesn't allow this activity, because the body is the Temple of His Holy Spirit and He lives in sacred and clean places." Additionally, he quoted the Bible, Leviticus 19:27: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord." No matter where it is on the body and who sees it, the religious message is the same: No tattoos should be done (E. Moreno, personal communication, October 11, 2007).

Brunilda Díaz Cruz, a student from Peñuelas, said: "I don't like extreme fashion. Tattoos divide people in groups and the body is something we must respect. It is not an art because the human body is a marvelous and perfect creation which does not need to be improved nor destroyed. Also, it's not healthy" (B. Diaz, personal communication, October 11, 2007). Philippe Busquen, the commissioner responsible for a study performed by the European Commission (2003) indicates that tattooing can produce illnesses such as AIDS, hepatitis, lepra, and skin cancer. According to this study, many of the materials used to make tattoos correspond to industrial chemicals which have been created for other uses, such as automobile painting or writing ink. In some cases the risks have been very high and have even lead to death.

Finally, Delhi Pagán, 17 years old from Aguas Buenas, said: "I don't like tattooing because of the risks of getting diseases (D. Pagán, personal communication, October 15, 2007). Doctor Aldo Torre mentioned that whoever is tattooed in a studio which has not been authorized or is not totally clean undergoes the risk of contracting diseases such as Hepatitis or HIV. He mentioned: "We're dealing with dangerous threats. For example, Hepatitis C

is an illness which does not manifest symptoms at the moment of infection but 15 or 20 years later when it has possibly already damaged the liver". He also said that although it is true that the most frequent form of infection of Hepatitis C virus has been through contaminated blood transfusion, specialist have issued a warning because it is becoming more frequent to find patients who have contracted the virus through tattooing (A. Torres, personal communication, October 13, 2007).

We believe that everybody can decide to do with their bodies whatever they want to, including tattoos, but they can't change the consequences of tattooing; which can be diseases and even death. Then, why should we mark our body when we are risking our lives? We perceive tattooing as an unnecessary action. So, if you want to get tattooed, first think about the reasons why you want to get a tattoo then consider the consequences so you'll have no regrets of what you're doing today. It's your decision!

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TATTOOS

Luz Iturbe, Isabel Diaz & Kelsey Doney

What is a tattoo? Although we often find a lot of tattooed people, many of us don't know what they really mean or where they come from.

A tattoo is an ink design inserted into the skin, commonly via needle. They have been used by humans for thousands of years in various forms: ornamentally and religiously. The word tattoo is likely related to the Samoan tatau, meaning "to strike or mark". Tattoos became popularized in the Western world when sailors began to explore the Pacific and returned with tattoos on their bodies. In Japan, where there is a long historical tradition of tattooing, the word irezumi refers to traditional Japanese tattoos, while the word tattoo is used in discussions of other types of tattoo art.

Because tattoos are a world-wide fashion, we took the initiative of investigating the different points of view from people in our community, at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Let's see what they think about this phenomenon that increases year by year.

We randomly asked some questions to people with tattoos made when they were 14 to 21 years old. Their tattoos had cost them from \$25 to \$2,500. From those interviewed, 25% said that they regret their decision. Half of those who answered the questions said that the tattoos had hurt; the other half said they didn't. When we asked them how people react to their tattoos, 63% answered that people are used to them and like them, while 37% said that people are impressed by them and judge them because of the tattoos.

Richie, one of the persons that we interviewed, owns a tattoo studio. He told us that his clients' ages are between 18 and 74 years old, but that the average age of people who get tattoos ranges from 20 to 30 years old. In Richie's shop the most requested tattoos are tribals, playboy bunnies, butterflies, flowers and stars.

When we asked him about the health measures taken in the tattooing process, he answered; "I buy sterilized needles that are thrown in a sharp container

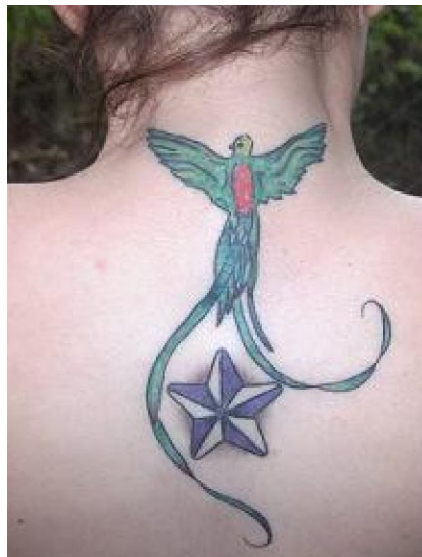
after I use them. I sterilize the tubes connected to the needles and to the machines in hot temperature for 24 hours. Then I put the tubes in safety pouches. The ink is located inside ink caps. The towel used for every work is bio-hazard waste." He also offered us some other details about the tattooing process: "Usually people that come for a first tattoo are accompanied. Clients younger than 21 years old must come accompanied because they need permission from their parents or adults over 21."

We also interviewed a dermatologist, who prefers to remain anonymous. He told us that tattoos can spread diseases like HIV and hepatitis, and may cause psychological problems like depression. These situations were more common in the past because of the lack of hygiene during the process. Nowadays, people who make tattoos are supposed to use a new and sterilized needle for every client. When we asked the doctor what happens when someone wants to remove a tattoo, he said: "The biggest problem for someone who wants to remove a tattoo is the economic one. This process takes from five to ten sessions, every six weeks. Depending on the size and colors of the tattoos, the sessions cost from \$200 to \$500.

Another thing that could happen when removing a tattoo is the appearance of white stains on the skin."

Through our interviews we learned that tattooing is a phenomenon that creates controversy because there are people who think it is fine and others who do not. There are some people for whom tattoos have a very important meaning in their lives although for others it is only a fashion. The owner of the tattoo studio told us that it is a safe practice and it does not produce any complications. Nevertheless, the dermatologist told us that tattooed people have the risk of developing different diseases besides the many problems and the long process involved when they want to remove them.

The decision of having a tattoo is a serious and difficult one because of the health and cultural matters that it implies.



BODY PIERCING

Zahira Rodríguez & Rafael Rodríguez

Body piercing is gaining acceptance by young people and adults however, they don't know all the risks that this practice implies. There are some things people should know before deciding to perforate their bodies.

The reasons people pierce their bodies have changed through history. For example, navel piercing started in Egypt to identify the royal family. Tongue piercing was used by Aztec and Mayan priests because they thought that it would allow them to communicate better with their gods. Lip piercing was used by Aztec and Mayan men to show their status in society. However today people have other reasons to do it. Results of a survey conducted at the University of Puerto Rico in December 2007, indicate that in our community, 50 percent of the people who answered liked body piercing because they find it sexy. Of these people, 33 percent said that they like how piercing looks and 17 percent liked them because it is something fashionable. Although infections caused by piercing are rarely found, people are taking a great risk just to show their beliefs or fashion preference.

In an interview with Maritza Ruiz, who has been doing body piercing for seven years at Psychodelic, a piercing shop in Carolina she gave us information about the regulations of this practice. First they must have a license from the Health Department. Every time they perform a perforation they must use a disposable apron, wash their hands with antibacterial soap for 30 seconds, and use disposable gloves. The skin area must be cleaned and if it presents signs of dermatitis or any lesion it should not be perforated. All the equipment has to be sterilized and in their packages, and all other instruments like cups and razors have to be thrown

in a biohazard can after each client. Additionally, she mentioned that she had only one bad experience with perforation. It was a guy who pierced his tongue and didn't wash his mouth properly (M. Ruiz, personal communication, November 7, 2007).

But, the remarkable question is: do people take the risks of diseases or infections just to be in with fashion or is it that they really don't know the dangers of this practice? In the survey at the University of Puerto Rico, 100 percent of the respondents knew that the practice of body piercing implies risks of getting infections. Surprisingly 48 percent of them knew the most common infection caused by body piercing is HIV. Newsome, R. (2005) explained that people usually think that HIV is acquired only by having sexual intercourse with an infected person; but they are wrong because in some cases it is transmitted by an infected needle. This virus destroys the immune system's cells interfering with their capacity to fight effectively against infections that cause other diseases. The author also explains that the person who has the HIV virus is more susceptible to get other infections like pneumonia and some types of cancer.



A great percentage of the people who answered the survey, 37 percent, identify tetanus as a principal infection caused by piercing. According Newsome, R. (2005) tetanus is a serious but preventable disease. In the case of body piercing it is caused by infected needles. It usually comes from a skin wound that becomes contaminated with a bacteria called clostridium. This bacteria creates a neurotoxin that is like a poison that causes muscle spasm. Without the necessary treatment, tetanus could be fatal. It normally begins with spasms in the jaw and pain in the muscles of the neck, shoulders, and back. These symptoms can appear

anytime from days to months after the exposure to the bacteria.

Body piercing can also cause other infections that produce scars on the skin which are called keloids. Diaz, B. (1997) states that keloids or fibrotic lesions occur during the healing of a deep skin wound. They result from the loss of the control mechanism that normally regulates the tissue repair. These scars can appear within months of the initial trauma in the skin and in this case after the perforation. The most important risk of these types of scars is the healing by secondary infections, or prolonged inflammation.

It is important that people who want to perforate their body know that doing this implies fatal risks. Maybe some people think that this is an exaggeration, but it is real. The infections and diseases that can be caused by piercing could be mortal. We have to be informed before considering this practice to prevent them. It would be an effective idea to create campaigns to inform people about the risks of body piercing. It would be better that the regulations were stricter and that those

who pierce have medical knowledge, in addition to the training that they have to take to get the license. If we can't avoid this fashion at least we can help to prevent the diseases that it can cause.

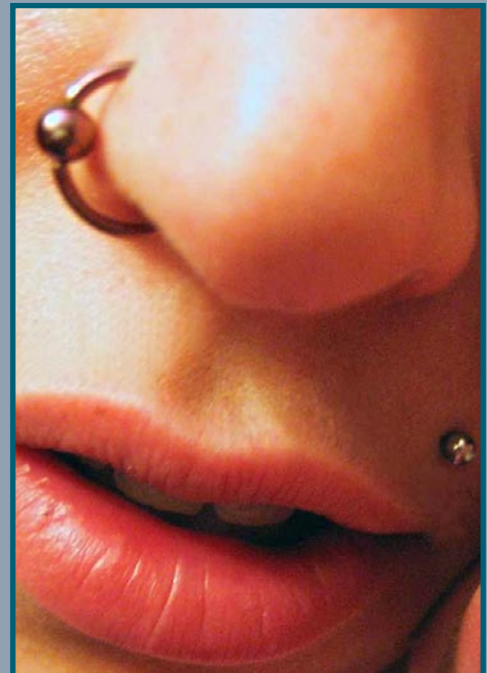
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FAST FOODS, LUXURY OR NECESSITY

Gabriela Santiago, Melissa Ocasio & Karla Vargas

Fast foods have become part of students' daily lives. But are fast foods a luxury, choice, or are they a necessity? To answer that question, last semester we interviewed a group of students, fast food restaurant employees and a nutritionist at the University of Puerto Rico.

We learned that in most cases, if not all, UPR students consume fast foods because they are faster, easier, economic and basically their only viable choice. Most of them consume fast foods between 1 to 3 times daily, when they're in or out of the university. Emmanuel González, a second year student, explained why: "My class schedule is complicated and I cannot have breakfast or have lunch in my house." He goes to college from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm every day. Another girl said: "Students like me cannot bring food from home because we don't have a place to warm it up. This is why I eat fast food" (E. González, personal communication, October 20, 2007).

The only eating alternatives in the Student Center at the UPR are fast food restaurants. These are Church's Chicken, Burger King, Pollo Tropical and Sbarro. Some employees told us that their rush hours are between 12 to 2 pm, and during these hours they receive between 100 to 200 orders daily. Students seem to prefer Church's and Burger King. They also prefer buying combos because they're cheaper, offer more food, and include beverages. Some people like to buy food individually to complement the combos.

Some of these employees think that the food from Church's and Pollo Tropical are healthy because they are made with chicken and look like

homemade food. Fried chicken is chicken which is dipped in a breading mixture and then deep fried, pan fried or pressure fried. The breading seals in the juices but also absorbs the fat of the fryer, which is sometimes seen as unhealthy. Most of them think that other fast foods like Burger King and Sbarro, are not healthy because they contain a lot of fat and calories. But all of the employees, agreed with students that between the four fast foods, they prefer Burger King and Church's.

However, we were still able to find a small group of students who prefer not to even direct their sight toward the Student Center, and they choose to eat in places like at the Humanities or Education buildings that provide nutritious food. There you can find different food stands, mostly known for their vegetarian and organic food selection. They provide us healthy food choices like burritos, lasagna, rice, etc., that are made with soy meat and organic ingredients.

Unfortunately for college students, fast foods far from being a luxury or a choice are almost a necessity. Due to our busy schedules and stressed lives, we prefer buying fast food instead of cooking our own meals. Elsa Batista Ocasio, a nutritionist we interviewed, confirms this when she explains that the fact of time and accessibility forces students to buy fast foods. "This is why we have the problem of obesity among students." She recommends we try to fit our schedules to eat homemade food or, if they can't, try to find healthy choices on campus" (E. Batista, personal communication, November 20, 2007).



IS PUERTO RICO PREPARED FOR GAY ADOPTIONS

Alberto O. Couret & Ashley Ceballos

A homosexual couple from Brazil was allowed by court to adopt a 5 year old girl. Although, the girl lived with them for a year, the Prosecution of Catanduva, a town in the interior of Sao Paulo, initially objected to the request for adoption by the couple. "If she calls me Dad, why doesn't the Court recognize my parenthood?" asked one of Theodora's fathers. The decision there was the first to recognize this right for a couple of men, and thus set a precedent for future requests for adoption. "Now we hope to make it more difficult for judges to deny an adoption request by homosexual couple," said the couple. (Gama and Carvalho, 2006).

Their process began in December 2005 with a request for adoption by Gama. The girl was removed from the couple's care. Later, the decision was challenged by the prosecution because, according to the lawyer, there were no legal provisions for two men jointly registering a child. In making the decision, the judge weighed the stability of the couple, who had received favorable reports prepared by psychologists and social workers.

Since the beginning of time there have been all kinds of families; however, western society has traditionally defined "family" as informed by man, woman, and children. With the passing of time, changes in fashion, lifestyle and even sexual preferences challenge society. Yet the issue of sexual preference has become the center of many debates in the governments of the entire world. Couples of the same sex had been asking for their rights years ago, but in the last couple of years they are being heard. One of their petitions was to make their marriages legal; with this they also could have the opportunity to adopt children. The government of some countries around the world

has accepted homosexual couples to adopt kids. In an informal survey that we conducted at the University of Puerto Rico, we found out that 60% of those interviewed believed that homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt, while 35% were undecided and only a 5% did not agree.

The debate between societies has created doubts about the ability of same-sex couples to raise children. The discussions led us to several professionals: social workers, psychologist, psychiatrist and sociologist that have carried out studies on these new trends. They reported that the sexual orientation of parents does not affect the education of children. Research indicates that

the upbringing of children under the safekeeping of a gay couple does not influence the future sexuality of the child. The homosexual couple and the heterosexual couple have the same ability to educate a child. In the same UPR survey we found out that 60% of the students believed that the homosexual couple could raise children and 30% did not think they could.



The American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association have taken the official position that it would be unethical to even try to change the sexual orientation of a gay person. They say that consulting a therapist in the hopes of changing your child's sexual orientation is pointless. Homosexuality is not a disease to be "cured." In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of abnormalities. "Homosexuality is a natural way of being," they concluded. "Only the education of people will promote health and the well-being of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, their families, and friends support to cope with an adverse society

education to enlighten an ill-informed public and advocacy to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.” (Sember, 2006, p.144)

Contrary to these findings, the religious community has a different position. The Catholic Church, the predominant religion on the Island, and other religious denominations believe that a child must be raised by only a man and a woman. Therefore, they coerce religious politicians so that they limit the civil and political rights of the homosexual community.

The church always refers to passages of the Bible to explain its position. For example in Genesis 2: 24-25 it says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall leave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Another Bible passage often mentioned is Genesis chapter 19, that indicates that Sodom and Gomorrah’s punishment was due to their sexual perversion. Leviticus 18:22, and 20:13 both describe homosexuality as “an abomination.” In Hebrews 13:4, Paul exhorted us to honor the marriage bed and keep it pure. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul wrote, “Know...Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.”

Some people, uneducated in scripture, are under the mistaken impression that all forms of sexuality are sinful according to the Bible. With this misconception, they readily disregard anything the Bible might say with regards to sexuality, choosing instead to side with their own sexual preferences.

As the human rights movements around the world condemn laws that discriminate against homosexuals, more Christians are challenging the

religious leaders’ position towards homosexuality. While only a small percentage of people are homosexual, the gay lifestyle is becoming mainstream – at least in some circles and in the media. Our survey revealed that 65% of UPR students believed that being homosexual is not a learned lifestyle.

Puerto Rican society in the twenty-first century is slowly accepting changes related to sexual orientation, a controversial issue worldwide. But, we must continue to make steady progress toward the future to provide social equality to all, regardless of social class, gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. In Puerto Rico, in contrast to other countries such as Spain, Netherlands and some states of the United States, the government has not yet accepted the marriages of same-sex couples. Why not emulate the social currents of the world who find themselves at the forefront of time? Well in our survey 50% of the students think that Puerto Rico is not yet prepared but 40% think that in the future this could happen. Are you ready to accept adoption by homosexual couples?



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LOVELY CURFEW

Xavier Toledo & Alexandra Reyes

Would you like to be trapped in your own house? Do you want to experience what a lovely bird feels when it is locked in a pretty birdcage? A bird's life is not easy. Their parents taught them how to fly, to be free. Suddenly, when they grow up, a human comes along to cut their wings. They enslave the poor birds, use them like decoration. Human beings are horrible with other creatures. Amazingly, they are doing the same with their own race.

Imagine yourself in your house all day including the weekend. How would you feel? Teens are birds waiting anxiously for the required age to fly. Now, a bunch of politicians come up with an idea called curfew.

Curfews were created in military bases to have personnel safe inside their rooms at a specific time. In emergency cases governments use curfews as a method to control a crisis. Everyone knows Puerto Ricans are passing through a huge criminal crisis where young people die every day in the streets. Drugs, alcohol and assaults are Puerto Rico's daily situation. People wait for someone to suggest a solution and expect the government to take action. So politicians suggest that implementing a curfew would help solve the problem. The use of a curfew in most countries is for teens under 18 or 16, but here they are trying to implement it for people under 21.

In some cities in Puerto Rico there are laws that have established the curfew for teens. Those laws are part of the "Código Civil del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico." Three of the cities that already implemented the curfew for teens are Caguas, Barranquitas and Lajas. However, results are a complete disaster, not because teens are suffering or are rebellious, but because even though the law exists, people do not respect it, or even they do not know about it. Only in Caguas around 1998-1999 a kind of alarm sounded at night announcing the curfew which was used as a method of crime prevention.

When people discuss curfew, it is evident that there are different perceptions of this. The subject provokes many debates because some people think it is a good idea while others, mostly young people, don't. Politicians see it as one solution to the problem of

crime. On the other hand, some people believe nothing will change with a curfew because these days criminals do not even respect daylight. It doesn't matter from what perspective we analyze a curfew, it is not necessarily the solution to the high crime rate.

People may go crazy when they are enclosed between four walls. Being locked somewhere causes stress, depression, anxiety, anger, and aggression. We believe that to prohibit an adolescent to be free is an absolute mistake. Teenagers experience a transition from childhood to adulthood: a time when they suffer many physical and emotional changes. They have to struggle with their feelings and society's problems. Adolescence is a crucial moment to choose paths that teenagers will follow for the rest of their lives. The only way to make those decisions is by confronting all kinds of situations that the world presents. In addition to the natural difficulties of this stage, now they have to deal with a curfew.

In fact, it is proven that people who are forced to be enclosed, especially without a reason, acquire a hostile attitude. According to the psychologist and professor Doctor Francisco Torres, any repressive action will be followed by negative reactions. Doctor Torres said: I completely disagree with the implementation of a curfew because that will bring more problems than solutions. Teenagers will react against the implementation in different manners. Additionally, he mentioned: "Maybe they fall into a massive depression that affects their eating habits, their academic progress, and probably their self-esteem. Some may even contemplate suicide. Adolescents could react rebelliously, manifesting their repressed feelings through violence or drugs. This then results in an increase of crime rather than a decrease" (F. Torres, personal communication, November 3, 2007).

Also, a curfew could provoke mental illness. Repressions are accumulated one by one until they explode resulting in several mental and physical disorders. Doctor Torres said that the restriction of the sense of liberty may cause damage in the psyche of teens. The mind is powerful and when it is tortured, it works like a machine-gun shooting everywhere, trying to defend itself. Sometimes there is so much pressure that the mind turns off to protect itself. The



worst consequence of the curfew may be the youth becoming crazy, fighting for their freedom.

Although, most politicians support the application of a curfew for teens, they love to pretend that they can understand the youth. Every three years the political campaigns for re-elections transform politicians into heroes that promise what people need to feel safe. They convoke the youth to a "political party" where they dance and sing their reggeton political music campaign. Politicians try to convince young voters with their false promises just to make sure they will have their votes. Instead of protecting the youth, politicians betray them by calling or blaming them as criminals.

Because in a democracy everyone's opinion is important we informally asked parents what they felt about a curfew. Surprisingly, the majority of the parents said that they didn't agree with implementing a curfew. One of the reasons they mentioned were that some teenagers work at night and with a curfew they would lose their jobs. Other teenagers go to church every Friday and some weekends and they have activities at night. If a curfew is approved, their kids would be prohibited by law from spending time in church and having fellowship with others. Still others said that it is a restriction of freedom. Another important critique was that if teens are too young to be out late at night and to have a respectable opinion, why are they allowed to promote smoking and participate in war? Many parents disagreed with the curfew, but also there was another group who agreed with it. They had many reasons for seeing the curfew as a solution. One of them thought that because many of the criminal cases involved by young people, maybe having them at home early would stop the crime. He said that having a curfew would have two benefits: the first one is that kids would not be victims of violence in the streets, and second the ones who cause accidents are going to be at home too, so they couldn't be in an accident. Another parent explained that he was in favor because having teens at home makes them follow and respect their parents' rules. He said these days teens do not respect their parents' rules and opinions and there has to be a way to make them respect them.

What do students think about a curfew? A group of 25 teenagers between the ages 17 to 22 participated in a survey we conducted at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Fifteen of them were male and ten female. 72 percent of them (males and females) knew what a curfew was. Results show that only 28 percent agreed with the implementation of a curfew. 95 percent of them were males. However, when they were questioned if a curfew would solve Puerto Rico's crime, 95 percent answered no. 99 percent also expressed they did not want to be locked in their

houses at night. 36 percent thought a curfew would obstruct their freedom.

They have many reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the implantation of a curfew. Two 19 year old males thought a curfew would be a good idea, but the government should consider making the curfew begin one hour later. A 21 year old male also said that the government should consider beginning the curfew for teens but under 16 years of age. "Increase police vigilance," was the opinion of a 20 year old guy. Another suggestion for the government (this time of a woman of 20 years of age) was that they look for another method because "a curfew is not the answer." A female argued, "Parents should give more attention to their children." Again a female said that it was the parents who should establish an hour for teens to be home. A male answered: "Education begins at home." A 19 year old said he had a job at night to pay his college and a curfew would affect his future.

Teens demonstrated that they wanted a solution that would eliminate crime in Puerto Rico, but they did not want to suffer because of it. They did not want to be treated like criminals. Teenagers understood why politicians proposed a curfew, but they have jobs, friends and a lifestyle which was going to be affected.

Think, would you like to be trapped in your own house? We believe you might not want to leave your social life and your job opportunities behind. Do you think you are a criminal? That is what politicians are trying to demonstrate. They are trying to enclose those they think are responsible for the crime Puerto Ricans are experiencing. Then, they have to ask to politicians if they were ever teens.

Do you really believe the curfew is the solution to the problem of crime? If you are a bandit you deserve it! But for everyone who works hard to succeed in this difficult environment we live in today, it will be a barrier. So you have to demonstrate to politicians they are wrong and that the implementation of a curfew for teens will be a mistake. How are you going to prove it?

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Sunset

Cirstina Padilla Cintrón

*Radiant, powerful, ferocious,
legendary, strong, prodigious—
a knight in the sky,
a myriad of gold needles.*

*Fire drops to the sea—
orange, red, and yellow—
sprinkle in the immensity.*

*The wind dancing,
the sound in harmony,
is the beginning of the performance.*

*An accord of habitual trepidation,
Aeolus blowing, Helios resisting,
hovering in the immensity,
living their destiny.*

*The gold knight is drowning,
the colors are fading into gray.
The sky dressed with sorrow
because of the tragedy.*

*The lady of the sky,
the stars as soldiers,
wait for a beginning,
shall never return...*

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FRESHMAN

Betzy Zoé Fontánez

When people come to the university, they see life from another point; most of the students that attend go from the house to the apartment and they share that apartment with new people. It is the moment of independence. When students experience this new life, they learn to value the true significance of family. But is the true family only the people that have the same blood?

University life is very interesting because you learn things that you never imagined. Not only do you learn the academic area, you also learn to value true friendship and the importance of time. However, the most important thing you learn is the true feeling that you have about your family, your town and your childhood friends. In the first month you remember your high school and the big difference there is when compared with the university. In the beginning of this quest you think you want to stay alone in one solitary place, but that only happens in the beginning because as time passes, you make new friends.

The next phase of the experience is when you stay alone or with new people in your new house. That experience is very funny because when you

don't know how to cook in the beginning of this new time, all the food that you cook is bad. But don't worry, you learn that there are the microwave products that exist until you really learn how to cook.

Now the university is your new home and the people that stay here are your new family. It is the moment you mature and see life from another perspective. It is time to establish firm goals because your future is in your hands. In our time the problems in the economy are increasing and in the future life will be more difficult. Continue with the college experience and achieve other successes. When you need to see your parents, sisters or brothers, it is hard but when Friday arrives you leave your apartment and enjoy the company of your family all weekend. On Sunday you know that on Friday you will see them again.

Life is a beautiful experience. Come to the university and have your own experience. It is time to learn to value your families, recognize your true friendships. You are the bird that wants to remain free to form its own family. I know you can do it. Welcome and good luck!



THE VISIT TO HEAVEN

Normary Negrón Encarnación

Once upon a time there was a boy named David. He lived in Toa Baja. He didn't like to follow rules. David's mother always told him that following rules was important for everything. One day David asked his mom for permission to ride his bicycle.

- "Mom, mom, can I ride my bicycle in the street?"

- "No, its too late, and its dangerous."

- "Mom, please, don't be like that."

- "I said no, and that's my last word."

David didn't like his mom response. "Oh, mom is exaggerating. What could happen?" he thought. He took his bicycle and silently went out to the house. He started wandering the streets and he felt free. "I did the right thing; following rules is so boring". He got distracted for just a second and when he looked to the front, he saw a hole in the middle of the street. The bike fell into the hole. He fell to the ground, closed his eyes and when he opened them, he saw a brilliant light. Suddenly he was on an electric stairs going directly to heaven. Little by little he was getting farther away from the bike. When he arrived, he saw an enormous and beautiful gate made of gold. A man with white hair like snow and a strong look was coming directly toward him.

- "Hello, friend, welcome to heaven. The only place that you can find peace."

- What! Heaven? Ha, ha, ha. There must be a mistake, Sir. I'm lost. Right?" His smile faded.

- "No," the man said seriously. "You are in heaven and I am the guardian, Saint Peter".

The boy didn't have any reaction. He couldn't believe what was happening. He thought it was a joke.

- "So I'm in heaven, ok so let me in. It's cold outside". He started walking inside.

- "One moment, child. To get inside you must follow one simple rule."

- "Oh, that again. Ok, tell me."

- "There is a sign that says Prohibited Zone. You must not go in there."

- "That's all, no problem. That's so simple."

- "You can come in and remember what I told you."

When he got in he felt an enormous peace. He saw a group of children jumping in the clouds. He heard some beautiful voices far away. He started to follow them until he saw the Celestial Chorus. He did everything; he jumped, ran and sang. He had never had so much fun. When he turned around, he saw a sign that said Prohibited Zone. What could be there? Why didn't he want me to go in there? He was so curious and he wanted to go

in. Then he remembered what the old man told him. He thought about it for a while. He had two options: follow the rules or discover what was in there.

Then he said to himself, "Following rules is so boring. Besides what could go wrong in heaven? I'll just go in quickly".

He decided to go in. When he put his foot in the Prohibited Zone, he fell. There was a huge hole he kept falling and falling and screaming, until he hit a hard rock. It was in a dark place and it was very hot. All the peace that he felt was gone



and he started to feel scared. Where am I? What is this place? Where is heaven? He had so many questions at the same time.

Then he saw this dirty kid and in bad conditions. "Where am I?" David asked him.

The boy in a bad tone answered, "In hell. You are inside the ground in a place that no one wants to visit".

- "What? There must be a mistake, I can, I just..."

- "You just went inside the Prohibited Zone." The boy laughed. "I did the same thing. I could not follow one simple rule to be in paradise and look where I ended."

David couldn't believe what was happening. He turned back, closed his eyes, covered his ears, and started screaming. "I don't want to be here, I promise I will follow the rules," he said again and again. When he opened his eyes he saw his mom's face and some neighbors around him. One of them

said, "That is some kind of bump that poor kid has."

- "Where am I? Inside of the ground. No, please, I don't want to..."

- "Darling, you are with mom."

David realized that it was a dream that seemed to be real. One of the neighbors said, "I think that bump affected him."

His mother was so worried about him. "Lets go home, I will put some ice on your head."

"Mom, I'm sorry. I understand that rules are not boring. They are necessary."

- "Thank God, you understand. But we will talk more about that, young boy. Now let's go home."

He was so happy to be at home that he did not care about being punished for his behavior. David understood the importance of following rules. Rules are not boring. They are necessary for everything in life.

