CRUSHING COLONIALISM

THE MAGAZINE

June 2024 | Edition 03



WHERE IS MY PRIDE?

On being Disabled, Queer, and Native

FROM POWWOWS TO POP CULTURE

Finding Sanctuary for Geekiness at IndigiPopX

COLORS FROM THE CARIBBEAN

Love, Freedom, and Diversity

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As we step into the vibrant and empowering month of Pride, it's with a heart brimming with anticipation that I welcome you to the latest issue of *The Magazine*. This edition is particularly close to my heart, as it delves into the profound question: What do we take pride in? In a world where our identities are often flattened into stereotypes, we must recognize and celebrate the rich tapestry of experiences within our communities.

Pride Month isn't just about colorful parades and festivities; it's a commemoration of resilience, rebellion, and radical self-love. It's about embracing every facet of our identities, even those that society has deemed unacceptable or unworthy. This issue serves as a reminder that our pride is not just about who we love or how we express ourselves—it's about reclaiming our narratives and asserting our existence in a world that has tried to erase us for far too long.

In the face of ongoing oppression and discrimination, taking pride in ourselves and our communities is a radical act of resistance. It's a refusal to conform to societal expectations and a declaration that we are worthy of love, respect, and visibility. By embracing our identities and asserting our right to exist authentically, we challenge the status quo and pave the way for a more inclusive future.

However, it's essential to recognize that our experiences are incredibly diverse. While Pride Month is a time of celebration for many, it can also be a period of reflection and introspection for others. Our community includes individuals from all walks of life, each with unique struggles, triumphs, and reasons to take pride in who they are.

As we navigate the complexities of our identities, let us remember that true liberation comes from embracing the full spectrum of human experience. Let us uplift those whose voices have been marginalized and amplify their stories. Let us challenge the systems of oppression that seek to divide us and instead build bridges of solidarity and understanding.

In the pages of this issue, you'll find a myriad of voices sharing their stories, perspectives, and visions for a more equitable world. From a personal essay delving into the intersectionality of queerness, disability, and Indigenous identity, to the inspiring tale of an Indigenous Two-Spirit finding sanctuary for their geekiness and queerness at IndigipopX, and a series of illustrations depicting the pride carried by Indigenous communities in the Colombian Caribbean, I encourage you to read with an open heart and mind and to reflect on what Pride means to you.

In solidarity and celebration,



Isabel María Riofrío Miranda
Editor-In-Chief





Celia Lorenza Chan, one of the oldest players of the Amazonas of Yaxunah softball team celebrates after hitting an inside-the-park home run. The team huddled together and chanted, "Strong women, warrior women, we are the Amazonas of Yaxunah," once the game ended, in the municipality of Halachó, in Mexico. Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024

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Cover photo:"The Kiss", a reinterpretation of Gustav Klimt's painting. Illustration by Laura Martínez.

**Throughout The Magazine, we default to using Indigenous place names unless otherwise stated. Colonial names are indicated in quotation marks for context.*

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WHERE IS MY PRIDE? ON BEING DISABLED, QUEER, AND NATIVE

BY JEN DEERINWATER

Pride is an odd concept for me. As 2SLGBTQIA+ pride and disability pride months in the so-called "United States" approach, I've been thinking a lot about what it means to find joy, as well as pride, in myself and my circumstances. As a bisexual and Two-Spirit, I'm proud to be queer and proud of the role that I play in my communities—but am I proud to be disabled? Not so much.

The purposeful disablement of my Indigenous body is a source of trauma, grief, and rage. I quite likely wouldn't have suffered over forty years of chronic pain, nor would I have autoimmune diseases, dysautonomia, asthma, and a host of other illnesses if I weren't Indigenous. It's no coincidence that Indigenous people across the world have higher rates of disabilities and illnesses than non-Indigenous people. According to the United Nations, 15% of the world's population has a disability. While there is no global data on the rates of disabled Indigenous people, existing data for the so-called "United States", "Canada", "Australia", and "New Zealand" shows that Indigenous people have the highest rates per capita of disabilities versus all others on our lands. We've suffered centuries of brutalities that have left our nations riddled with injuries, diseases, and intergenerational trauma. Those that our colonizers couldn't kill, would be left to suffer for generations. If I didn't grow up surrounded by oil and gas extraction and uranium waste would my health be better? Almost certainly. Numerous studies have found that people living near polluted, toxic areas have significantly higher rates of autoimmune diseases, cancer, heart disease, and many other illnesses. If my people didn't know the continued indignities, violations, and terror of an ongoing, unrecognized genocide would my health be better? Absolutely!

I want my disabled kin, Indigenous and otherwise, to love and feel pride in themselves, but it feels like a place of real privilege, and is frankly a bit galling, to expect a disabled Indigenous person to proclaim themselves proud of being disabled.

I also fear for queer youth and their ability to feel pride when so many of their lives are under attack. As of April 19, 2024, the ACLU is tracking 487 anti-queer bills across the so-called "United States". My home state of Oklahoma has had 54 bills in the state legislature aimed at restricting 2SLGBTQIA+ people's right to live, the highest of any state thus far. I've struggled a great deal with the death of Choctaw Two-Spirit and trans youth, Nex Benedict. At fourteen, I attended school in Owasso, Oklahoma, where Nex was a student. I remember the way I was mercilessly harassed by the white students for having attempted suicide the year prior. I skipped school constantly because I couldn't stand to be there. It was just too hard to struggle through unnamed disabilities and trauma while also being harassed. My home life was no hayride either. I can't imagine I'd be alive today if I had known then that I was queer.

> *"I want my disabled kin, Indigenous and otherwise, to love and feel pride in themselves."*

After Nex's death, Oklahoma State Senator Tom Woods said at a public forum held in Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, that "I represent a constituency that doesn't want that filth in Oklahoma" about 2SLGBTQIA+ people. A 2022 candidate for State Representative, Scott Esk, even stated he believes queer people should be "stoned to death." On my last trip home in 2019 to cover a Native-led conference against oil and gas extraction in Ponca City, I received a flurry of hate mail in response to my reporting that included a message telling me I should be stoned to death. Given that Oklahoma has 38 federally recognized tribes and one of the largest American Indian and Alaska Native populations in the so-called "United States", these instances of anti-queerness are Native issues and must be addressed by our tribal leaders.

My tribe, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, has released various statements related to Nex discussing how awful the loss of a child, especially a Native child, is. But they refused to acknowledge the anti-queerness that was responsible for Nex's death. The colonization, assimilation, and Christianization of the Cherokee Nation has led to anti-queerness ranging from extreme attempts to restrict the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and using hate speech to simply ignoring our existence and needs. As a result of this rampant violence and hatred within my tribe, I don't go home for our annual Cherokee Homecoming celebration or any other events. I've had blatant anti-queer experiences at events held by our tribe in Washington DC, where I currently live. Couple this with the lack of disability access or care for our disabled citizens and I'm left with no ability or reason to participate in my tribal nation. I'm further disconnected from my people because of their hatred of queer and disabled people. How can my fellow Cherokees and our elected leaders say they live their lives with the principle of gadugi, meaning that we work together to serve the tribe rather than one's self, when they ignore the repeated direct threats to the very lives of our 2SLGBTQIA+ people?

I still wave my pride flag and loudly and frequently proclaim that I'm a bisexual, Two-Spirit, disabled citizen of the Cherokee Nation because I refuse to be erased, but this won't change my circumstances. I need more than pride celebrations, hashtags, and parades that exclude me. I need to see my communities doing the work to ensure disability justice practices, and this means a great deal more than merely meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act. I need to see Two-Spirits and Indigequeer people's lives being both celebrated and protected by everyone, not merely by ourselves.

> *"I need to see Two-Spirits and Indigequeer people's lives being both celebrated and protected by everyone."*

The multitude of injustices of life with chronic pain in the so-called "United States" are rarely discussed in their brutal honesty nor do those of us suffering often see the possibility of joy in our lives. But there is joy amidst the pain. Ketamine infusions have brought me a sort of disability joy in that I've found a path to a future worth fighting for. It's difficult to think of the future with eagerness and excitement when the only certainty I know is more pain. Ketamine, as well as my bright yellow disability scooter that saves me untold amounts of pain and fatigue, plant medicines, and shared knowledge and support amongst disability justice spaces have brought me more hope. And within this hope, someday there may be more space for pride.

About the author

Jen Deerinwater is a bisexual, Two-Spirit, multiply-disabled citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and an award-winning journalist and organizer who covers the myriad of issues her communities face with an intersectional lens. Jen is the founding executive director of Crushing Colonialism, a 2019 New Economies Reporting Project, and a 2020 Disability Futures fellow.

'Where is My Pride' will be published in SICK issue 6, an annual print magazine exploring illness and disability. SICK aims to increase the representation of sick and disabled folks in the arts and challenge the harmful stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding disability. Founded in Norwich, UK in 2019, SICK is now based out of Maine & London. Pre-order issue 6 and learn more at www.sickmagazine.org.

FROM POWWOWS TO POP CULTURE: AN INDIGIQUEER'S JOURNEY IN GEEK SPACES

BY AMBER L. HAMPTON

Growing up as a white-passing Tsalagi in a trailer park in the stolen lands of Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Kalapuya, Yoncalla, Winefelly, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians ("Springfield, Oregon"), provided a unique backdrop for my childhood. Despite the lack of vocabulary to articulate my identity, I always felt a sense of disconnect from heteronormative labels. This awareness solidified later, amid conservative societal norms, where I realized my identity did not conform to prevailing cisgender heterosexual expectations. To navigate these challenges, I found solace in my Tsalagi culture and the immersive world of geek and nerdy pursuits, which provided a sanctuary from conservative pressures.

In my household, where fantasy, science fiction, and horror were cherished, bonding often revolved around shared interests in comic books, video games, and some discussions about our heritage. Fond memories of storytelling sessions with my grandparents, interspersed with Star Trek reruns, or engaging in Mortal Kombat matches with my mother after her factory shifts shaped my upbringing. Similarly, watching my father play video games and read comics influenced my fascination with superheroes and adventure narratives.

The cultural landscape of the '90s and 2000s, defined by bustling arcades and Saturday morning cartoons featuring iconic characters on X-MEN and Sailor Moon, provided the backdrop for my formative years. During this time, I found a kindred spirit with a fellow trailer park kid, united by our shared passion for all things geek and horror. Although the term "bisexual" would later provide a semblance of identity during our youth, it failed to encapsulate the full breadth of our Native heritage and queer experiences. But we had our love of fiction and each other to fill in the holes as we learned more about ourselves.

As I ventured into anime and sci-fi conventions, I grappled with issues of objectification, racism, and the lack of Indigenous representation in these spaces. Despite these challenges, the allure of witnessing elaborate costumes, and art and engaging in discussions on pop culture topics remain undiminished. The emergence of Indigenous Comic Con, later known as IndigiPopX, offered a glimmer of hope—a space where my intersecting identities as an Indigiqueer individual and pop culture enthusiast converged in unexpected ways.

The possibility of attending IndigiPopX 2024 for the first time, held in traditional Caddo territory ("Oklahoma City"), sparked a deep sense of anticipation and connection to my ancestral roots. With ancestors listed on the Dawes Rolls and a family history intertwined with the tumultuous Indian Territory and broken promises, the opportunity to retrace familial footsteps and immerse myself in a community of like-minded Indiginerds held immense significance.

As I entered the First Americans Museum at IndigiPopX, I felt a profound sense of belonging—an affirmation of my identity and cultural heritage amidst a backdrop of creativity and excitement. From participating in metalsmithing workshops to engaging in heartfelt conversations with fellow attendees, every moment at IndigiPopX underscored the power of community and the enduring legacy of what it means to me to be Indigenous and a total "nerd-o".

> *"I found solace in my Tsalagi culture and the immersive world of geek and nerdy pursuits, which provided a sanctuary from conservative pressures."*

During a panel discussion with co-founder of Rising Sons Media, Sadekaronhes Esquivel (Kanien'keha:ke/Mohawk and Mexican descent, agender), I learned more about the Indigenous Futurist role-playing game (RPG) Coyote and Crow and a Cyber Noir computer game called Hill Agency: PURITYdecay in which colonizers left the planet after destroying it while Indigenous people remained and rebuild. Discovering the main character happens to be a Two-Spirit private investigator in one of the last remaining cities in North America solving challenges that resonate with the Native experience—I knew I had to chat with someone involved in its creation. To my excitement, I had the opportunity to interview Sadekaronhes later in Duwamish territory (greater "Seattle" area).

Sadekaronhes, who prefers the first name as a pronoun, reflected on the personal journey through the shifting landscapes of Indigenous identity and geek culture. "I've never really felt like I belong to one group or another," Sadekaronhes shared, highlighting reflections on gender identity. Sadekaronhes' formative years, shaped by the fusion of traditional experience and being a Native growing up attending powwows and 80s pop culture, laid the groundwork for Sadekaronhes' creative exploration. "[Fiction should have] Natives in space. Star Wars didn't have that, Star Trek didn't have that," Sadekaronhes mused, underscoring the significance of representation in shaping Sadekaronhes' imagination.

As Sadekaronhes' career evolved, Sadekaronhes became a pivotal figure in the emerging Indigenous representation within geek culture. "Imagination was always an escape... Native art is whatever we want it to be," Sadekaronhes emphasized, echoing the commitment to challenging stereotypes and paving the way for future generations. Through Sadekaronhes' work from comics to game development, Sadekaronhes seeks to empower young Indigenous individuals to dream beyond societal confines. "If we can't imagine, do we have a future as a Nation?" Sadekaronhes questioned, embodying a spirit of resilience and determination that continues to inspire change in the ever-evolving landscape of geek culture with the Native community.

Later at the convention, I immersed myself in a cultural journey and shared reflections during the Grand Celebration Ceremony, highlighting artistry, tradition, and resilience, in the face of the ongoing challenges of colonial violence. What was most important to me was the prayer and honoring of fellow Two-Spirit relative Nex Benedict, a non-binary Choctaw descendent. Benedict lived on the Cherokee Nation reservation and attended a primarily non-Native school. They were the target of anti-queer violence and bullying that eventually took their life. Afterward, the songs performed by the Cherokee Youth Choir allowed community members to mourn and a space for healing.

As I continued exploring the con, I participated in fashion discussions with Native Max Magazine, saw the creative endeavors of comic artist Roy Boney Jr., who breathes his style into the Tsalagi language and culture revitalization, and met actors from the hit series "Reservation Dogs". Along with other attendees, I tasted the culinary delights prepared by Choctaw and Cherokee chefs which tantalized the taste buds with Indigenous ingredients like corn, chokecherries, and persimmons.

IndigiPopX also offered moments of levity with cultural considerations, during the thought-provoking presentation of the founder of A Tribe Called Geek and Grim Native, Johnnie Jae (Choctaw/Otoe-Missouria asexual woman). Using a scenario in which the dead rise while drawing upon Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, Jae outlined strategies for community resilience, from leveraging traditional strongholds to fostering safer communication channels rooted in ancestral sign language.

Delving deeper into the realms of horror and storytelling, I wandered into a panel discussion on Indigenous in the horror fantasy genre led by esteemed Native writers and artists. Speakers included Johnnie Jae, Shane Hawk (Cheyenne & Arapaho), and Jim Terry (Ho-Chunk). The panel was moderated by Weyodi Oldbear (Comanche), delving into the nuances of Indigenous representation in the genre. Reflecting on personal experiences and cultural insights, participants explored themes of stereotype subversion, historical erasure, and the colonial underpinnings of the cannibalism and haunted house trope while celebrating works of Blackfeet horror writer Stephen Graham Jones and having a good laugh over campy films such as 1989 film "The Cellar".

Afterward, I got the chance to connect with Weyodi Oldbear (bisexual, she/her) for an interview over video chat. Oldbear, a mother of three children, two of whom are transgender and one cishet autistic physicist, integrates experienced identities into her commitment to inclusivity within her work as a Native science-fiction writer.

In our conversation, Oldbear delved into the themes of her work, which often feature 2SLGBTQIA+ characters, emphasizing her belief that the geek/nerd fan culture operates as a gift economy, driven more by passion and recognition than financial gain. She also highlighted her upcoming projects, including characters like Tilly, a transfem cousin, and Victor, a gay man, illustrating the diverse representation she strives to achieve.

When asked about her pride in being an Indigiqueer person in the geek community, Oldbear said: "I don't know if pride is the right word but I love to see the flowering of geekdom as a beautiful, diverse and accepting space. It wasn't always that way." She emphasized the positive evolution of the geek community towards greater inclusivity, celebrating diverse identities. Oldbear stressed the importance of creating space for Native voices within geek culture to combat stereotypes and offer fresh perspectives. Reflecting on her experience at IndigiPopX 2024, she described it as " drinking from a firehose of Indigenous creativity."

As IndigiPopX came to a close, I experienced a mix of emotions, tinged with both sadness and sweetness as I prepared to leave. Reflecting on the vibrant blend of Indigenous heritage and geek culture, alongside the recognition of the diversity within our Indigiqueer community, I felt a deep sense of connection, unlike any other convention experience. It was a unique blessing. Held in the old Indian Territory, a place where my family had been relocated before fleeing to the Pacific Northwest, attending this convention felt like more than just a gathering—it felt like another step in my family's ongoing journey of intergenerational healing and a validation to my cultural, gender and orientation identity.

About the author

Amber Hampton is a gender fluid, bisexual, Two-Spirit Tsalagi, who's a developer by day and a complete nerd by night (actually full-time). Whether it's discussing video games, comics, food, or anything fantasy and sci-fi, conversations with Amber can go on for hours, so be warned if you ever meet. When the body is not being a dumpster fire due to heDS, Amber finds enjoyment in beading, sewing, foraging for medicine, and preparing traditional noms. Always eager for a good story, especially from elders.

PRESERVING TRADITION AND CULTURE OF GUINEA-BISSAU'S VIBRANT BIJAGÓS ISLANDS

BY YSM

Tucked in the Atlantic off the coast of mainland Guinea-Bissau, the Bijagós Islands are home to an extraordinary and vibrant Indigenous culture that thrives on a foundation of tradition and community pride.

At the heart of Bijagós society is a unique matriarchal structure, where historically and even today, women hold paramount influence. They manage land ownership, and resource distribution and are pivotal in guiding family and community decisions. This powerful matriarchy highlights the respect and reverence for women in Bijagós culture, a significant source of pride and cultural identity within their communities.

On the Bijagós Islands, dance and music aren't just pastimes; they're the heartbeat of daily life. These vibrant expressions are at the core of the community's intricate initiation ceremonies, vital rites of passage marking social status and adulthood. Young men and women are ushered into their new roles through elaborate dances, rhythmic music, and profound rituals. These ceremonies not only celebrate their rich heritage but also ensure the preservation and continuity of their cultural values, making each beat and movement a testament to their enduring traditions.

> *"On the Bijagós Islands, dance and music aren't just pastimes; they're the heartbeat of daily life."*

Initiation ceremonies on the Bijagós Islands emphasize the spiritual essence of natural objects, places, and creatures. This deep connection to nature is evident in their reverence for sacred sites like forests and rivers, which are central to their spiritual and daily lives. Each group and island within the archipelago boasts its marine totem, from the renowned Bijagós sea turtles to sawfish sharks and playful dolphins. Through rich oral traditions and vibrant rituals, the inhabitants of the Bijagós Islands proudly preserve and celebrate their unique cultural legacy.

The Bijagós Islands is one of the largest archipelagos on the African continent. Made up of approximately 88 islands, Bubaque is one of its biggest islands, with a population of around 6,427 as of 2009, according to the World Bank, and home of the Bijagós people's vibrant culture.

To help preserve and protect this culture, groups such as the Netos de Bandim travel the country and the world, showcasing the patrimonial cultural heritage of the Bijagós people and other Indigenous groups in Guinea-Bissau. Under the direction of Negado Ector Camara, a renowned dancer in Guinea-Bissau and internationally, Netos de Bandim has become a symbol of cultural pride. Camara's deep love for his culture and his passion for sharing the music, sounds, and traditional attire of the Bijagós Indigenous group shine through in every performance.

“There is an importance to share our songs and dance not only with the entire world but specifically throughout West Africa to build relationships and connections with our regional family”, Negado shared during an open rehearsal of the Netos de Bandim group. On stage are around 50 dancers of all ages bringing their best footwork and voices front and center in preparation for upcoming performances.

The dancers leave the practice hall one by one through the haze of heat and the drums begin their harmonious chant to call the dancers back into the hall. At the forefront is Negado's son, whose impressive skills captivate the room despite being smaller than many of the other young men in the group. His talent at such a young age shines brightly during their practices. His older "brothers" in the group frame him as they begin their dance routine. These movements lead into a traditional dance that honors and embodies the hammerhead sharks, leaping dolphins, and large fish that inhabit and protect the oceans surrounding their island home.

As the drums fade, the young women dancers parade in, singing in unison with syncopated steps and swaying to their voices. Their faces light up with pure joy, reflecting their pleasure in the perfection of the routine. As their song ends, the drums pierce the air once more, and their feet begin to fly as they complete their procession out of the room. It's impossible to imagine how many times they have practiced this flawless tribute to their ancestors, land, and oceans.

Throughout the rehearsal, the young women of Netos de Bandim stand out not only for their intricate dance moves but also for their powerful voices. Their meditative melodies, rooted in traditional songs, blend seamlessly with the rhythmic drum beats, creating a timeless and captivating performance. This integral role of women in the performance mirrors the vital role women play in Bijagós communities, highlighting their strength and cultural importance.

The cultural heritage of the Bijagós Islands stands as a testament to the resilience and vibrancy of its people. Despite the challenges posed by modernity and external influences, the Bijagós maintain a deep pride in and strong connection to their traditions. Cultural ambassadors like Negado Ector Camara and groups like Netos de Bandim showcase the Bijagós' heritage on the global stage, playing a crucial role in preserving and promoting this rich cultural tapestry. Their efforts ensure that the traditions of the Bijagós Islands are not only remembered but celebrated, fostering a sense of pride and continuity for future generations.

The people of the Bijagós Islands are a beacon of cultural resilience and pride, offering a beautiful example of timeless cultural honor. Their example demonstrates how to preserve and celebrate cultural heritage in the modern age for all to admire.

“Despite the challenges posed by modernity and external influences, the Bijagós maintain a deep pride in and strong connection to their traditions.”

About the author

YSM is a marine and environmental conservation professional with 10+ years of experience with a passion for shark conservation, Indigenous-led conservation, and land/ocean rights. They use nature-based solutions as a tool to spread knowledge and awareness in Western Afriqiyah and Abya Yala through the project of The Gambian Marine and Environmental Conservation Initiative.

COLORS FROM THE CARIBBEAN: LOVE, FREEDOM, AND DIVERSITY

BY LAURA MARTÍNEZ

The colors and faces of the Colombian Caribbean emerge with strength and pride. The diversity and *mestizaje* embrace each other in a visual dialogue that celebrates our identity and ancestral inheritance.



UNABU: EMBERA CHAMI GIRL IN FIRE FLOWERS

Unabu means light in the Embera Chami language. Unabu is the light of the sun, the light of life that persists in Indigenous communities that are remote and affected by the armed internal conflict in Colombia. These communities continue resisting.



WHAT TO DO ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY?

This illustration intertwines the threads of ancestral cultures and contemporary voices. Blackness, *mestizaje*, Indigenous and trans communities. Together, they form a triangle of power, a celebration of the diversity and resilience of Abya Yala. This illustration was made in collaboration with RED HILA, an organization that promotes research on social realities from a gender perspective.



FEELING A LOT

Feeling a lot is a revolutionary manifesto in the face of a world where we are required to abandon tenderness to give way to complete rationality.

What do we do to prove that we are alive at birth?

Cry. Feel.



"THE KISS," A REINTERPRETATION OF THE PAINTING BY GUSTAV KLIMT

Two *mestiza* women embrace each other in an intimate and loving hug. One of them has more Indigenous features, reflecting the diversity of her roots. Their clothes, instead of the original golden details, are adorned with multicolored beads and ancestral symbology.

The legend reads "Love blossoms in the territory of freedom," to encapsulate not only the love of a diverse couple, but also to spread a message about the right to freedom for all communities and their resistance in the face of violence. The illustration intertwines love, identity, and struggle.

About the artist

Laura Martínez was born and raised in the Colombian Caribbean, and identifies as a sentimental artist. Laura's work stands as a political challenge, where social criticism and protest art are the pillars on which the narrative is built.

Laura firmly believes in the transformative power of art and in the capacity of each individual to contribute to social change. Laura has a clear commitment with what she loves and for that reason she trusts in the building (for many utopian) of a better future.

"The social function of the artist is to provoke and encourage humanity, that's why I decided from full awareness that my task in this world is to CREATE instead of answering."

STRONG WOMEN, WARRIOR WOMEN, THEY ARE THE AMAZONAS OF YAXUNAH

BY JESSE FOLEY-TAPIA

When the Amazonas of Yaxunah formed in 2018, they were told the softball field was only for men. With little equipment, they played barefooted and with sticks as bats to challenge traditional gender norms that restricted women's participation in sports.

The 28 women on the team, aged 14 to 63, play in their traditional Huipil dresses to honor their Mayan culture. These embroidered garments represent their cultural identity through their design and color.

The softball team continues to break free from cultural gender barriers set upon them, inspiring many throughout México. "They tried to tell us women can't play sports, women can't go out of the house, they can't study, they can't work with men. That's our rebellion," says right fielder Yessica Yazmin Diaz Canul.



The Amazonas before their game against the Águilas de San Antonio played at a local park in Halachó, a small municipality in México's Yucatán Peninsula. From left to right: Ceci Chan (Second Base), Regina Chan (the daughter of Liliana), Liliana Carolina Chan Puc (Third Base and Shortstop), Yasuri Balam (Designated Hitter), Shirley Mex Chan (Shortstop and Left Field), María Enedina Canul (First Base), Yessica Yazmin Diaz Canul (Right Field and Third Base), Celia Lorenza Chan (Right Field), Daniela Patrocinia Canche (Catcher), María Juanita Moo (Starting Pitcher and Left Field), María Amalia Ek (Center Field), Sitlali Yovana Poot (Left Field and Relief Pitcher). Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024



Daniela Patrocinia Canche gives a menacing look to the opposing pitcher as she settles into the batter's box. Each player would kick around the dirt before their at-bat to reveal cooler and more forgiving soil. Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024



María Enedina Canul guards first base during the game against the Águilas de San Antonio, in the municipality of Halachó. María Enedina is one of 750 or so Yaxunenses within the Yaxunah community. Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024



Ceci Chan gets ready to swing during the game against the Águilas de San Antonio, in the municipality of Halachó. The contrast in equipment between the two teams makes the Amazonas' victory over the Águilas, 24 to 19, more impressive. Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024

About the author

Jesse Foley-Tapia obtained his degree in English in 2020 and his Masters in Journalism in 2023, both from the University of California, Berkeley. Jesse is a firm believer in abolition and community care. He also believes that organic food, clean drinking water, shelter, healthcare and some form of higher education should be available for all, for free. Ultimately, he would love to help historically and intentionally marginalized communities overcome obstacles and barriers set upon them. You can check more of his work at jessefoleytapia.com.

HONORING NEX BENEDICT

BY SOLANGE AGUILAR



Nex Benedict was a 16-year-old non-binary Chahta student whose life was taken due to anti-queerness at their school in February 2024. Their death is a tragedy and a sobering reminder of what it's like to be queer in a country that doesn't honor our traditional ways of queerness. Whenever I make a piece to honor someone - both living or dead - I take great care and time in making each piece.

Although I didn't know Nex personally, I made sure that all of the flowers that surround Nex are native to Chahta Territory. The stars are from a so-called "Oklahoma" skyline. The overall color palette reflects the non-binary flag colors of black, white, purple, and yellow. The cedar around their shoulders is there to send them off in a good way and to put down prayers to all the other queer youth who need it, to the queer youth who deserve to grow up and become elders and have full, happy lives as their authentic selves.

PROTECT NATIVE KIDS. PROTECT QUEER NATIVE KIDS. PROTECT TRANS KIDS.

About the author

Solange Aguilar (They/Ze) is a Mescalero Apache, Yo'eme, & Filipinx (Kalinga & Kapampangan) artist, poet, and zinemaker currently living in Qenepstin, Chumash Territory (“Santa Barbara, CA”). They are a first-place winner in the Santa Barbara Poetry Slam, a recipient of The Pachamama Skillshare and Women's Creative Collective for Change artist scholarship, and a 2021 fellow from the Artist2Artist program by the Art Matters Foundation.

AUCKLAND PRIDE FESTIVAL 2024: A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY AND UNITY

BY ISABEL MARÍA RIOFRÍO

The Auckland Pride Festival 2024 celebrated the Takatāpui, MVPFAFF, Queer Pasifika & Rainbow Communities in Tāmaki Makaurau, (“New Zealand”), with the theme "Ki Tua / Beyond Paradise," which explored both historical and futuristic queer narratives. Highlights include "Kiss Goodbye to Judgement," a photographic exhibition at Silo Park, and the film festival "Lesbian Sapphic Flicks" at the Charlotte Museum, showcasing queer cinema.

Events such as "Queer Yarns" at the Auckland Art Gallery offered interactive activities, while "Loud and Proud" featured a diverse range of performances from queer musicians across Auckland. The festival also included the "Big Gay Out" at Coyle Park, a lively, family-friendly event with music and markets. Celebrations ended with the Auckland Pride March & Party, celebrating the Takatāpui, MVPFAFF, Queer Pasifika & Rainbow Communities diversity and strength with a vibrant procession starting from Aotea Square.

The Auckland Pride Festival 2024 also featured numerous workshops, panel discussions, and community gatherings designed to educate and inspire. These events aimed to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Takatāpui, MVPFAFF, Queer Pasifika & Rainbow Communities history, culture, and contemporary issues. With an extensive lineup, the festival is an annual platform for meaningful dialogue and connection among attendees.

"KEEP THE FIRE BURNING! BLAK, LOUD, AND PROUD”: THE THEME FOR NAIDOC WEEK

BY ISABEL MARÍA RIOFRÍO

The National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week is a time to celebrate and recognize the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week 2024, taking place from July 7 to July 14, carries the powerful theme "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud." This theme highlights the resilience, pride, and enduring spirit of Indigenous communities in “Australia.”

One of the highlights of NAIDOC Week 2024 is the unveiling of the official NAIDOC poster, designed by Samuawgadhalgal artist Deb Belyea. The artwork is a vibrant and symbolic representation of the theme, capturing the essence of Indigenous pride and cultural continuity. The poster will be prominently displayed in various communities and serve as an inspirational emblem for the celebrations.

Throughout the week, a variety of events will take place, including cultural performances, art exhibitions, and educational workshops. These events aim to engage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The celebrations also provide a platform for discussing important issues affecting Indigenous communities, promoting solidarity and advocacy.

NAIDOC Week 2024 is expected to be a significant cultural event, that encourages reflection on the contributions and achievements of First Nations peoples. The theme "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud" invites everyone to celebrate Indigenous culture with pride and ensure that the rich heritage and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to thrive.



Yessica Yazmin Diaz Canul warms up before the softball game against the Águilas de San Antonio, in Halachó. "Our husbands said, you can't leave your house, you have a son, you have to take care of me but we started changing that ideology of people, of men, of other women. Now more girls are studying in university and high school. That's what changed. Little by little we are achieving more changes," says Diaz Canul. Photo credit: Jesse Foley-Tapia, May 5, 2024

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