UCLA MAGAZINE FALL 2024

OUR NEXT CHANCELLOR | SHOULD YOU GET A BRUIN TATTOO?

UCLA

JOHN WOODEN'S FINAL GLORY

Reliving Coach's last championship, 50 years later

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BUILDING BLOCKS
See more of the work of famed architect Eric Owen Moss in a stunning online photo gallery at ucla.in/3SWrOqd

ON THE COVER:
Artist Charlie Griak created this original illustration, inspired by retro basketball program covers, exclusively for *UCLA Magazine*.

Features

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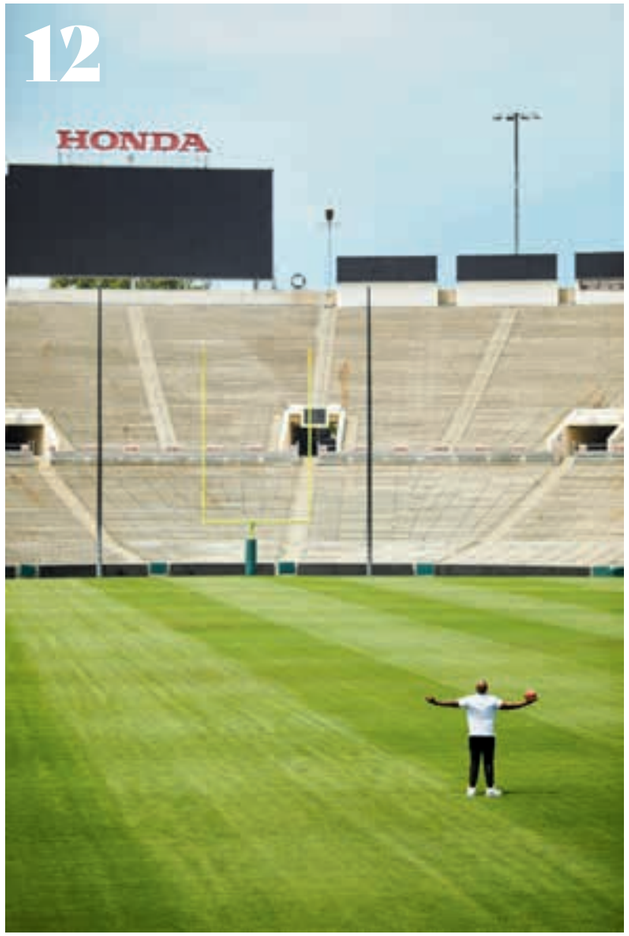
WANT A BRUIN TATTOO?
View a gallery of cool designs created for *UCLA Magazine* at ucla.in/3X9XJ9j



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Bruinology

Celebrating the blue, the gold and everything in between

Also in this issue

PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): GLASKEWIJ; YURI HASEGAWA; DAVID ESQUIVEL

UCLA MAGAZINE FALL 2024
VOLUME 36 NUMBER 1

A PUBLICATION OF UCLA STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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Filmmaker and freelance illustrator **CHARLIE GRIAK** created the dynamic retro-style art for our oral history on John Wooden's 10th and final championship winning season. A former college baseball player and avid sports fan, Griak was excited to dive into researching the Bruins' 1974–75 campaign to uncover "details that bring the images to life." Over his more than two-decade career, Griak has created commissioned works for such clients as Microsoft, Target, American Express and *National Geographic*. His fourth and most recent film, *End of the Rope*, tells the true story of a 1931 murder investigation in North Dakota.

"The UCLA experience is something memorable enough to carry with you throughout your lifetime." That's the lesson photographer **MICHELLE GROSKOPF** learned while shooting our feature story on the Bruin faithful whose devotion runs so deep they decided to display their pride with UCLA-themed tattoos. Groskopf's work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine* and *Wired*, among other publications, while her corporate clients include TikTok, Meta and Nike. She is currently working on a book with Los Angeles–based independent publisher and coffee roaster Deadbeat Club.

ALEXIS HUNLEY is a photographer, director and archivist whose art centers on the intersectional experiences of underrepresented communities, so it's no surprise she found meaning in capturing the inspiring work of UCLA's Prison Education Program. "Witnessing faculty, students and currently incarcerated individuals learn alongside and from each other reaffirmed for me the power of collective care and action," she says. Hunley's work has appeared in *TIME*, *Essence*, *The New Republic* and *Rolling Stone*, and she has worked with the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the WACO Theater Center. Her lifelong goal: to create work that celebrates the beauty and complexity of the human experience.

"I gained a new appreciation for the double-edged nature of fame — the quirks of the 'Be careful what you wish for' department," says **JESSE KATZ**, who in this issue profiles UCLA associate professor of English and acclaimed novelist Justin Torres. "I'd assumed that winning the National Book Award would be every writer's dream, and it may yet be his. But I was not expecting his frank description of how exposed the prize made him feel, how antithetical it was to the solitary experience of writing." A veteran magazine writer, Katz has reported on everything from music and food to baseball and literature for *GQ*, *New York*, *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times Magazine*, among others. His latest book, published in July, is a true-crime narrative about Southland gang warfare titled *The Rent Collectors: Exploitation, Murder, and Redemption in Immigrant L.A.*

A writer and artist whose work has been featured in *Cultured*, *Photograph* and *Art Basel* magazines, **DIANA MCCLURE** was an ideal choice to pen this issue's valentine to legendary artist and UCLA treasure Betye Saar '49, the current subject of a retrospective at the Huntington. "I was reminded of how Saar's underlying interests in metaphysics and mysticism are ever-present in her process, despite her use of very tactile materials," McClure says, adding that it was also a "delight to discover that Betye Saar's parents fell in love at UCLA, where they were students in the 1920s."

"I've had the great fortune to learn about hitting from future Hall of Famer Joey Votto and men's room crooning from Bono," says **SRIDHAR PAPPU**, who reported our oral history celebrating the 50th anniversary of John Wooden's last NCAA championship. "Now I know how to tie my laces and put on my socks the Wooden way." The author of *The Year of the Pitcher: Bob Gibson, Denny McLain and the End of Baseball's Golden Age*, Pappu is a former columnist for *The New York Times*, correspondent for *The Atlantic* and staff writer for *The Washington Post* and *Sports Illustrated*. "The story revealed how really great the game was in that era," he says of retelling the tale of UCLA's 1974–75 season. "It also taught me how much went into playing for Coach Wooden. This went beyond learning set plays or getting the right haircut. It was about belief — in him, in your teammates, in yourself."

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AT ISSUE

A Time for New Beginnings

By UCLA Interim Chancellor Darnell Hunt M.A. '91, Ph.D. '94

On August 1, I had the honor of stepping into the role of interim chancellor at UCLA, charged with stewarding the university as we prepare for the arrival of our next chancellor, Julio Frenk, at the start of 2025.

I take up this position with great humility, with recognition of the responsibility entrusted to me, and with gratitude for the opportunity to continue giving back to an institution that has largely shaped my own life. I have seen this campus from a number of vantage points — that of a student, alum, faculty member, department chair, dean of social sciences and, most recently, executive vice chancellor and provost. These varied experiences have led me to conclude, without hesitation, that UCLA is one of the most extraordinary educational institutions ever created.

UCLA has built such a remarkable legacy because of the talents and passion of our faculty, staff, students, alumni and partners; a principled commitment to inclusive excellence; and a singular dedication to the highest standards of research, education and service. Certainly, we are far from perfect. Yet even during challenging times, our community has persevered, always striving to reach higher, to know more, and to do better.

UCLA's contributions to the world, a commitment to continuous growth and improvement, and the relationships we have built with the public and our partners will drive our continued success despite the obstacles ahead.

In a time when some Americans express significant distrust in colleges and universities, UCLA remains the most applied-to university in the nation, and it showcases the immense social and economic benefits that come from high-quality public higher education.

In a time when we encounter skepticism of science in our country, UCLA is achieving medical and technological breakthroughs that save lives and ease suffering.

In a time of broadening economic divisions in society, UCLA widens the doors of opportunity for thousands each year — with nearly one-third of our students from low-income families, one-third from underrepresented backgrounds, and one-third among the first in their families to attend college.

And in a time when a commitment to diversity is attacked, we prove that a community attracting talent from every background and every corner of the globe can achieve great things when we champion equity, inclusion and mutual respect.

I recently shared our *Four-Point Plan for a Safer, Stronger UCLA* with the Bruin community, which reaffirms core institutional values and our commitment to better embodying them. Our to-do list is long: We must ensure that all Bruins can participate fully in our community, regardless of race, class, religion, gender, physical ability or political beliefs. We must fairly and responsibly protect the rights of everyone on our campus. We must push ourselves to respect one another's humanity and endeavor to understand one another's perspectives, especially when we have deep divisions in ideology or background.

We have much to do over the next several months to build on our strengths and address our shortcomings. But when I think of the extraordinary talent, skill and devotion of our staff, faculty, students, alumni and donors, I am convinced that we will meet the challenges before us.

When I reflect on UCLA's first century of accomplishment, I can honestly say that we are entering our second century with aspirations that are even higher. We are guided by our 2023–28 strategic plan, which focuses on deepening our engagement with Los Angeles, expanding our global reach, enhancing our world-class research and teaching, and becoming a more efficient and effective institution. Inclusivity and excellence remain the foundational pillars upon which we build our institutional future.

At its best, UCLA is a place where people make and remake themselves, where we give birth to ideas and nurture dreams, where we create opportunities and expand horizons, and where we work diligently to benefit our region, our nation and the world. That vision will guide my service as UCLA's interim chancellor, and I am committed to partnering with our community to ensure that UCLA remains one of the greatest institutions of higher education the world has ever known.

PHOTO: DAVID ESQUIVEL

UCLA Authors' Marketplace

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT FEATURING BOOKS BY UCLA ALUMNI AND FACULTY

Science Fiction Thrills ... Horror Chills

BY NICHOLAS ANEZ '65

This fourth volume of the author's *Celluloid Adventures* series focuses on films within the science fiction and horror genres that are undeservedly unknown and should be rediscovered. This volume includes extensive analyses of 14 movies released from 1943 to 1978. Available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

There Are No Rules for This

BY JJ ELLIOTT '95

After Ali Stirling loses one of her best friends to suicide, suddenly and without warning, she and two other friends decide to hold their own funerals while they're still alive — an unexpectedly cathartic and moving experience that teaches them volumes about themselves and their lost friend.

Giovanni Boccaccio, Theseid of the Nuptials of Emilia (Teseida delle Nozze di Emilia)

TRANSLATED BY VINCENZO TRAVERSA M.A. '59, PH.D. '63

The first epic poem written in Italian is this work by Boccaccio. Conceived and composed during the Florentine author's stay in Naples, it combines both epic and lyric themes in a genre that may be defined as an epic of love. Besides its literary value, it reflects the author's youthful emotions during the happiest times of his life.

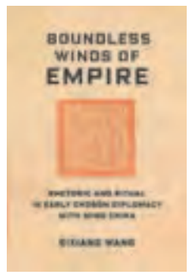
SMiLE: The Rise, Fall & Resurrection of Brian Wilson

BY DAVID LEAF

SMiLE: The Rise, Fall & Resurrection of Brian Wilson is an oral history of one of the most famous albums in music history. It celebrates the 20th anniversary of *Brian Wilson Presents SMiLE*, a Grammy Award–winning, best-selling artistic miracle, the most unexpected creation of Wilson's glorious roller coaster of a career. Publication date: March 2025

Boundless Winds of Empire: Rhetoric and Ritual in Early Chosŏn Diplomacy With Ming China

BY SIXIANG WANG



"Korea was not the compliant vassal that Chinese imagined it to be, but a canny role-player manipulating China's imperial myth so as to constrain its capacity to dominate. An eloquent revision of what we thought we knew."
— Timothy Brook, co-editor of *Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations Since Chinggis Khan*

Leading Modern Technology Teams in Complex Times: Applying the Principles of the Agile Manifesto

BY KEVIN R. LOWELL '89

Master the art of leadership with *Leading Modern Technology Teams in Complex Times*. Learn from real stories of leadership across the technology landscape. Navigate modern leadership, emphasizing collaboration and generative dialogue. Discover how to empower your teams amid complexity, and to lead with insight and innovation in today's fast-changing tech world.

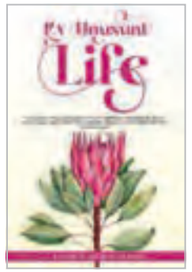
Startup Cafe

BY BILL ROLLINSON '81

Startup Cafe is a collection of stories about growing up in Silicon Valley during the 1970s. The story continues with the pioneers behind the scenes who introduced early software for the Apple Macintosh in the 1980s and the first internet companies that were created in the 1990s. The book finishes with entrepreneurship in the 2000s and what work might look like in the future.

My Unusual Life

BY LAURIE LEWIS HAVEL '72



Immerse yourself in the action, drama and romance of *My Unusual Life*, an autobiography that chronicles a determined spirit through twists and turns — a time, in retrospect, full of life, replete with humor and not without challenges.

Overcoming the Odds: The Benefits of Completing College for Unlikely Graduates

BY JENNIE E. BRAND

In *Overcoming the Odds,* Jennie Brand reveals the benefits of college by comparing the life outcomes of college graduates with their counterfactual life paths. Brand's innovative research convincingly demonstrates that four-year college completion enables disadvantaged graduates to increase wages and circumvent unemployment, low-wage work, job instability, poverty and social assistance.

Ethics of the Algorithm: Digital Humanities and Holocaust Memory

BY TODD PRESNER

How can computational tools from the digital humanities expand how we see, read and listen to Holocaust testimonies? To answer this question, Presner proposes an "ethics of the algorithm" to mediate between the ethical demands of listening to individual testimonies and the interpretative possibilities unleashed by large-scale, computational approaches.

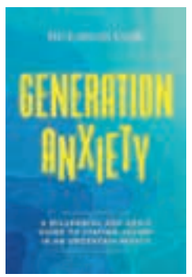
Uncertainty: Decision-Making & Teamwork in High-tech Healthcare

BY FEDERICA RAIA, MURRAY KWON & MARIO DENG

Building on *Relational Medicine — Personalizing Modern Healthcare*, our new book presents a single case analysis of recorded consecutive encounters in a dramatically accelerating life-and-death decision-making situation in the high-tech medical practice of advanced heart failure. It analyzes interactions among practitioners, patient and family as they face multiple uncertainties, illuminating the roles of each multidisciplinary team member and offering a novel approach to unravel an unrecognized universe of practice themes aimed at continuous improvement.

Generation Anxiety: A Millennial and Gen Z Guide to Staying Afloat in an Uncertain World

BY LAUREN COOK '13



Dr. Lauren Cook, a psychologist and career coach who specializes in treating millennials and Gen Z patients — and a millennial who also lives with anxiety — understands the many nuanced reasons why these two groups are struggling. This relatable, honest and information-packed book incorporates thorough, evidence-backed psychological research and diverse client experiences to help readers gain insight into their own stressors and learn how to combat them.

The **UCLA AUTHORS' MARKETPLACE** allows authors to create awareness for their books among our audience of 157,000 alumni, donors and other members of the campus community. Whether you've recently written a book or you're the author of a perennial bestseller, you can make a big impact on an extended audience of Bruin readers who are passionate about reading and eager to champion UCLA accomplishments.

To reserve an ad in the Fall 2025 UCLA Authors' Marketplace, please contact Chris Coniglio at **cconiglio@stratcomm.ucla.edu**.

bruinology

Celebrating the blue, the gold and everything in between

A collaboration between interdisciplinary fiber artists Tanya Aguiñiga and Porfirio Gutiérrez takes center stage in a PST ART show at the Fowler.

PHOTO: YURI HASEGAWA

Arts and Sciences

IT IS THE LARGEST art event in the nation: 800-plus artists, 60-plus exhibitions. It's also one of the most important. Its mission: to spark critical civic dialogue, to get us thinking and talking about our world.

Held every five years and underwritten by the Getty Foundation, PST ART (formerly Pacific Standard Time) challenges arts organizations to bring ingenuity, curiosity and creativity to the urgent issues of our day. This year's theme: *Art & Science Collide.*

With 50-plus grant recipients, UCLA remains the heart of the initiative. Exhibitions at the Fowler Museum at UCLA and the Hammer Museum at UCLA examine the climate crisis and anthropogenic disasters, seen through a lens of equity and social justice. In the series *Science Fiction Against the Margins*, the UCLA Film & Television Archive and the UCLA Cinema & Media Studies Program reveal what the genre can teach us far beyond Hollywood entertainment.

As artists and scientists explore climate change, Indigenous knowledge, the burgeoning field of eco-acoustic art, and countless other topics, they push the boundaries of what we know. Or, perhaps, what we merely choose to believe. *—Mary Daily*

A Whole New Ball Game

As UCLA plays its inaugural season in the Big Ten, new head football coach DeShaun Foster is bringing energy, vision and his own Bruin story.

By Michael Callahan

Photography by GL Askew II

"YOU'RE CATCHING ME in a sugary moment," DeShaun Foster is saying, popping the latest in a seemingly endless series of chewy Starburst candies into his mouth. He smiles. "I actually went into that drawer to get a napkin."

If he needs the occasional sweet jolt, it's understandable. In February, the soft-spoken, affable former NFL running back was named the new head coach of UCLA football, taking the reins as the Bruins play their first season as a member of the NCAA's famed Big Ten conference.

"There's a lot of expectations," Foster says. "I mean, *John Wooden* was a coach at this university. I don't take this lightly. But I do think that the fact I have been part of this program does help."

Indeed, the North Carolina native, 44, was a standout Bruin running back before playing seven seasons in the NFL, most of them with the Carolina Panthers. Retiring in 2009, Foster was planning to enroll in law school — until UCLA's legendary Bobby Field, then an athletics administrator, recruited him as an assistant coach in 2013. Aside from one season at Texas Tech, Foster spent the next decade in Westwood.

Entering the Big Ten offers access to a much wider, deeper recruiting class ("The sky's the limit," Foster says), more resources, more national television exposure, more travel, more … everything. Including, of course, pressure. Battling the rowdy elite of college football — powerhouses like Nebraska, Penn State, Michigan and Ohio State — presents a formidable long-term challenge. "I can pump up the crowd noise in practice," Foster admits. "I can't change the venue."

Foster coaches by a simple credo: discipline, respect and enthusiasm. But no matter how many Starbursts get chewed, there's no way to sugarcoat it: The Bruins are considered an underdog this season. Still, their coach remains calm. And undaunted.

"The bigger the game, the more excitement there'll be," he says. "I think the players are looking forward to it."

Says Foster, photographed inside the Rose Bowl, of the Bruins' storied football legacy: "I don't take this lightly."

Sing a Song of UCLA

For almost a century, Westwood has seen a lot of amazing musical moments.

By John Harlow

Fleeing the Nazis (who had branded his modernist compositions "degenerate"), Austrian composer **Arnold Schoenberg** arrives in the Hollywood Hills to teach music. Two years later, Schoenberg will be appointed a UCLA professor on a salary of $5,400 a year, which allows him to buy a home across the street from Shirley Temple. He becomes a tennis partner of George Gershwin.

1934

Jazz giant **Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington** is playing at Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club in Culver City when two UCLA students make an audacious request: Would he play a campus concert for free? He agrees, and students pack Royce Hall; the band bus mistakenly heads for USC (the indignity!), turning up two hours late. The show — Ellington's first concert performance in America — is later immortalized with a Robert Graham–sculpted maquette outside Schoenberg Hall.

1936

George Gershwin arrives in Hollywood to work on a Fred Astaire movie; Gershwin had written "Strike Up the Band" for the 1927 Broadway musical of the same title, and he and his brother Ira donate a revamped version of the song to UCLA. They are paid in swag and game tickets. Today, the UCLA band still plays a jaunty arrangement before football games.

1937

The forerunner of the Center for the Art of Performance launches its first subscription season at Royce Hall in 1937, headlined by famed African American contralto **Marian Anderson**. Two years later, Anderson will become world famous after the Daughters of the American Revolution block her from singing at Constitution Hall. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt resigns from the DAR in protest and helps organize a national broadcast of a concert by Anderson from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

1945

Spring Sing

Early UCLA fraternities begin a spirited tradition of serenading sorority sisters; William Ackerman '24, tennis coach at UCLA, organizes a "sing-off" among 11 groups. **Spring Sing** is born.

1952

Spending his last years living above the Sunset Strip, reclusive Russian conductor **Igor Stravinsky** gives a rare performance at the Royce podium, leading the Los Angeles Chamber Symphony Orchestra in a program heavy on 18th-century masters such as Bach and Haydn.

PHOTOS: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

1961

Ella Fitzgerald plays Royce in a performance packed with tunes by her favorite composers: Thelonious Monk, Benny Goodman and George Gershwin. A resident of Beverly Hills, the "Queen of Jazz" was a Royce season ticket holder.

The Thelonious Monk Quartet takes an autumnal evening off from recording its *Live at the It Club* album at the eponymous Washington Boulevard jazz venue to appear at Royce, where, Monk says, the sound is "sweet." It's later revealed he was talking about the fee.

1964

As a seasonal gift, **Bob Dylan** pegs all ticket prices for his December 6 Royce gig at one dollar. He will return to UCLA for two nights in May 1998, this time to perform at Pauley Pavilion with Joni Mitchell and Van Morrison. Scalpers will ask $2,000 per ticket.

1967

The Student Culture Commission invites **Nina Simone** to open its fall jazz season at Royce; the program contains a warning to patrons that while the singer is known for her passionate pleas for racial justice, this should not be misunderstood as anger. Simone dies shortly before she is due to return to Royce in 2003.

Purists contend that the **Los Angeles Jazz Festival** at Pauley Pavilion May 12–14 is the apogee of the West Coast jazz scene: Ornette Coleman, John Handy and Carmen McRae all appear. But the clincher for the boast may be Miles Davis playing songs from *Kind of Blue*, routinely voted the best jazz album of all time.

1968

Jimi Hendrix plays the 1,200-seat Ackerman Union Grand Ballroom on February 13; author Michael Thomas reports that adulation runs so high that some men cry and try to kiss the guitarist's boots.

1970

In August, an unknown **Elton John** plays his first U.S. gig at the Troubadour, in West Hollywood. By the time he finishes his tour with a December 6 gig at Royce, he is a rock 'n' roll star. On this same night, Bernie Taupin completes the lyrics to "Tiny Dancer," perfectly capturing the California spirit. John will return to Royce in 2003.

1971

Neil Young's breakthrough album, *Harvest*, is enhanced by the first live version of "The Needle and the Damage Done," an ode to lost friends, which the singer-songwriter records at Royce on January 30. In 2022, Young releases an album of the entire acoustic concert.

1978

On Sunday, October 28, **the Ramones** play 32 songs in under 100 minutes at Royce, from "Blitzkrieg Bop" to "Judy Is a Punk." Ticket price: $8.50.

On May 8, **Fleetwood Mac**'s Stevie Nicks, accompanied by Christine McVie and Mick Fleetwood, drops the flag to start a 10K "rock and run" charity marathon out of UCLA's Drake Stadium. Also on stage: Eddie Money, Jane Wiedlin of the Go-Go's, Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick and Bonnie Raitt, who later joins the Fleetwood Mac crew to sing "Rhiannon" and several other Mac classics.

1983

Mick Fleetwood

Christine McVie

Stevie Nicks

1986

Welsh rock band **the Alarm** makes history when its May gig from the base of Janss Steps is filmed by MTV and broadcast live to Europe via an experimental NASA satellite. Some 25,000 concertgoers attend in person, and countless more watch from across the world.

1994

On Memorial Day 1986, student jazz enthusiast Ron Richards '88, M.B.A. '95, J.D. '95 gathers his friends to put on a small musical gig at UCLA Sunset Canyon Recreation Center. It eventually blossoms into the **JazzReggae Festival**, the largest student-run music festival in the U.S. The annual gathering offers alternative jazz, jam and reggae days and attracts such marquee acts as Ziggy Marley, Erykah Badu, Snoop Dogg, the Roots and Jill Scott — what the *Daily Bruin* eventually labels a "quality hodgepodge."

Jill Scott

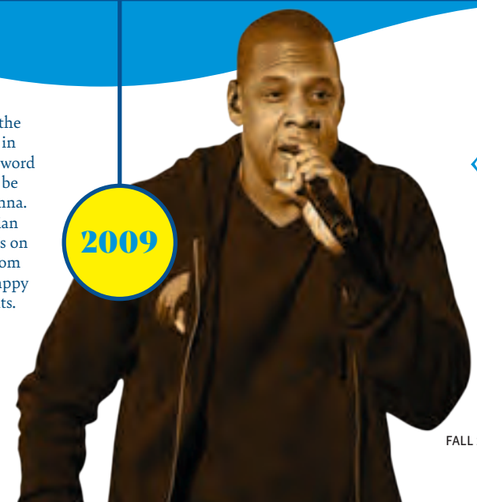
Pauley Pavilion hosts film composer **Henry Mancini**'s 70th birthday party, during which the composer is awarded the UCLA Medal, the university's highest honor; a star-studded celebrity roster attends. Luciano Pavarotti gives a 40-minute performance, and Andy Williams sings Mancini's Oscar-winning "Moon River," from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. There is cake.

2008

Odetta

McCabe's Guitar Shop, the tiny Santa Monica venue famed for great shows and hard seats, holds a five-hour 50th anniversary party at Royce. The stars come out, but the night is dominated by the final appearance of the legendary Odetta, often called "the voice of the Civil Rights Movement." The 77-year-old folk singer caps the night with a stirring performance of "House of the Rising Sun."

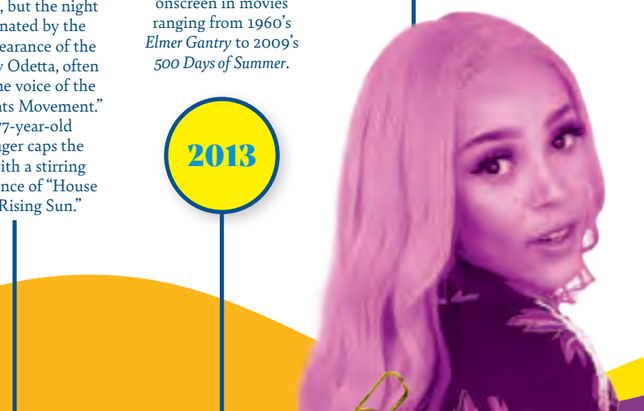
2009



Rapper **Jay-Z** sells out the 13,800 seats of Pauley in minutes, even before the word has leaked that he will be joined on stage by Rihanna. He is backed by musician Pharrell Williams, who is on the cusp of world stardom with his own range of happy hip-hop and floppy hats.

2013

On May 3, the **UCLA Bruin Marching Band** opens for the Rolling Stones at the Staples Center, performing a brassy rendition of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" before 19,000 screaming fans. The band is no stranger to the entertainment industry, having appeared onscreen in movies ranging from 1960's *Elmer Gantry* to 2009's *500 Days of Summer*.



2018

Tarzana-born rapper **Doja Cat** celebrates the release of her first album at Royce. She is backed by Kilo Kish, Sudan Archives and the UCLA Afro-Cuban Ensemble.

For more musical moments, scan the QR code:

PHOTOS: (BRUIN MARCHING BAND) COURTESY OF UCLA HERB ALPERT SCHOOL OF MUSIC; (JAY-Z) BRAD BARKET, INVISION, AP; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A True Work of Art

At 98, Betye Saar is still telling bold, thought-provoking and groundbreaking stories through the power of sculpture.

By Diana McClure • Illustration by Ana Belcher '23

BETYE SAAR '47 is currently searching for an old wooden ladder. One, she says, "with a nice, warm patina." Found objects, overlooked materials, and the thrill of the hunt for both — all are central to her creative process. "The ideas for art are always young," she says. "When I run out of ideas, that's when I'll be old."

That may sound unusual coming from someone born in 1926, but then again, Betye Saar is an unusual talent. Collecting, upcycling and repurposing objects into sculpture is something she first observed growing up in Southern California. As a child, she marveled at the mysterious unfolding of a monumental construction made of discarded dishes and detritus created by artist Simon Rodia. "The Watts Towers were, and still are, incredible, and they were what inspired me the most," she says. "I learned early on that you can make art out of anything."

Saar's parents met as first-years at UCLA in 1924, at a time when less than 2% of U.S. college students were Black; Betye herself enrolled during a time of constant construction on campus. ("There was a lot of dirt," she recalls.)

Trailblazing clearly runs in the family. Saar became a legend in the art world not only for her mastery of materials, but for her unique integration of eclectic subjects, ranging from religion and folklore to mystical images such as the palmistry chart. Her cross-cultural investigations, as well as metaphysical and historical commentary, continue to inspire us. "I like to combine lots of different cultures and ideas," she says, "to make something totally new."

Saar's work has been showcased all over the world, including at New York's Museum of Modern Art and Fondazione Prada in Milan.

Now, in the last act of her storied career, she remains hopeful about what art can achieve. "If I watch the news, I feel saddened. The world seems to move forward and then two steps back," she says. But she remains steadfast in a belief that art can be a powerful voice for change. "Art," she says, "can call things out."

Betye Saar: Drifting Toward Twilight *will be on display at the Huntington through Nov. 30, 2025. Huntington.org.*

Scan the QR Code to view bonus content:

The Gifts That Keep On Giving

For more than a century, graduating classes have bestowed a parting gift to the university as a way of saying "Thank you." Here, a highlight reel of some of the most memorable bequests.

By Fiona Ruane • Illustration by Stan Fellows

1928

The Class of '28 gifts an original text by German theologian Johann Arndt, *Wahren Christenthum (True Christianity)*, published by Benjamin Franklin in 1751. It's the largest book ever printed by Franklin.

1929

A stained-glass window to adorn brand-new Royce Hall, costing $300 and including the class numeral, comes the following year. The meaning and history behind this gift and all of the stained glass in Royce are documented in the 1930 class yearbook.

1942

Feeding the war effort, the patriotic Class of '42 buys war bonds at the height of World War II, which will eventually be used to create scholarships for members of the class of 1953 serving their country. The gift inspires the rest of the student body to raise additional money for military scholarships, USO dances and libraries.

1946

The Founders' Rock bronze plaque by the northwest corner of Murphy Hall, commemorating the spot where UCLA co-founder Edward A. Dickinson stood when deciding where to build the campus, is given by the Class of '46. Its inscription reads: "Here on October 25, 1926, the new campus of the University was formally dedicated."

1947

Feeling sunny, the Class of '47 bestows a sundial on the south end of Powell Library. The gift is actually presented in 1949, with graduates unveiling it in front of Provost Clarence Dykstra, Head Librarian Lawrence Clark Powell, football coach Red Sanders and new basketball coach John Wooden. A *Daily Bruin* headline declares, "Bruins Now Can Tell Time While Sun Shines."

1963

Following a decade with no class gifts, the Class of '63 resurrects the tradition and purchases six pictures for the walls of the Housing Cooperative, the "Coop." Two years later, 1965's class follows suit and donates two photos of UCLA's basketball team in a continued effort to beautify student housing.

1972

Accepted at commencement with suitable gravity by Chancellor Charles E. Young M.A. '57, Ph.D. '60, a bronze plaque recognizing UCLA students who fought and died in the Vietnam War is given by the Class of '72. The plaque especially acknowledges Black, Chicano, Asian and Native American students affected by the war both overseas and at home.

1986

Getting into the swim of things, the Class of '86 donates a new swimming pool for the UCLA nonprofit UniCamp in the San Bernardino Mountains. Campers today continue to enjoy the pool at UniCamp's Camp River Glen, near Big Bear.

1989

Originally named "The Graduate," the picturesque Shapiro Fountain in Royce Quad is bestowed by the Class of '89. Explicitly designed to contribute to the beauty of the campus while not taking away from the grandeur of Royce Hall and Powell Library, it will be built using bricks from the same quarry used to construct the four original campus buildings: Powell, Royce, Kaplan and Haines.

1991

A new reading room, dubbed "Night Powell," opens courtesy of the Class of '91. Transforming old university housing archives, it offers extended library hours while providing additional book storage and new reading nooks. Today, Night Powell stays open all night beginning the third week of every quarter.

2006

A portion of the UCLA Fund donated by the Class of '06 is used to house students affected by Hurricane Katrina. Eighty-four students who had planned to attend school in Louisiana instead enroll at UCLA; 30 live in on-campus housing.

A SIMPLE EQUATION

Inside the **Olga Radko Endowed Math Circle**, the next generation of great math minds is taking shape.

By Lucy Berbeo '06
Photography by David Esquivel

IT'S 10 O'CLOCK on a bright Sunday morning at UCLA, but Vivian Moy-Dinson's students are not your standard campus pupils. Some are in pigtails; a few sport superhero backpacks.

"Rotation," Moy-Dinson is saying, drawing on the board, "is when a point moves along a circle, but the center stays the same." The kids chime in.

"Like an orbit," says one.

"The Earth around the sun!" exclaims another.

The animated kindergartners and first-graders are part of the UCLA Olga Radko Endowed Math Circle, also known as ORMC, a free, weekly enrichment program for gifted K–12 students from a hundred zip codes over the greater Los Angeles area. Think of it as a playground for some of the brightest young minds in the world of mathematics. Established in 2007 as a passion project of the late UCLA math professor Olga Radko, the program serves students united by one common factor: They enjoy math and excel in it.

That's on clear display in Moy-Dinson's classroom. Sitting in neat rows behind placards bearing their first names, this group of 17 kids — all around the age of 5 or 6 — follow her lesson as intently as if they were watching a Pixar movie. They brim with confidence — and pose a *lot* of questions. ("Be brave and ask," Moy-Dinson encourages the quieter ones.)

Teaching assistant Shimon Schlessinger, 16, helps the kids stay focused, easing them into group work. A high school sophomore who completed AP calculus in the seventh grade, Schlessinger himself is enrolled in ORMC, where he's exposed to much more advanced course work than his high school is able to provide — a challenge he relishes. Even during breaks, he and his fellow mathematicians work together on the day's conundrums.

Schlessinger calls the program's approach "radically different." "It provides an amazing sense of community," he says. "Nowhere else can I find a group of people who share such similar interests — people with whom I can truly be myself."

The math whiz kids have inherited the Earth — at least in Westwood.

A Center of Gravity

From the beginning, Schlessinger, who was born and raised in L.A., seemed to have an innate sense about numbers. In kindergarten, while the rest of his class was learning to tell time, he lost interest, instead keeping busy by identifying prime numbers in his head. When he was 7, his parents asked him why he liked math so much.

"He said, 'To me, math is like candy. I can't get enough of it,'" marvels his father, Evan. "What do you do with a kid like that?"

Enroll him in ORMC, which was created to feed just such hungry young minds. Led at its outset by its late founder, the program is today directed by Oleg Gleizer, Radko's longtime colleague and a professor in the UCLA Department of Mathematics. The program stems from the tradition of Eastern European math circles, where both scholars came of age, and it offers opportunities to grow mathematically far beyond what is offered in a typical classroom. The work is focused, challenging, intense and — to its many motivated participants — a lot of fun. Courses range from beginner through intermediate and advanced levels; there's also an offshoot chess club and training for competitions like Math Kangaroo, American Math Competitions and Math Olympiads. Kids thrive on the group work, building self-confidence as well as logic and critical-thinking skills.

Just how many kids in L.A. are willing to spend their Sundays coming to UCLA to do … math? Turns out, a lot. The current number is around 400 — and that simply reflects the number of spaces for enrollment. Some *2,000* more young hopefuls apply every year. Students have to take a qualifying exam to be admitted; those who are accepted are the cream of the academic crop, and most are at the top of their class. "Math circle is like a clubhouse," says 9-year-old Charlotte Huang. "I really loved it when I went home with a math question that my parents couldn't answer."

Down the hall, Gleizer's office buzzes with activity as parents and students stop by to say hello. Eighty percent of ORMC's work, he says, is simply getting kids college-ready when it comes to math. "We know what they get at school, and we know what they need to succeed in my classroom, where I teach as a UCLA professor to undergrads," he says. "We cover the gap."

He's being modest. ORMC does much more than that. Gleizer and his colleagues work around the clock to find new ways to engage the kids' curiosity; at the moment, he's introducing students to something called "five-dimensional chess with multiverse time travel." (Don't ask.) The goal, Gleizer says, is to teach something far grander than equation solving — it's to allow kids to recognize, and explore, math's intrinsic beauty.

"Basically, each time you do math, you are building a part of a universe — your own universe," he says. "And you'll start looking at things in a very different way."

Worlds of Possibility

Ten-year-old Ayden Gandhi recently showed friends at school a magic trick he learned at ORMC. He won't reveal much about it ("A magician never gives away his secrets," says his delighted mother, Rana), but he allows that it has something to do with binary numbers. And mind reading.

That's Math Circle for you.

To the untrained eye, ORMC's wonders really do look like magic. At any given time, the younger students might be cutting up Möbius strips, constructing a hyperbolic soccer ball or learning a secret language through the study of ciphers. By offering a broad range of topics and applications, the program helps them discover what sparks their excitement, as well as what paths they may choose to pursue in the future.

Many of the program's approximately 1,600 alumni have gone on to MIT, Brown, Yale, Columbia, UCLA, UC Berkeley and other top universities. Alumnus Max Steinberg '24, M.A. '24 graduated from UCLA this past June at age 18 with both bachelor's and master's degrees in math. Current students are earning major distinctions, too: Charlotte Huang scored in the top 1% nationwide on the American Math Competition's AMC 8 exam, a 25-question, 40-minute, multiple-choice test for middle schoolers. Tiger (Qiao) Zhang, 16, received a gold medal in this year's international Romanian Master of Mathematics competition. Junior high students Atticus Stewart and Elili Flore each received the highly competitive Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship from the Institute for Educational Advancement.

It's a diverse group. Gleizer says the program makes a concerted effort to support promising students from families with less access to quality education. That commitment began with Radko, who devoted herself to the program before her tragic death from cancer in 2020 at the age of just 45. In one case, a mother who was driving her child from South L.A. couldn't afford to fill her gas tank each week for the trip to Westwood; ORMC stepped in to pay for it. When another student needed housing near campus, Radko contacted the appropriate offices to help secure resources.

"That was something about Olga: She gave her heart," says Sierra Chen M.A. '93, who earned her master's degree in mathematics at UCLA and now sits on the ORMC steering committee. In 2021, Chen made a major philanthropic gift to endow the program and rename it in Radko's honor. "She not only developed the program, she went out of her way to help students."

Satellites on the Move

That wholehearted dedication is shared by the program's leadership and steering committee, which also includes rock star UCLA math professor Terence Tao — winner of the Fields Medal, otherwise known as the "Nobel Prize in mathematics"; the math department, which Gleizer calls "hugely supportive" in every way; and the numerous volunteers and parents who contribute time and support. And it's embodied in ORMC's more than 80 instructors, who include UCLA faculty and an impressive number of current UCLA students.

The Math Circle movement is gaining ground in the U.S., with programs in place at UC Berkeley, Stanford University and other locations. Having a thriving community of student instructors at one of the nation's top public universities is one particular hallmark of UCLA's endeavor: Undergraduates gain exposure to new areas of math as they learn to teach, while faculty have the opportunity to mentor and give back. And ORMC's pupils gain a glimpse into their own potential futures. "We are very lucky," adds Dimitri Shlyakhtenko, Radko's husband and ORMC's steering committee chair, "to have so many students and colleagues at UCLA who share the commitment to excellence in educating the next generation of mathematicians and scientists."

UCLA's program is also distinct in its commitment to teaching very young students: Its innovative offerings for kindergarteners make it a standout in the Math Circle community. In fact, in 2015, Radko and Gleizer co-authored a book titled *Breaking Numbers Into Parts*, which is used in Moy-Dinson's classes. Now in its second edition, it even got a shout-out in a *Washington Post* opinion piece for its excellence in "teaching 5- and 6-year-olds serious basic math." Meanwhile, high school–age ORMC students like Schlessinger benefit from working with the youngest students, in whom they often see their younger selves — another unique aspect of UCLA's iteration.

The program has received support from the National Science Foundation and other institutions, but it would require significant additional funding to accommodate the hundreds of students the Circle does not currently have the capacity to admit. What Gleizer would like to see happen, he says, is for the Math Circle's work to spread — and for others to use ORMC's many publicly available class handouts. Students in the program have already created eight satellite math circles of their own while enrolled in the program, and ORMC offers resources to support them.

It's all, Gleizer says, the perfect way to get this generation of young people — and those to come — to fall in love with a subject so many of us dreaded in school.

"Spread the word," he emphasizes. "Math is beautiful."

"Basically, each time you do math, you are building a part of a universe: your own universe." —OLEG GLEIZER

Opposite: Olga Radko (pictured at center) founded the Math Circle in 2007. This page: Students fle their mathematical muscles.

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Where the Journey Takes You

UCLA's incoming chancellor, **Julio Frenk**, and his wife, the distinguished scholar and advocate **Felicia Marie Knaul**, exemplify the gifts bestowed by their own immigrant families: resilience, community and a belief in the power of possibility.

By Eddie North-Hager
Photography by David Esquivel

Our next chancellor and his wife enjoy a leisurely saunter on Bruin Walk.

IT'S A WARM, sunny Friday, the kind of day that makes people who visit here wish they lived in Southern California, and the soon-to-be chancellor of the most prestigious public university in the country and his wife are taking a stroll down Bruin Walk. The campus is quiet; no one seems to really note their presence. In January, of course, that will all change. Quickly.

In June, Julio Frenk, president of the University of Miami, was named the seventh chancellor of UCLA, and it is now, in the months before he officially assumes that role, that he is taking time to get to know the campus. Or, perhaps more accurately, to *feel* it — its hum, its beauty, its life. A passionate lover of opera, he and his spouse, Dr. Felicia Knaul, a health economist who directs the Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas at the University of Miami, are heading into the baronial Evelyn and Mo Ostin Music Center recording studios, a mini Disney Hall tucked away near the Inverted Fountain just north of the Paul R. Williams–designed Pritzker Hall.

They're here to listen to the talents of Rakefet Hak, the music director for Opera UCLA, who performs a solo from the beginning of Act Two of Mozart's seminal work *The Marriage of Figaro*. This, in turn, leads to an improvised jam that includes UCLA master's of music candidate Virginia Douglas gorgeously singing the aria "Porgi, Amor," and then master's of music candidate Romeo Lopez taking on Jules Massenet's haunting "Ah! Fuyez, douce image," from the French opera *Manon*.

Soprano Douglas and tenor Lopez climb delicate vocal ladders, as Hak complements the swirling crescendo of emotion. Frenk, eyes slightly closed and wearing a bemused smile, stands at attention in the 4,300-square-foot recording studio. When the performances end, he utters the only word that seems appropriate.

"Bravo!" he bellows, his applause suitable for a box seat at the Met.

Afterward, the group talks earnestly — Frenk leans in, listens first, digs deeper. They talk about the intricacies of the vocal performance, about the art form of opera itself, about Frenk's hearty collection of 400 opera recordings, about how when he was a child his mother used to practice piano concertos with a recording of the orchestral accompaniment for hours.

It's an exhilarating discussion. And evidence that while they maintain relationships with friends and colleagues in Miami they will always hold dear, the couple is excited to be transitioning to what is, for them, brand-new terrain: UCLA, Los Angeles, a new life. They bring with them not only their own unique lived experience — Frenk is a distinguished public health researcher, Knaul a globally recognized health economist — but a warmth, grace and optimism that collectively brim with Bruin values.

For now, Frenk and Knaul are enjoying their anonymity on campus; come spring, everyone will want a selfie. Still, even now the pair have a presence about them, so when they drop into the ever-present line at Kerckhoff Coffee House, students drift about, stealing the occasional look. One tells Knaul how much she adores her flowing, Coachella-esque dress.

At the back of the S-curve of the line, Knaul gently tugs on her husband's jacket sleeve, prompting him to strike up a conversation with two students sitting at a two-top. Frenk and Knaul are on a tight schedule today, something to be expected of the chancellor-designate and his partner. But you can see they are eager to hear from the UCLA community. So, despite being ushered to move on to their next appointment, the couple stops to chat with the two students, who turn out to be well-informed political science majors.

First-year Laila Salam isn't shy about using her opportunity to ask Frenk what his top priority will be.

Bringing the campus together, he says. To anyone who knows Frenk, that answer isn't a surprise. In making the announcement of his appointment, University of California President Michael Drake noted Frenk's "powerful commitment to the health and well-being of people."

"That is a hefty goal," Salam replies.

Yes, it is. And hefty goals take time. Which is why, for months, Frenk has been living bicoastally, making strategic visits to the Westwood campus every few weeks to meet, learn, research, prepare. He's hardly intimidated by the task. Formidable goals were intertwined with both Frenk and Knaul's lives even before they met 30 years ago. Their partnership only reinforced what might be described as a global, public health mission lifestyle.

Born in Mexico, Frenk earned his medical degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico before deciding to pursue a broader education in public health and sociology at the University of Michigan. His career took him from the Mexican Health Foundation to the World Health Organization in Geneva and back to Mexico, where he became the Minister of Health before going on to Boston as dean of Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He has been at the helm of the University

Frenk enjoying his visit to the Ostin recording studio. "Opera," he once said, "is a perfect art form: It combines music, which is an abstract and sensorial experience, with literature and the performing arts."

Frenk and Knaul have already discovered the charm of one of the campus's true hives, Kerckhoff Coffee House, where they spoke to students — and surveyed the yummy offerings in the pastry case.

"My big inspiration is the idea of generosity to strangers," Frenk says. That idea "made my own life possible."

of Miami for the past decade, and under his leadership the university's health system experienced a dramatic turnaround. Frenk led efforts to raise billions of dollars for the university, while also steering it into membership in the AAU.

Knaul and Frenk met in 1995, after she gave a presentation for the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies on her doctoral thesis research, on working with kids living on the streets in Guatemala and Colombia. It didn't take long for them to see how they fit together: They shared not only a devotion to using public health to improve people's lives, but also family narratives that drove both of them into public service.

Over coffee, they chat about things they love to do together (walks on the beach), hobbies (searching for kaleidoscopes, for one), what they'll miss most about Miami (friendships). But you can clearly sense that while they truly endeavor to enjoy life to the fullest, Frenk and Knaul are serious, dedicated people who never drift far from their belief in mission, in service.

It prompts me to ask Frenk a simple question: What inspires you?

"I have many inspirations," he says thoughtfully. "But you know, the original one, which I always think of as the defining event in my life, is the fact that my grandparents had to flee from Germany in the 1930s."

His grandparents fled the rising antisemitism with Julio's father (then 6 years old) and his aunt (who was 4), eventually finding refuge in Mexico. His immigrant story is reflected on his mother's side as well — she and her family were also immigrants to Mexico. Her father, Julio's namesake, emigrated when he was 11 from the Canary Islands of Spain.

"My father and his parents arrived to this land on the other side of the ocean," Frenk says. "They looked very different. They spoke very differently. They prayed differently. They were different in almost every dimension. And yet that country was generous to them."

It's that idea that Frenk wants to foster here at UCLA. "My big inspiration is the idea of generosity to strangers," he says. "It is easy to be generous to family and friends. It is very hard to be generous to people who are very different from you. But that's what saved my grandparents and my father. And made my own life possible."

It mirrors the inspiration of Knaul's life as well, and her own father's journey. Originally from Toronto, she was led to Central and South America by the desire to work on behalf of children at high risk, driven by her father's ordeal of being interned for five years from the age of 15 in concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

"Let me start there, because that really is the way of explaining why I do what I do," she says. "When you grew up as the child of genocide — which is what I am, the child of a Holocaust survivor — the world is a very frightening place." For her, the only way she could imagine making that world less frightening was to do something to change it for the better. "What matters," she says, "is that our world is one of tremendous avoidable suffering, and that something can be done about that."

Knaul's father died when she was only 18; it was her mother, Marie, an immigrant who lived through the World War II bombings in London, who provided the stability that propelled her forward in her education and career. Knaul earned her master's and Ph.D. in economics from Harvard; her mentor there, and a leader of her dissertation committee, was the Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen. Later, Knaul became an associate professor in Harvard's Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, and she led the Harvard Global Equity Initiative.

For all of the academic roles and honors and travels, the idea of family — how it binds us, how it connects us to something more powerful than us — remains top of mind for both Frenk and Knaul. One of seven children, Frenk talks often about his family: a brother, the cosmologist; the five talented sisters (including a twin) whose fields include medicine, counseling and music; an aunt who is a renowned philologist (scholar of linguistics). Knaul has one brother, a Canadian Armed Forces pilot who served in Kosovo and Afghanistan and who is now flying out of Mojave. The couple has two daughters, Sofia Hannah and Mariana Havivah — Mariana joined them on their recent excursion to campus — and Frenk also has two sons, Esteban and Emilio. They have worked diligently to instill these values around connection in all of their children.

"You can have deep roots, and you can have more than one set of roots, and you can build new roots," Frenk says. "You can move to a new community, like I'm doing now in Los Angeles. And you know, you're not denying your previous roots. You're honoring them."

Spoken like someone who remains extremely grateful that his grandparents were welcomed to a foreign land, to a new home. And who looks forward to building a new home at UCLA as well. ■

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.
THE INTERNET REVOLUTION.
THE AI REVOLUTION.

It's here. It's going to change life as we know it. Are you ready? Are you sure?

By John Harlow and Jonathan Riggs • Illustrations by Erik Carter

SPOOKY. Albert Einstein once used that word to describe his new universe.

It's also my sensation as I slide inside the empty calm of a Waymo One driverless taxi in West Los Angeles. It's my first physical encounter with artificial intelligence, the otherwise virtual technology that is both quietly and loudly changing our world.

I'd paid the toll on the Waymo One app — $24 to go from Culver City to Santa Monica — and ID'd my ride by seeing my initials flashing from a birthday cake–shaped sensor mounted on a Jaguar purring along Washington Boulevard.

I had clicked on the app and the door locks had clicked open. Now settled into the back, I watch, wide-eyed, as the steering wheel turns as if by invisible hands, and we ease smoothly into traffic — a haunted house on wheels. The Jag obeys all traffic laws, better than the drivers around it. It's odd how quickly one gets used to the lack of complaints about politics and roadworks.

Twenty minutes later we pull into Santa Monica Pier, the end of Route 66, traditionally known as the terminus of Western highways and the start of all American futures. A tattooed tourist cheers the Waymo One; he apparently sees a safer, brighter future with friendly machines. A jaundiced Santa Monica cop disagrees: He tells me he has self-parking on his own Mercedes and never uses it. Why would he trust an autonomous car built by Tesla or Honda? And, he adds, what about killer robots? This is only the first step, he mutters ...

Like so much else, AI is dividing us.

Will artificial intelligence make us happier, healthier, smarter? Or merely unemployed? Is it simply another case of "Enough with the so-called improvements to life already?" It's a reckoning that's been 70 years in the making.

The pursuit of helpful machines that are actually smarter than we are was born in the 1950s, limping through "AI winters," times when the hype failed and research stalled. But since 2012, software breakthroughs, faster chips and market appetites have converged to usher in a new age that is both awe-inspiring and also, well, spooky. Now it's not just sci-fi movie directors who are speculating about what AI could mean for all of us.

Artificial intelligence roared back into the headlines two years ago, when Bay Area company OpenAI gave away a program called ChatGPT. By "data-scraping the internet" at high speed, ChatGPT can answer questions or prompts with an almost passable essay in mere seconds. It's still a toddler, but one that's growing phenomenally. By this past May, 180 million people were using it — an unprecedented retention rate for such an app. Its next iteration will be as a chatty "digital assistant" that (or who?) could make browser searches obsolete.

Yet futurists say ChatGPT and Waymo One are only the foam on the AI wave. So much more is coming. UCLA is already ahead of the curve. Judea Pearl's work on probabilities has earned him not only the sobriquet "godfather of AI," but also the ACM A.M. Turing Award. Pioneering AI work at UCLA Health is saving lives.

"For me, the most important piece of what we're going to learn from AI will be to understand ourselves," says Pearl, a professor of computer science and director of the UCLA Cognitive Systems Laboratory. "This is something that will definitely be beneficial — but I don't know if it will happen before we become pets of this crazy creature."

That sounds ... frightening. Is he frightened? Yes. And no. Mainly, he says, he feels "excited, because I know that this will give us the capacity to understand ourselves better. But also afraid, because I don't know who is going to misuse it."

It is, as Aldous Huxley presciently wrote almost a century ago, a brave new world. We asked UCLA experts to weigh in on how and where AI will change it.

Job killer, or work creator?

EMPLOYMENT

AT THE UCLA ANDERSON School of Management's Innovate Conference in January, there was lively discussion about two analyst reports on the shape of work to come. Forrester Research predicted that 2.4 million U.S. jobs will be lost to AI by 2030, largely in law and media. McKinsey & Company, looking even further ahead, said work will be "transformed" in marketing and sales, in research and development, and in call centers, which by themselves currently employ about 3.6 million Americans.

"All the software developers that were getting rid of the blue-collar jobs? AI is coming for them," says Terry Kramer '82, an adjunct professor of decisions, operations and technology management at Anderson who chaired sessions at Innovate. "People who are average in their work will get the biggest boost — *if* they adapt to using AI. Top performers will only see a marginal gain."

As McKinsey predicts, he says, there will likely still be a net gain in new jobs. In sum, people who know how to use AI will take jobs from people who don't. "And that disparity, about who has access — a digital divide that exists at an individual and company and societal level — that worries me," Kramer says. "None of this imperative to adapt is going to stop. But you must make sure you have the right guardrails in place to ensure equal access to AI tools."

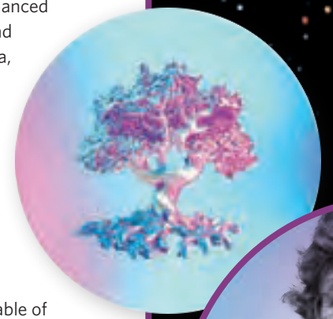
Using the threat to find solutions to the threat.

THE ENVIRONMENT

ONE ISSUE ABOUT AI comes up over and over, and that is the dehumanization of society. Another is the environmental cost, which isn't being talked about enough, but it is enormous and is contributing to carbon emissions. That's because AI infrastructure demands mind-boggling levels of electricity and water to compute data. It's estimated that AI could consume *one-fifth* of the world's power by 2030.

Then there's water. Specifically, the amount required to cool super-server farms. Singapore has been so concerned about water consumption that in 2019, it issued a moratorium on new data center developments; it recently lifted it.

Server farms and the next generation of linked devices, such as AI-enhanced phones, are not all that virtual: They'll gobble up mountains of physical and human resources. These include vast amounts of copper, mined in Zambia, often under brutal conditions. And there is toxic waste: AI could create more electronic waste than previous computer systems installed at business facilities.



Yet there is hope that AI can actually help ease its environmental footprint by designing more efficient electricity grids and developing alternatives to "rare earths."

Oh, the irony, says Karen McKinnon, associate professor of statistics and the environment at the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, who studies climate change predictability. "It is a race between the AI environmental threat and using AI, which is uniquely capable of designing solutions to those very same threats," she says. "Every day we are trying to outrun the cost of AI."

McKinnon uses ChatGPT to "noodle out" questions, but says it's not yet that useful to climate scientists dealing with big ones. "The issue with climate data isn't that it's too big to handle, but rather that it is different from datasets AI has been developed for."

"There are possibilities here," she says. "AI can help us analyze masses of data, but it will not help us ask better questions. It is still down to scientists to figure out what we really need to know."

Karen McKinnon

"ChatGPT and Waymo One are only the foam on the AI wave. So much more is coming."

Can AI actually … protect us?

LAW

THE PRACTICE OF LAW, which is still settling down from shocks of document digitization and internet access in the 1990s, is about to be shaken up again. Radically.

At least, that's the verdict of John Villasenor, professor of electrical engineering and law and faculty co-director at the UCLA Institute for Technology, Law and Policy.

A *Bloomberg Law* survey of legal professionals earlier this year reported that lawyers are concerned about document fakery and "hallucinations"; Chief Justice John Roberts has lamented the rise of AI-generated "precedents" quoted, which have turned out to be either wholly invented or, at best, misinterpreted by AI. Protection of privacy is another concern, as is model bias — "Racially biased statistics in, racist garbage out," as one lawyer told the survey.

The upside? By using algorithms to sift through electronically stored documents, AI could make lawyering more efficient, and maybe even cheaper. (Wouldn't *that* be nice.)

"Many of the issues surrounding AI — like those very rare 'hallucinations' — can be dealt with under existing laws because these are old problems," says Villasenor. "We do not need a new raft of laws written in fear to deal with these issues."

He does highlight one untested area: generative AI's wholesale reading from the internet to train itself. It's a hot-button question that's arisen in the early days of this new frontier: How far does all this go in possibly breaching copyrights? Is this training a form of fair use? "One relevant precedent we have is a recent Supreme Court ruling about Andy Warhol's use of photographs in his art," says Villasenor. But while that was about fair use, it wasn't about AI, so there are still a lot of open questions.

The European Union has passed laws banning AI systems that seek to influence behavior in "harmful ways, lead to discrimination or remotely identify people." That's painting with a pretty broad brush; Villasenor does not see the U.S. adopting such a broad legal framework. All of which means that when it comes to the law, AI's biggest contribution may be to its practice: more lawsuits.

John Villasenor

Faster diagnoses — with some red flags.

HEALTH

IN 2019, UCLA RESEARCHERS harnessed an element of AI called Large Language Model to yoke together a million ways of looking at data to detect prostate cancer. The resulting system, called FocalNet, proved nearly as accurate as radiologists. In 2023, investigators from the UCLA Health Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center developed an AI model that can help predict survival outcomes for patients with cancer. They detected patterns that were unavailable before AI.

And that's all great. But such intoxicating breakthroughs could also spark a boom in Theranos-type frauds that could overwhelm regulators, warns Peipei Ping, professor of physiology medicine/cardiology and biomedical informatics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. AI is a fascinating technology, turning around data in days rather than years — but, Ping says, "It is still a black box, where few truly understand *how* it computes the answers. We need to find ways to validate AI answers, make the process more transparent to ensure the processes are trustworthy."

For example: If Ping is working with 20,000 genomes that come from outside the United States, she wants to know they've been examined in an AI environment where the parameters are the same as she would expect if she were examining them at UCLA.

"We need global guardrails — urgently," Ping warns. "It is part of our role as educators at UCLA to communicate these concerns across the world."

Keeping students honest will be key.

EDUCATION

STUDENTS NOW HAVE THE ABILITY to generate an entire essay in seconds with the push of a button. What's a professor to do?

"It feels like AI could either change everything about the way we teach and write, or nothing," says Laura Hartenberger, a faculty member in the UCLA Writing Programs. "The current generation of students have had plagiarism warnings drilled into their heads and tend to view [using] AI to draft essays as cheating. But it will be interesting to see how AI impacts the kids who are learning to write *now*, in elementary school, and whether they will have a different understanding of plagiarism by college."

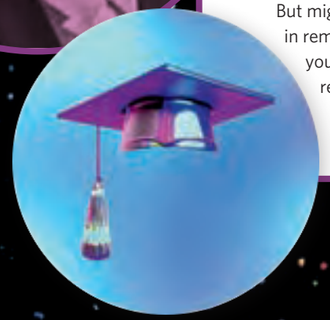
Charting an adaptive course for UCLA is an evolving process, with many departments "feeling it out." While Terry Kramer is optimistic about tools like Khanmigo, an AI-powered teaching assistant, peers such as Saloni Mathur, chair of the art history department, ban the use of generative AI tools on graded assignments.

Meanwhile, teachers are wrestling with the ethics. "It's impossible not to be working with AI tools in one way or another," says Danny Snelson, an assistant professor of English and design media arts, as well as a writer, poet and archivist. "But there are so many concerns." Mainly, plagiarism and algorithmic bias.

Snelson builds ChatGPT into his coursework: He wants to encourage his students to experiment with all the tools available to enhance the imaginative process, to test both the possibilities and the limits of AI for creative use.

But might we see a day when teachers are replaced by AI avatars, especially in remote learning? The original Turing Test to define AI — that it could fool you into thinking it was human — has long been redundant. So how many remote students would know they are talking to a pedagogic bot? It might be fine for facts — but, say UCLA lecturers, inspirational, life-changing teaching will always remain an intimately human task.

Danny Snelson



Can AI really buy you love?

RELATIONSHIPS

LONELY HEARTS ADVERTISEMENTS go back more than 300 years, but the hunt for affection has never been more fraught than it is today. In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness to be a national epidemic.

"The connections we feel with celebrities and fictional characters are called 'parasocial relationships,' and they are one-sided, in that the celebrities and characters rarely respond to us," says Professor Benjamin Karney '92, Ph.D. '97, co-director of the UCLA Marriage and Close Relationship Laboratory. Advances in generative AI raise the possibility that AI companions may be able to meet the emotional needs of some people.

Karney cites a relationship model called the Intimacy Process Model, where you express a need and the other person responds in a way that validates that feeling.

When prompted with "I had a bad day at work," a chatbot can generate a successful response that could potentially make users feel cared for.

"Even if we know it's a program, it provides a connection that people want — and the evidence of subscription apps shows that is happening," he says. Downloads of chatty, AI-enhanced "companion apps" such as Replika, Genesia, Nomi and, for kids, Moxie Robot, are brisk.

There are limits, Karney warns. "Right now, AI can't cook you soup when you're feeling sick. But in the future it might, without asking you, order you chicken soup from DoorDash and treat you nicely.

"An AI companion might offer services that a friend might provide," he adds. "It's not going to surprise you or demand compromise, which helps you grow in love. But if you are isolated and lack basic affection — as many millions are — AI may be an answer."

Benjamin Karney

COULD AI REALLY REPLACE THE GREAT WRITERS? We challenged ChatGPT to write stories about UCLA in the voices of Raymond Chandler and Joan Didion to find out. Read the crazy results by scanning the QR code below:

WHO BENEFITS?

Looking at AI — and its implications — through a social justice lens.

IT'S TEMPTING TO THINK OF AI as *other* — built by people elsewhere, technology that any of us could choose to opt out of or never engage with. But AI is coming for us, whether we want it to or not.

So it is extremely important, says Ramesh Srinivasan, UCLA professor of information studies, that "with any technology that's going to shake society up like this, the well-being of every person on our planet is what guides the direction it will take."

Will it? The rise of AI has long impacted working-class communities in the U.S. and abroad. The current public hand-wringing over AI has largely been because it's now impacting white-collar jobs, according to Munia Bhaumik, program director of UCLA's Mellon Social Justice Curricular Initiatives Program.

"That aspect is one of the fundamental questions we raised in our [Data, Justice and Society] Cluster course: Is AI producing more injustice, and what are the ways it's being regulated?" she asks. "The answer to that is very little, if not zero."

Using the lens of humanities and social sciences — an approach notably taken by UCLA's Safiya Noble, the MacArthur Fellowship–winning professor whose *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* is a key text — the interdisciplinary course is co-taught by Bhaumik and Davide Panagia, professor of political science; Todd Presner, professor of European languages and transcultural studies; Srinivasan; and Juliet Williams, professor of gender studies.

"Technologies and data are never neutral or value-free," says Presner. "AI can be a tool of both democratization and disenfranchisement. Ethical issues need to be at the foreground of our engagement with it, especially as these tools reshape our collective social world and even ideas about humanity."

—J.R.

Safiy Noble

Facing a Hollywood ending?

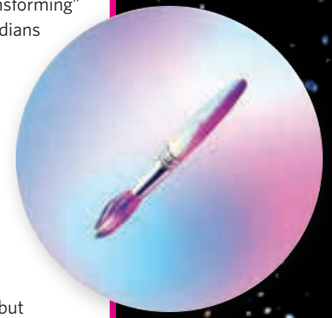
CREATIVITY

WRITERS, ARTISTS AND RECORD LABELS are on the front line of the AI battleground. Some are suing generative AI companies such as ChatGPT for plagiarism and copyright infringement. The AI companies say they are "transforming" work scraped from the internet and are, like comedians and artists themselves, thus protected under "fair use" laws.

Some Hollywood studios believe AI could save them money. The 2023 Hollywood labor dispute slowed but did not stop A24 Films from using AI in a series of promotional posters for the 2024 feature *Civil War*. Duplicated actors, AI-penned scripts and algorithm-generated marketing campaigns may one day follow.

"Right now, the focus of the entertainment industry is still on conventional types of material, but I think we will be seeing more forms that adventurously blend gaming, film, television and even live or interactive experiences," says Jeff Burke '99, M.S. '01, M.F.A. '10, professor and associate dean of research and technology at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. It's a popular sentiment in entertainment circles these days. "I think there's going to be an expansion of storytelling possibilities that emerge from XR, real-time technology and generative AI," Burke says.

At Anderson's Innovate conference, Mihir Vaidya, chief strategy officer at Electronic Arts, offered that a new frontier in electronic gaming may be made possible only through AI: highly personalized games in which players can write their own cinematic narratives. Ceding creative control to the general public may end up being the ultimate twist ending Hollywood didn't see coming.



Carol Bakhos

Tools are great, but human connection will still be better.

HUMANITY

IS A SMARTER PHONE worth your humanity? "Whether it's in art or in relationships, we need to find a way to distinguish between what AI produces and what comes from the heart," says Vida Yao, associate professor in the UCLA Department of Philosophy. "Otherwise, there is a great danger that we shall lose what makes us human."

Professor Carol Bakhos, chair of the UCLA Study of Religion program, will teach a course this winter on the human search for meaning, from holy texts to Hollywood. The course will dissect the 2013 film *Her*, in which Scarlett Johansson voices the mobile phone digital assistant "Samantha," who comforts (and eventually becomes an obsession for) a loner played by Joaquin Phoenix. Bakhos feels that the film, set in a slightly futuristic Los Angeles, is a prescient exploration of AI as a godlike presence, one that is in a "kind of" caring relationship with thousands of people all at once. Samantha, she says, is a technology that elevates — and then ultimately betrays — vulnerable human beings.

"AI is going to be very important for many people. But the film's final answer is not to look for meaning in AI technology, but in the people around us. In those who can touch us," she says. "And that thought, in a world being remade at a distance by AI, is very cheering." ■

ERIC OWEN MOSS AND THE REBIRTH OF CULVER CITY

With his postmodern, deconstructivist, can't-look-away buildings, the famed urban architect is accomplishing what many have set out to do but very few have achieved: reimagining the American city.

BY ED LEIBOWITZ • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TY COLE

IN 1986,

surging rents forced architect Eric Owen Moss ’65 to vacate his original office in Santa Monica. He ended up finding a spare floor in a warehouse in Culver City’s Hayden Tract, then a 60-acre, ramshackle wilderness of abandoned factories, industrial storage facilities and sheet metal shops. Moss liked the unorthodox approach that his landlords, Frederick and Laurie Samitaur Smith, had to developing the area. He began designing for the Smiths “as a way of reducing the rent,” he says. “That’s not an esoteric explanation. But that’s how it began.”

Together, Moss and the Smiths set about building what Moss termed “The New City” — a radical reimagining that saw decrepit concrete warehouse blocks transformed into some of the most phantasmagorical creative office space in America. The Ogilvy advertising agency was an early settler; starry media companies, a talent agency, a distillery, a software company, a pottery studio, a two-star Michelin restaurant and — ta-da! — Apple followed.

At 81, Moss continues to challenge the office building status quo. (W)rapper, his firm’s latest contribution to The New City, opened last year. Encased in what appears to be a deconstructed spiderweb of swooping steel, the startling office tower won *Fast Company* magazine’s “Innovation by Design Award.” Not everyone was so enamored. “If ever Hollywood needs a villainous headquarters for a dystopian, petrol-guzzling empire,” wrote the *Guardian*’s critic, “this will be first in line.”

“If we’re spreading discomfort among people who are not comfortable with being uncomfortable, then we’re pushing the conversation forward,” Moss responds. “I’ll take that as a compliment.” In his 2015 farewell address as the director at SCI-Arc, arguably the most iconoclastic architecture school ever conceived, he casually summed up his career by declaring, “I’m the enemy.”

With his steel-blue eyes and bushy gray hair, Moss gives off a certain Zen master vibe. But the wild acrobatics of his free associations seem to have much more in common with Beat poetry than Zen restraint.

“When we’re talking about building and architecture,” he observes, “the fact is that a crack is not necessarily a liability, or something pejorative, or a weakness. It might be, but it’s also an opening. Something can penetrate — come in or go out.”

Moss’ particular sense of exploration goes back to his undergrad days at UCLA. A course called Philosophy in Literature introduced him to Joyce, Beckett, Kafka and Dostoevsky, opening a portal for him into a life of the mind. “In a sort of fundamental way, by allowing me to investigate and interrogate with wonder and curiosity, UCLA was a perfect venue for me,” Moss says. “And if it didn’t completely satiate that thirst, at least it encouraged it.”

UMBRELLA • 1999

To create a performance space and recording facilities for the L.A. Philharmonic, Moss merged two adjacent warehouses. A steel-spined roof stretches over an outdoor amphitheater and a confluence of staircases. “The glass canopy — the umbrella — originally came from the name of the [Philharmonic’s] Green Umbrella concert series,” Moss says. The canopy bears much more resemblance to an umbrella battered by a stiff wind than to one freshly bought at Target. Alas, the Green Umbrella series decamped for Walt Disney Concert Hall; a remodel brought conference rooms, offices and production facilities. “The umbrella remains,” Moss says, “as a recollection of the process.”

STEALTH • 2001

Moss has never seen a resemblance between the supple dark gray sweep of his building and a spy jet. An architect friend suggested the name. Moss adores the building's continuously shifting geometry. "On the north end, it starts out as almost a Euclidean form," he explains. "Then, as you follow it south, the shape changes." This shape-shifting, Moss observes, occurs on a millimeter-by-millimeter basis. "Remember that old Heraclitus saying, that you never step into the same river twice?" he asks. "This building is a manifestation of that."

PTERODACTYL • 2014

"So, sometimes these buildings have names," Moss says. "It's fun, it's cute. But don't think it should substitute for a substantive analysis of what the hell the building is." This building "appears that it might leave the ground and that it might fly, and it might be fascinating, ominous, terrifying and an anachronism. And some of these things contradict each other." The project, designed for an advertising agency, included two levels of office space atop a four-story, 800-space parking structure. "What I did, essentially, was to drape the pterodactyl over the public face of the garage," explains Moss, "which mitigates the effect of having to look at everybody's Toyota and Prius and BMW."

WAFFLE • 2016

Moss conceived the russet-colored, bespoke home of Vespertine in collaboration with chef Jordan Kahn. Moss' firm also designed the furniture, trays and pitchers for the pricey eatery. "The 'waffle' nomenclature has to do with a kind of admixture of vertical and horizontal lines," Moss says. "The vertical lines are constant. The horizontal lines get denser." Because of this, the spaces could not be filled in uniformly. Uniformity was never the intention. "The building is both very progressive in terms of the software modeling and the technical side of it, and very 19th century in the sense that there were a billion individual pieces of glass that had to be cut and installed."

(W)RAPPER • 2023

Moss' most recent addition to Culver City is a frontal assault upon conventional-commercial-architectural wisdom. "What is a high-rise building?" he asks. "It gets its meaning from its redundancy. When you build a building where every floor is different, then you're contradicting the conceptual premise." (W)rapper has a parentheses, and hence a double meaning. Some years ago, his son introduced him to the likes of Drake and N.W.A. "I like the idea that something that's auditory could be physical, and something that's physical could imply something that's auditory," Moss says. "Draw your own conclusions." ■

Scan the QR code for an online gallery of more stunning images:

FOREVER LINKED

For those with Bruin tattoos, UCLA devotion runs skin-deep.

BY MADELINE ADAMO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHELLE GROSKOPF

ROGER THAT

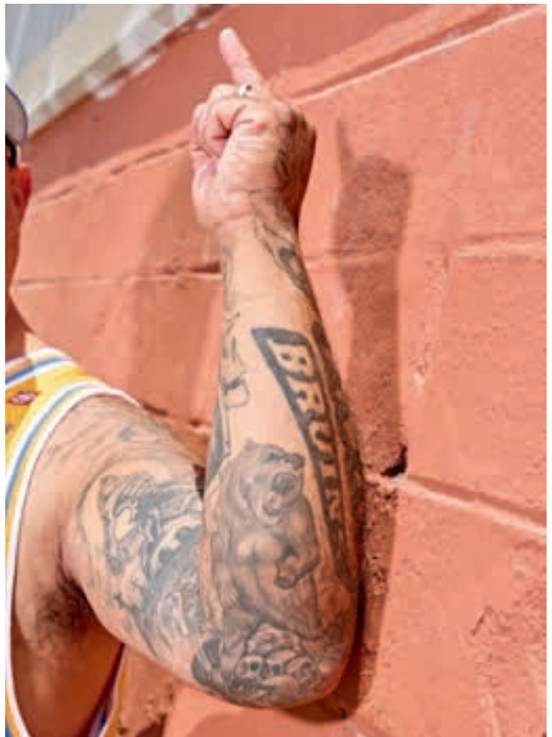
"I'm always pushing my group of university friends," says **Roger Chacon '96**, "to go to the next level for UCLA." *He* certainly has: In 2019, he offered up his back as a canvas for the block logo tattoo, the latest sign of devotion for a creative soul (he handles art at the Getty) and diehard Bruin football fan who's had the same tailgating spot at the Rose Bowl for almost 30 years. None of his Bruin posse has taken the tattoo plunge. "That's just not for them," he says. "It *is* for me."

"BATTLE" SCAR

There is no shortage of formidable creatures inked onto **Mark Lopez**'s skin, but the UCLA Bruin reigns supreme. Not surprising for any proud alum, but Lopez never attended UCLA. "I rock my UCLA all day, every day," says the Yucaipa resident, who became a rabid fan while watching Bruin sports in the 1990s. He playfully scoffs at the memory of his cousins getting USC Trojan tattoos; they inspired his retaliatory "Battle of L.A." piece, showing a bruin, teeth bared, looming atop a pile of skulls and Trojan helmets. "If that ain't repping," he says, "I don't know what is."

BRUINS, BRUINS, EVERYWHERE

Finn Burrows has many creatures tattooed across their body. Dogs. Birds. And, on their right arm, the bruin, which took four hours to ink. "I had an amazing time at UCLA, learning so much and playing rugby and making lifelong friendships," says the Northern California–born alum. "I want to celebrate that feeling every day." Burrows has long embraced Bruin imagery — on business cards, letterheads — but wanted to celebrate their Harley-driving spirit by blaring Bruin pride via skin art. There remains three inches of unclaimed space near the wrist. "What is the *UCLA Magazine* logo?" Burrows asks. "Will that fit?"



ALL IN THE FAMILY

The giant bruin is as forbidding as the deltoid it covers, its face almost animated by the contours of the impressively large muscle belonging to UCLA superfan **Rubicel Vargas**. "The bear is kind of my first love," says Vargas, who didn't attend UCLA but whose two younger sisters did. His expanding sleeve started three years ago, with a bruin and a UCLA logo; in the middle stand silhouettes of both his father and his son. "It's dedicated to the things I like the most," says Vargas. He dreams of a basketball scholarship for his now 16-year-old. "He's gonna go to UCLA for sure." ■

THE WIZARD OF AAAHHS

Cristina Williams '23 will happily use your body as a canvas, designing a sure-to-get-noticed tattoo as unique as you are. BY FIONA RUANE

FROM KAUFMAN HALL classrooms, Kerckhoff patio and Gayley Avenue fraternity houses, **Cristina Williams '23** has left her mark all over UCLA. You won't find her art hanging in the Hammer or the Fowler, but you might just find it on the arm, wrist or ankle of someone wandering through them.

Today, Williams is one of Southern California's most in-demand tattoo artists, working in private studios for clients who sometimes drive hours for an appointment. She is one of the brightest new faces in a very old craft.

She didn't actively seek tattooing through apprenticeships or finding mentors to shadow in studios; tattoos sort of found her, during her sophomore year. "During quarantine I started exploring and making my art. And my peers would say, 'I would get that tattooed on me,'" she says. "After that, I became a 'kitchen wizard': that's when you tattoo out of your own home. When I went back to campus in 2021, I continued that kitchen wizard thing in my college apartment." She laughs. "My roommates," she says, "were very nice about it."

Williams even brought her newfound love of tattooing into her UCLA curriculum, bridging gaps between body art and her academic pursuits, which included a major in world arts and cultures and minors in global health and visual and performing arts education. While tattoos aren't always accepted or respected as a higher art form, Williams remained dedicated and undaunted, often using presentations, essays and even her senior project to celebrate the art of permanent ink. "My peers were probably sick of me. But my professors loved and supported it," she says. "There were so many conversations about art therapy and using art to heal individuals and community spaces."

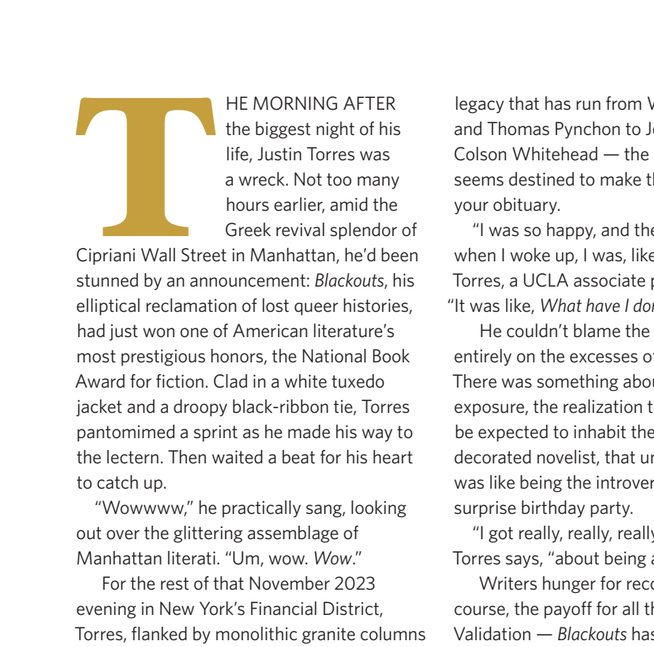
Now living in Calimesa, Williams continues to tattoo alumni, among many other clients. Ever evolving, she sees the future of her tattooing as much more than what she physically creates. "With every tattoo, there's always a new identity, a new design," she says. "Making all of these designs reminds me how important art is to translating life experience."

Williams designed five tattoos exclusively for *UCLA Magazine*, such as this cute tattoo of Powell Cat. See them and read about Ira Cohen, who sells thousands of tattoos blaring a message of UCLA pride — without the pain of a needle. Scan the QR code:

QUEER AS FOLKLORE

» How **JUSTIN TORRES** leaned into his own history of emotional pain and trauma to craft a stunning novel that won the National Book Award.

By **JESSE KATZ**
Photography by **JESSICA SAMPLE**



Previous spread: Torres, photographed at Lily's Bar in Franklin Village in Hollywood. This page: Torres accepting his National Book Award last year. Opposite: In a booth at the Clark Street Diner, a favorite neighborhood hangout

THE MORNING AFTER the biggest night of his life, Justin Torres was a wreck. Not too many hours earlier, amid the Greek revival splendor of Cipriani Wall Street in Manhattan, he'd been stunned by an announcement: *Blackouts*, his elliptical reclamation of lost queer histories, had just won one of American literature's most prestigious honors, the National Book Award for fiction. Clad in a white tuxedo jacket and a droopy black-ribbon tie, Torres pantomimed a sprint as he made his way to the lectern. Then waited a beat for his heart to catch up.

"Wowwww," he practically sang, looking out over the glittering assemblage of Manhattan literati. "Um, wow. *Wow*."

For the rest of that November 2023 evening in New York's Financial District, Torres, flanked by monolithic granite columns capped with a domed stoneware ceiling, basked in literary glamour. He posed for photos with his bronze medal and gulped champagne at the after-party. He suddenly had $10,000 in prize money to spend. And he was now heir to a National Book Award legacy that has run from William Faulkner and Thomas Pynchon to Jesmyn Ward and Colson Whitehead — the kind of honor that seems destined to make the first sentence of your obituary.

"I was so happy, and then the next day when I woke up, I was, like, shivering," says Torres, a UCLA associate professor of English. "It was like, *What have I done*?"

He couldn't blame the raw, jittery feeling entirely on the excesses of the night before. There was something about the looming exposure, the realization that he'd now be expected to inhabit the persona of a decorated novelist, that unnerved him. It was like being the introverted recipient of a surprise birthday party.

"I got really, really, really freaked out," Torres says, "about being a public person."

Writers hunger for recognition, of course, the payoff for all the solitary toil. Validation — *Blackouts* has been hailed as a "triumph," a "rare masterpiece," and a "perfect book" — helps silence the doubts and replenish the ego. There is excitement in harvesting something from your imagination that resonates beyond yourself, vindication in the kinship that makes a reader ask for a signature or a selfie. Publicity can also help inch an author back from the financial precipice. It's why participants in today's creator economy can appear to be in a perpetual state of self-promotion, forced to invest endless psychic energy in the construction of their "brand."

Which is separate from — and often incompatible with — the writing itself. Novels take time; in the case of *Blackouts*, 12 years. They demand isolation.

"Writers want recognition, and what comes with recognition is exposure, and nobody ever has the right amount of exposure," says UCLA associate professor David Russell, who teaches 19th-century literature, critical prose, and psychoanalysis. "It's always too much or too little."

Russell should know: He's married to Torres. The morning after the gala, in the Lower East Side hotel room they shared, Torres kept fretting — to the point that Russell grew "so mad at me," Torres recalls.

Russell prefers to call his advice "impatiently encouraging." He acknowledged to Torres that ambivalence came with the territory, that the public requirements of being an award-winning novelist might be at odds with the very private experience of writing one. But within that conundrum lurked a reassuring truth: Torres' work unpeels and metabolizes the world in a way that matters.

"I want him to focus on the pleasures of the trouble he gets himself into," Russell says. "It's about finding a way for the terror to settle down and get to the excitement of it."

THE YOUNGEST OF THREE BOYS born to an Italian-Irish mother and a Puerto Rican father, Torres has caramel-colored eyes and a tight crown of receding brown hair that appears on the brink of exploding into curls. When he was 31, the online magazine *Salon* placed him on its "Sexiest Men of 2011" list, a distinction that has lost currency, Torres likes to playfully grumble, as his accolades as a writer have accumulated. Now 44, he is lean, even without an exercise routine, and loose-limbed, though years of sitting have saddled him with an angry lower back now soothed with Tiger Balm patches. Tattooed on his right forearm is a California poppy; on his left, a unicorn with wings.

Torres professes to be something of a recluse, preferring to "communicate to the world through books," but in person he's a voluble, unfiltered conversationalist — a "Chatty Cathy," as he puts it — with a self-effacing streak and a mordant sense of humor. He's allergic to pretense and prestige, skeptical of prescriptions for success and uplifting platitudes, "anything that in any way might feel inspirational on purpose." He has no writerly rituals, nothing that he does habitually to summon the creative juices. Except for, maybe, watching *Survivor* — the "tackiest thing on Earth," he says, but also "very novelistic" in the way contestants gossip and manipulate and conspire.

Torres calls himself a "chronic loser" of things, the most disastrous being the laptop containing his only copy of the manuscript that was supposed to be his second novel. There will never be an archive of his work; there will be no papers to donate.

"I'm the opposite of a collector," he says during an interview that begins in his Kaplan Hall office, continues over a harissa-spiced lamb pita (his go-to Plateia meal), and concludes along Bruin Walk. "I am the least completist person."

Torres loves the aspect of teaching that promotes inquisitiveness and invites experimentation, the kind of work that embraces ambiguity. He tells his students, "I want your stories to be as full of nuance and conflicting ideas and concepts and characters as possible. Don't try and resolve and smooth things out."

He loathes the other side of academia: sitting in judgment, measuring achievement. "It's very rare that I give a disappointing grade," Torres says. He sees himself more as a nurturer, offering students permission to take risks. "It's weird that I'm a professor," says Torres, who sifts through at least 100 writing samples to arrive at the 12 or so students who get enrolled in his workshops. "When I was their age, I was a terrible student. I was very interested in ideas and very interested in making art, but I didn't care about grades and things like that. I kept dropping out."

Growing up in Baldwinsville, New York, a virtually all-white agricultural community of more than 7,000 people near Syracuse, New York, Torres was an outsider struggling to conceal his emerging queerness, especially from his macho Boricua father. In high school, he self-medicated, then resorted to half-hearted stabs at self-harm.

Torres' distress reached a head in Advanced Placement English, where he was assigned *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin's early feminist novel about the suffocating constraints of gender norms. It concludes with an act of rebellion and autonomy: The central character drowns herself. Journaling about the book, Torres identified so explicitly with the suicidal imagery that his writing "set off alarm bells," recalls his AP English teacher, Laura Iodice. She felt obligated to alert a school psychologist.

Torres was tested and monitored and, after an OD landed him in a coma, institutionalized; he spent a chunk of his senior year in a psychiatric facility. In his coming-of-age debut, the semi-autobiographical *We the Animals*, he writes of the protagonist's trip to the psych ward — strapped to a gurney and sedated — after his parents discover his journal, "a catalog of imagined perversions, a violent pornography

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL BOOK FOUNDATION; PHOTO BY NATHALIE SCHUELLER

Says Torres' husband, David Russell: "I want him to focus on the pleasures of the trouble he gets himself into."

with myself at the center, with myself obliterated." Iodice, who has a gay brother herself, recognized Torres as a sensitive soul in need of some grace. She arranged a study group to pay him weekly visits at the hospital.

"Books were his safety net, a place of solace," Iodice says. "His being able to escape into those other worlds provided him a little bit of relief."

Discharged toward the end of his senior year, Torres returned to ace the AP test and earn a scholarship to New York University. But he was still fighting himself, and he dropped out almost as soon as he began. The following year, he enrolled at SUNY Purchase, but he grew restless and dropped out again. He repeated the pattern at San Francisco State. For a while, he took classes at UMass Amherst, except he wasn't even enrolled; he'd moved in with a boyfriend who was.

Torres' résumé during those years speaks mainly to his survival skills: truck driver for an international aid group (and likely cult) that managed clothing donation bins in Massachusetts; shot boy at a queer nightclub in Texas, where he paraded (in his underwear) with a tray of booze-filled test tubes; dog walker (among other services) for wealthy men in the West Village.

"There's no point in me pretending that I wasn't a hot mess," Torres says, "doing whatever I had to do to get by for a long time."

Always a prodigious reader, Torres didn't start writing seriously until his late 20s. He landed a job at an indie bookstore in New York and finagled his way into a workshop after the instructor waived the fees. Torres began sketching vignettes, a page or two at a time — a fleeting moment, an enigmatic memory. "I wrote to break my own heart," he once told the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. "I did not write to get published." Poor, and saddled with student loans, Torres gained admission to the highly selective M.F.A. program at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, an invitation to get paid to write. He still lacked an undergraduate degree, so he had to enroll in online courses — completing a bachelor's

PHOTO: [PICADOR PROF] © ANDREAS LAMM FOR HOLTZBRINCK BERLIN

"I wrote to break my own heart," Torres once told the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. "I did not write to get published."

in Latin American studies from San Francisco State — as he earned his master's.

He eventually stitched his work from that era into the bestselling *We the Animals*, a taut (just 126 pages) yet emotionally fierce novella published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2011. It transformed Torres into a cultural phenomenon, earning him "5 Under 35" honors — fiction's equivalent of a best new artist award — from the National Book Foundation. What followed were laurels most writers can only dream of: fellowships at Stanford and Harvard; residencies in Paris and Leipzig; translations into 15 languages. By then, Torres was already working on a second book, but wasn't loving it. "I felt like I was a one-trick pony," he says.

It was during one of the European residencies that Torres slipped his laptop into the seat pocket of a train, then forgot it was there. He'd backed nothing up. Mortification gave way to resignation and then, oddly, relief. "It was definitely a cataclysmic kind of moment," says Jenna Johnson, his editor at HMH, who later brought Torres with her to Farrar, Straus and Giroux, where she is now editor in chief. "But I thought it was very interesting that he never tried to re-create it from the beginning. As he was mourning the loss, he never thought, *Let me just bring it back to life*. That's the kind of person he is, as well as the kind of writer he is."

Casting about, Torres found inspiration in a largely forgotten Depression-era investigation into the lives of gay men and women, *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. He'd come across it some years earlier while working at a used bookstore in San Francisco's Mission District, where he'd been unpacking a donated box of queer literature. The textbook was surprisingly tender — an anthology of frank testimonials from a stigmatized population — but also chillingly clinical. The subjects were specimens, the "pathologies" needing a cure.

Torres had been wanting to do something with *Sex Variants*. But what? He began to experiment with erasure poetry: blacking out individual words or entire lines from the book's pages, repurposing the testimonials and diagnoses through subtraction. "Rather than have it be dismissive," says Torres, "I'll make it an ode."

Those hand-redacted pages and other found images run throughout *Blackouts*, giving the novel a fractured, oracular spirit that also shapes the narrative — a dialogue between a dying man and the young admirer who tends to him. Set in a sweltering desert institution, the book is at once intensely specific and historically sweeping. It's a queer and Latino novel; it's also a big, human story about the ways people survive in a world that withholds acceptance.

"I've never really thought about appealing to a broad audience, based on the kind of content or tone of what I'm writing," he says. "But I definitely think about universal ideas — erasure being a massive universal idea."

Torres at an event in Leipzig in 2016, the summer he was the University of Leipzig's Picador Guest Professor

AT HIS FIRST UCLA WORKSHOP of Spring Quarter 2024 — his first time back teaching since the National Book Awards — Torres was going over the syllabus with a dozen students at a seminar table when one of the veneers covering his front teeth cracked. Then fell off. The injury was old, from his tumultuous Baldwinsville days, and not one he's eager to explain. For the longest time, Torres didn't have dental insurance, which is why in early portraits, he says, "I'm never smiling."

Only after getting hired at UCLA in 2015 did Torres at last have the security of a full-time position with grown-up benefits. He immediately had his teeth done — they gleam now from a stubbled face — but after so many years of deferred maintenance, the fix proved fragile. "It did feel like a metaphor," Torres says out of his now shiny grin. "Oh, like, you've just won this big award? Let me show you the crumbling rot underneath."

In the months since his freak-out from winning the award, he's had more time to reflect on what it means. He and Russell — his "man," never "partner" — took a road trip to Santa Barbara's elegant Spanish-Moorish courthouse for a spontaneous, same-day wedding. And his editor at FSG reassured Torres, now immersed in his third book, that she would give the project all "the time that it needs to become what it wants to be."

Soon there will be a new National Book Award recipient. Torres is already looking ahead, imagining what this whole chapter might look like in retrospect — an incredible thing that once happened to him, rather than his needing to approach every day as the defending champ. Even if his next book falls flat, he'll always be the guy who won.

"They can't take it away!" Torres says, dropping his lamb pita as his voice soars to a puckish shriek.

He likes the sound of that. The way it frees him to take new chances. ■

THAT CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

Exactly 50 years ago, John Wooden took his Bruins basketball team all the way to the NCAA title — his 10th and fina one. Here, an oral history of that amazing journey, told by the people who took it.

BY SRIDHAR PAPPU
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLIE GRIAK

JOHN WOODEN

COACHED IN WESTWOOD FOR 27 YEARS,

famously winning 10 national championships across 12 seasons. Under his guidance, the Bruins won seven straight NCAA titles. In one stretch, they won 88 straight games.

In an era without a shot clock or a three-point line, the Bruins played a frantic, high-scoring, fast-break style that was rooted in Wooden's basketball upbringing in Indiana. It was merciless and unstoppable.

We will forever remember the era for its marquee stars — most notably, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar '69 and Bill Walton '74. These men quite literally loomed large over the UCLA campus and all of college basketball. Their greatness and gifts to the game, and to the larger world, cannot be overstated.

But it was the 1974–75 team that Wooden forever held closest to him. That season, the Bruins lacked that one dominant player, that huge star. This was a team in the truest sense — one that some doubted could even win the Pacific-Conference. Instead, it steamrolled the competition in the regular season and powered through the NCAA Tournament, including a nail-biter in the Final Four that people still talk about as one of the greatest wins in the program's storied history.

It would be the fina chapter in Wooden's peerless body of work as UCLA's head basketball coach.

This is the story of that team — his last champions.

BRUINS ASSEMBLE

Marques Johnson '77 (Small Forward, 1973–1977): Bill Walton had just scored 44 points against Memphis State [in the 1973 NCAA championship game, for Wooden's ninth title]. I was sitting in the den of my family home in Los Angeles. And the phone rings about 10 minutes after the game has ended. My dad answers the phone and says, "Poppa Stoppa" — which is what he called me — "it's for you." I said "Hello," and the other end says, "Marques, it's Coach Wooden." I'm kind of shocked, you know, jumping out of my shorts. I say, "Hey, Coach." "You watch the game, Marques?" "Yes, yes, yes. Congratulations. Congratulations." "You think you might want to be a part of this next year, Marques?" "Coach, I would love to be a part of it." "We'd love to have you, we just wanted you to know that. Have a great day." I hung up the phone, mouth wide open.

Richard Washington (Forward/Center, 1973–1976): Being from Oregon, I thought it would be more fun and more competitive to be on the team that *beat* UCLA. My first thought about UCLA was, *I want to be on a team that ends their dominance.* That all changed in the recruiting process, meeting Coach Wooden. He was so different from the other coaches who recruited me. Here's a guy who was at the top of college basketball — winning championship after championship, getting all this notoriety. But yet he was completely the opposite of what [you'd expect] somebody like this would be. He never talked about winning or losing. He came to one of my games here in Portland. Sat in the stands right next to my mother.

Pete Trgovich '78 (Guard, 1972–1975): The first time I met Coach was on our [campus] visit. It was funny, because Indiana is kind of one of those states that is the last to do a lot of things, and I remember riding around campus with Coach Wooden, and he was turning right on red. In Indiana, we didn't have that. So I thought he was running red lights. I didn't know it was legal to do that. But I remember thinking, *This guy really thinks he's special*.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PRACTICE?

Wooden's practices were already legend by 1974. Rigorous and heavily scripted, they reflected his emphasis on conditioning and repetition. Each season also started with detailed instructions on how to put on your shoes and socks.

Jim Spillane '78 (Guard, 1973–1977): I don't think it was about the socks. I viewed it as being all part of the course — and this is a Coach Wooden saying — that every detail matters. Another Coach saying: "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail." I viewed it as all part of the preparation: You need to be in the best shape you can be, you need to have your hair cut, you need to be ready to go, you need to have your uniform on properly, you need to have your shoes and socks on properly so that you can be at your best performance.

Andre McCarter '76 (Point Guard, 1973–1976): The things he did were all game-related. He wasn't one of these guys that pushed all these side things

for you to do. So, you come to do what he says, and it's time to do what he says at the level of excellence he requires, and you're going to be one of the most conditioned teams in the country. You believed that, too.

Lester Friedman '73 (Student Basketball Team Manager, 1968–1973; Volunteer Team Assistant, 1973–1975): Coach would never ask anybody to do anything he wouldn't do himself. On the road, it was my job to ensure that the locker room was in as good shape when we walked out of it as it was when we walked into it. We were not leaving a mess behind. I was the last one out, and I was always accompanied by one person: John Wooden. We did that clean-up job together.

AFTERMATH

The prior season, 1973–74, should have been the capstone for one of the greatest college teams of all time. Instead, it was fraught, disjointed.

Wooden, who had already bailed Bill Walton out of jail following an anti–Vietnam War protest in 1972, increasingly bristled at the freewheeling ways of his talented squad. He might have lived with this latitude had the season ended with an eighth straight title.

Instead, in the NCAA semifinals, UCLA collapsed as no other Bruin team had before. In the Final Four, facing a North Carolina State team it had trounced in the regular season, UCLA squandered a seven-point lead in the second overtime.

Walton later called that failure a "stigma on my soul."

Gary Cunningham (Assistant Coach, 1965–1975; Head Coach, 1977–1979): I'll never forget that season. I'll never forget the team. The team was fractured. Guys didn't like each other. Bill Walton had decided to become a vegetarian and gotten into transcendental meditation, and the team was really divided. The team was the best team we ever had, potentially. But we broke down. We should have beat North Carolina State. And we blew the game. It really hurt. At that time, you played a third-place game, and Walton led the charge with the players that the team wasn't going to play. [Athletic Director J.D. Morgan '41] spent the whole day convincing Walton to play, and we played, and we won. But it was meaningless.

Pete Trgovich: I hate to go there, but I'm 70 years old now. I can't tell you what happened on the court, because I didn't play. But the first time we played them that year, I started. I played the majority of the game, and we won by 18. That's all I can say. Andre McCarter came up to me in the locker room after and said, "We will get this back." And I said, "Yeah, we will."

Lester Friedman: One of the things Coach stressed in his talks to the team was that for every hill or mountain, there is a valley. He always wanted us to keep our emotional level steady.

Gary Cunningham: Coach came back the next year, and he was tougher than nails. He felt like he was too lax with the '73–'74 team. Let them get away with some things. And the next year, boy, he was tough.

Richard Washington: There was a void there. UCLA had been vanquished. We wanted to show everybody what we could do. We played a lot during the offseason — the players who were coming back, and the new guys who were coming in. All that summer, we put in a lot of hours in the gym just scrimmaging. I did a lot of running, a lot of bike work to keep in shape. There was a lot of enthusiasm among the players. I remember being a little concerned about Coach. I was happy that he was going to come back; I was worried that after what happened he might decide to move on.

Andre McCarter: If you played at UCLA the year before, you knew what you were going to go through.

LESS-THAN-GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Only two seniors remained from the powerhouse team that had faltered the previous season. Without the presence of an established star and with a squad consisting mostly of underclassmen, many worried about UCLA's prospects.

These concerns grew deeper as Johnson, who had worked into peak shape during the summer, contracted hepatitis before the start of the season. (After losing considerable weight and missing a good chunk of the early season, he returned, healthy.) But the Bruins did, well, what the Bruins always did. They went 28–3. Their remarkable season was punctuated by notable losses — most profoundly with a 103–81 thumping at Washington.

Still, this was a team that was showing its talent, its poise — and its worth.

Marc Dellins '76 (Co-sports editor, *Daily Bruin*, 1974–1976): Expectations weren't great. We lost the big guy [Walton]; we lost a lot of seniors. People thought it wasn't going to be the same. As the year went on, people started realizing that there was something about this team. When we went into Maryland and beat them in Cole Field House [81–75], there were people starting to think, *Oh, they might have something.*

Ralph Drollinger '76: We didn't necessarily have the same athletic talent that other Wooden championship teams had. But we had a unity and bond with Coach Wooden that carried us through like we were on a cloud.

Pete Trgovich: The game against Washington up in Seattle, they blew us out. I never saw Coach Wooden that angry as after that game — he read us the riot act. He told us exactly how he felt.

Richard Washington: That game showed us that at any point in time, a good team can catch a spark and are capable of beating us if we don't focus.

THE DECISION

In the summer of 1974, Wooden began telling close friends that the forthcoming season would be his last. Athletic Director J.D. Morgan's natural first choice had been Cunningham, who had played for Wooden's first Final Four team in 1962.

After struggling with the decision for months, Cunningham finally passed. Morgan set his sights on Illinois' Gene Bartow, the former head coach of Memphis State, whom the Bruins had matched up against in the 1973 final.

Meanwhile, word had begun to spread. In his weekly column for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer *on March 8, Washington head coach George Raveling wrote of Wooden's "pending retirement."*

"The public announcement won't come until mid-April," he wrote. "But John Wooden won't return as head coach at UCLA next year."

Gary Cunningham: He'd had a heart attack. He was still a great coach; I don't want to take that away from him. And he was still a great teacher, but he didn't have the energy. A lot of times in practice, he had to go over and sit down, and I ran the practice. For his own health and welfare, it was time.

I never told Gene Bartow that I was the first choice, because I wanted him to feel that he was special. I just didn't want to coach anymore.

Jim Spillane: I don't even have a memory of one of my teammates in practice saying, "Do you think Coach is going to stay?" It wasn't part of the thought process, maybe [my] being 19 years old.

Pete Trgovich: Dave [Meyers '80] and I thought he was [retiring]. I think Dave more than me, because Dave was more connected. I think Dave's mom and Coach Wooden's wife saw each other every game, and Dave had mentioned it to me. So we did have a feeling, but we obviously didn't *know*. We always talked about how when the groups [of players before] us came, Coach Wooden promised them that he would stay there for four years. He never promised us that.

THE LAST RUN

The road to the 1975 Final Four in San Diego would not prove easy. It would include narrow escapes in overtime to Michigan in the West regional quarterfinal and a three-point win against Montana, which was then led by future Michigan State head coach Jud Heathcote.

Richard Washington: Dave [Meyers] was a fiery guy. He was our spirit. I was the happy-go-lucky guy. Dave came to me before the NCAA Tournament started and kind of gave me a little pep talk, tried to focus me on the importance of the tournament — how he really wanted to win it. He was more aware of the UCLA legacy, how we had an opportunity to retrieve something, to get something back. He kind of made me start thinking about that.

Delight Slotemaker de Bruine '76, UCLA Spirit Squad, 1974–76: It was just so exciting. Everyone at UCLA felt they had a part.

REGIONAL FIRST ROUND, UCLA 103, MICHIGAN 91 — OVERTIME

Pete Trgovich: When you're a senior, you go onto that court, you think this could be your last game. I remember being very angry at halftime. I didn't think we understood how important this was. I was a senior, and I knew I didn't want to go out like that. I didn't think that we played very well, especially on the defensive end. I was very upset about that. Thank goodness that [Michigan center] C.J. Kupec missed that jump shot at the end of the regulation, or we'd have been going home.

REGIONAL FINAL, UCLA 89, ARIZONA STATE 75

Marques Johnson: Before that game, my boy Sidney Wicks '71, who was playing for the Portland Trailblazers, comes down to the floor as I'm warming up and pulls me to the side and says, "Look, man" — and remember, I played against him all summer and I was killing him all summer before I got sick — he says, "You're the best player out here, man. Show me something." I was like, "OK, Sidney. All right, OK." I went out and had the game of my life. Twenty [points] by halftime. At halftime, Sidney comes back down and says, "What'd I tell you? Don't let up. You ain't got to say nothin' to your guy. Let your game do the talking."

NATIONAL SEMIFINAL UCLA 75, LOUISVILLE 74

Louisville head coach Denny Crum had played for Coach Wooden at UCLA and gone on to serve as his top assistant. Many felt he was Coach's heir apparent, but he would later turn down the chance to take the helm to stay in horse country. But in 1975, Crum and Wooden — pupil and teacher — were matched against each other in a national semifinal for the ages.

Andre McCarter: We're facing ourselves. Denny Crum was Coach Wooden's assistant coach. Mano a mano. They had similar types of players — Wesley Cox, Allen Murphy. They had everything built like a John Wooden system was built.

Gary Cunningham: Denny ran the same offense. But he put different wrinkles in it. It was a little bit of a variation. And they were good variations. He gave [the players] more freedom, had guys that could really shoot, and he let them play a little more one-on-one. Coach would never do that. I mean, I'm sure he's turning over in his grave with the way basketball is today.

Down four with 1:06 in regulation, the Bruins cut the lead to two. Then, having intercepted an inbound pass, Johnson scored to tie the game at 65. In overtime, Louisville again led 74–73 with precious time remaining. Crum brought in forward Terry Howard, who was 28 for 28 from the free-throw line for the season. After a Richard Washington foul, it was left to Howard to cement a Louisville win.

Richard Washington: I can kind of feel for the guy, because these kinds of things can create a life of their own. That's not a story I'd want to live with for 50 years. I guess he'd been put in the game specifically to get fouled. I hear there's no recording of him actually shooting and missing the free throw.

After a timeout and then a miss by McCarter, the ball eventually found its way to Marques Johnson, who knew to get it to Washington — a young man ready to make the game-winning jump shot.

Marques Johnson: I got it on the wing, and what I liked to do with Richard, I knew he loved to turn to his left shoulder on the catch in the post, so I led him with [the pass to] his left hand just a little bit to keep it away from the guy defending him — but I knew once he caught it, I knew he was going to square up. And he didn't miss that jump shot.

Richard Washington: Marques threw the ball to my baseline side, which told me from practice that my defensive man was overplaying me on that other side. So, I knew I was clear to turn that way — to go to the basket or get a good shot. I knew the shot that I was going to take or that I was going to have because of the pass that Marques threw me. That's what practice is. We drill every day in practice.

Jim Spillane: Here's a joke that I've made before: I was the difference in that game. I scored two points. And we won by one.

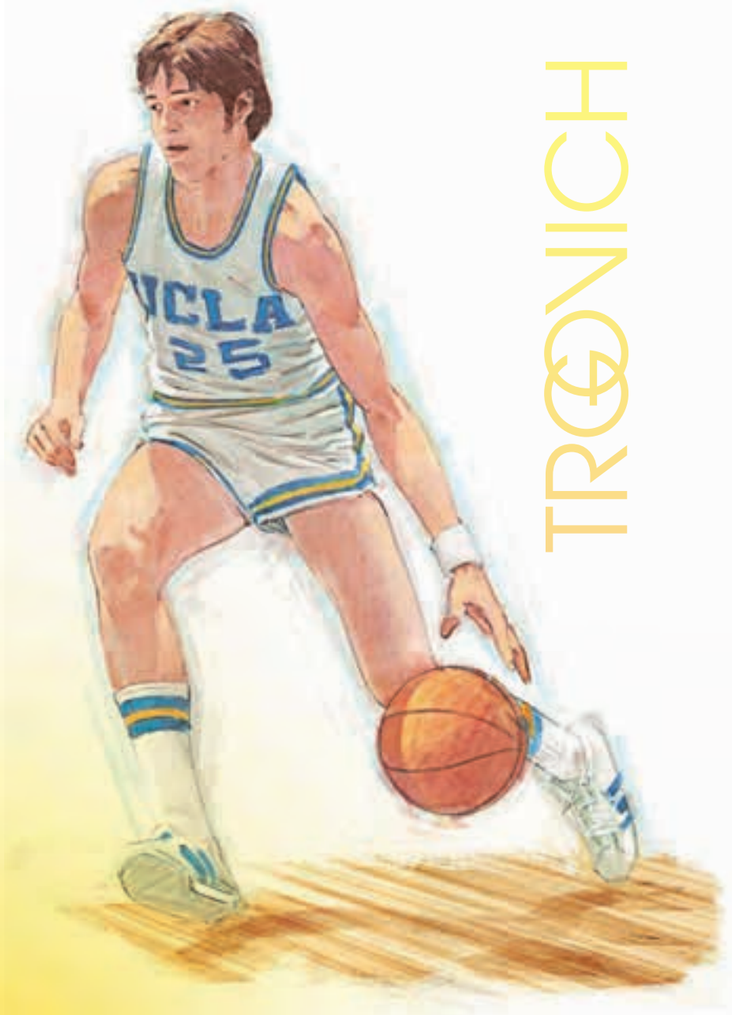
THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Following the win, Wooden entered the locker room and delivered the surprising news to his players.

Gary Cunningham: An incredible win. And then Coach announced his retirement right after the game, which absolutely shocked me. To this day, I don't know why he did it. But he did it.

Andre McCarter: Coach Wooden kind of lays everything down. He kept the media out, the people out. He says, "I'm going to be leaving UCLA. This is my last game, against Kentucky." And it's

A scene from the documentary *John Wooden: They Called Him Coach* shows Wooden informing the team, after the thrilling semifina win over Louisville, that this season will be his last.



TROVICH

like, "What?" Guys are messed up. Some of the guys he recruited expected him to be there — I expected him to be there one more year. At least for me to finish there. And that was gone. So now here we are with Kentucky, who the media thinks are going to pulverize us, and I say, "No. We're going to send Coach out a winner. Period."

Marc Dellins: I went up to him after the press conference, after he'd done some one-on-ones, and just said, "You know, Coach, we want to do something special on you for the *Daily Bruin*. Would you have some time to talk to me?" And he said, "You know, Marc, I'm going out to dinner with my family, but call my room at about nine o'clock when I'm back, and we'll see what we can do." So I called, and he said, "Well, why don't you come over?" I did. And we sat in the sitting area of his hotel room, him with his feet up on the table. Me, I mean, I'm a junior, a newspaper guy, and he's *John Wooden*. He spent a half-hour talking with me.

Gary Cunningham: I did not understand why he would [announce before the final]. Was it to motivate the team? Did he feel internal pressure and want to get that off his back? Don't know. But I know our team played really well against Kentucky. I mean, we just took them out of the game.

NO DOUBT

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP: UCLA 92, KENTUCKY 85

Richard Washington: The whole time I was at UCLA, that was probably the most confident I've ever felt going into a game that we're going to win the game. For me, from the physical feeling of playing both those teams, Louisville was the better team. And Kentucky was a team that I thought if we played them 10 times, we would beat them eight times. Whereas Louisville was a team, if we played them 10 times, we'd be lucky to win five.

Pete Trgovich: I don't know if you saw Ralph Drollinger's stat line [16 minutes, 13 rebounds], but it was the best game I've ever seen him play. It was so huge what he did for us in 16 minutes. You have to give Ralph a lot of credit.

Ralph Drollinger: Thank you. It was my best game!

Marques Johnson: They had this enormous front line that would wear you down, so Coach put in Ralph Drollinger for me. We played six guys that game. I remember sitting on the bench, tired, winded, glad to have a brief respite until I could go back in. But Ralph played so well that game, and I wound up — I remember this vividly— just feeling relieved that Ralph was able to get in there and play the game of his life and play aggressive and rebound. I remember some rebounds that were sticking to him — and that wasn't Ralph. Ralph's one of the greatest guys in the world — super-religious, super-spiritual guy. Not that that hinders guys from being tenacious competitors, but that wasn't Ralph, normally.

And after he got into the game, that tenacity was on full display. Coach kept telling me, "I'm gonna get you back in." And I kept saying, "It's OK, Ralph's playing great." Coach put me back in during the waning moments of that game, and I had a bucket or two down the stretch. I would have loved to have had a bigger contribution. But the way Coach Wooden was able to kind of infuse this whole mindset of teamwork, it was [a feeling that] we were all in this together.

Ralph Drollinger: We won on belief, not on better ability. And that's because of Coach Wooden's ethos. I think that's the theme here that ties it all together: We just had belief [because] Coach Wooden told us we were better.

Joyce Rangen '70, UCLA basketball season ticket holder: In 1975, we got tickets to the Final Four through the lottery they had a year in advance.

The final game was fabulous. I was one of those fans jumping up and down and screaming wildly. The crowd went wild, but I don't remember [Wooden's] reaction being out of the ordinary. To him, it seemed like any other game.

Pete Trgovich: It was a great ending for me because I'm an Indiana boy. I'm playing against guard Jimmy Dan Conner, and he's Mr. Kentucky Basketball. My senior year [of high school], we played against each other in the all-star game. His running mate was Mike Flynn, who beat me out for Mr. Basketball my senior year. It was a great way for a kid from Indiana to go out, to beat a Kentucky team.

Delight Slotemaker de Bruine: It was just super, super high energy. Everyone was so excited and so affirming to be able to support the fact that [Coach Wooden] had a win [in his final season]. All of the guys who were on that team are all memorable. Every single one.

Pete Trgovich: I remember after the game, when reporters were talking to me and saying, "Did you want to win this one for Coach Wooden because he's going out like that?" And I said, "Well, yeah, we did. But if John Wooden's gotta retire to get you extremely pumped up to play a national championship game, then something's wrong."

As the crowd stormed the court, Wooden stood, victorious for the last time. An era for him, for UCLA, for college basketball, had come to a close. The sport he had changed forever would reach heights no one — and certainly not he himself — could imagine. But now, in the melee, he was asked about the achievement by NBC's Jim Simpson. "I've had such a wonderful year working with these youngsters," Wooden said, amid the bedlam. "I've never had a finer group. We haven't had a single problem off the court or on the court all year. And I'm happy," he said, "that they could go out this way, too."

Richard Washington: I've actually seen that interview. I actually said to him once, "Yeah, if I ever went to jail [like Walton had], I wouldn't call you."

Andre McCarter: I'm being selfish. I think the next year's team would have won another championship. But for him, it don't get much sweeter than that. Ten. A perfect number. ■

Left: Fans and band members show their Bruin pride; the 1974–75 squad assembles for its postgame victory photo.

THE SPIRIT OF KOREA

After a roving career across multiple Korean industries, Bryan Do struck gold crafting premium alcoholic beverages on the peninsula — first with beer, and now with the country's first single malt whiskey.

BY ANTHONY GIGLIO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY STAN LEE

BRYAN DO '97 strolls into New York's Seoul Salon, a hipster K-town riff on a Korean *sooljib* (a spot for drinking), and it's as if everyone there knows him. The beaming greeter, the deferential waiters, a couple of guests seated at the bar — all proffer a discreet, respectful nod-bow, a polite smile. Do does command attention: He sports a signature wide-brim felt fedora the color of sand, the hat tipped slightly back, high in front, in a manner reminiscent of early 1980s Boy George.

While he may look the hipster, Do is all business. Today, the former Bruin athlete (he rowed crew) is wearing his latest hat, and it's not the fedora. He's the brains and a fair amount of the capital behind Three Societies Distillery, which is bringing to the global spirits market products no one ever could have predicted as being hip: a distinctly Korean gin and a portfolio of single malt whiskeys that are the very first of their kind in his ancestral home.

Do's route to liquor was hardly the straight line he rowed in college.

After earning a bachelor's in political science from UCLA in 1997, he obtained an M.A. in international relations at Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in South Korea in 2000. Soon after, he was in media, managing a staff of journalists at Arirang TV while also hosting the nightly *Korea This Week* show. From there he bounced around, with a stint as a media trainer for global powerhouse PR firm Edelman and an eight-year climb up the marketing and sales ladder at Microsoft.

Then, in 2013, he gave it all up. To make beer. "I wanted to have Koreans drinking the best craft beers in the world, so I introduced many firsts, like the first barrel-aged beer and the first hop farm," he says. He adds, with unexpected braggadocio, "I am a trailblazer."

DO WAS BORN in Columbus, Ohio, but grew up in L.A., mostly in the Miracle Mile neighborhood. "I'm pretty much a true-blue L.A. boy," he says, with a wide smile. Wanting to spread his wings beyond the City of Angels for college, Do attended UC Irvine for his first two years, but decided the 'burbs of Orange County weren't for him. "I realized I always wanted to go to UCLA, because I used to skate or BMX there in Westwood when I was young," he says. "And because UCLA has such a storied program, I wanted to be a part of anything UCLA Athletics." Andy Strum '95, who lived next door to Do and eventually attended UCLA alongside him, recalls that he and his best friend spent a lot of their youth playing on the UCLA campus. I ask him to describe Do in a few words. He responds with "fearless, charismatic, diplomatic and generous."

Do joined the crew team at UCLA even though he'd never rowed

in his entire life. While that may sound bonkers, it didn't to the friends who knew him. "Whatever Bryan gets into his mind as something he wants to pursue, regardless of whether he knows anything about it or not, he'll put all his energy and focus into mastering it," says Mira Kim '97, a classmate of Do's at UCLA. "This type of focus is exactly what's led to all of his career accomplishments."

A random night out with his teammates would eventually change Do's life. Celebrating a win with the team at a local bar, he decided to splurge on a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale instead of ordering his usual Bud Light. "I was blown away by the flavorful taste," he says. Buying a brewing kit from Costco, Do started making beer. A seed was planted.

He forgot about brewing for the next two decades. Then, when he moved to South Korea, he met friends who were home-brewing, just as craft brewing was taking off. After a stint as a "beertender" at night (while working at Microsoft by day), Do hung up his corporate suit and started making Korean craft beer. The Hand and Malt Brewing Company was born.

Do started making waves right out of the gate: He was the first to put craft beer in a can rather than a bottle, which many Korean brewers warned him was nuts. That tenacity tracks with UCLA classmate Sunny Whang Daughtrey '97. "I think there are a lot of parallels between his career path and what he continues to accomplish today," she surmises. "He's not afraid to try new and different things; he seems to have an eye on the edge and has proven that he can actually *start* trends."

No sooner had Do conquered the Korean beer world than, presciently, he saw the global premiumization of alcohol coming to South Korea. So, in 2018, he sold Hand and Malt to Anheuser-Busch InBev, the Belgian-Brazilian multinational drinks conglomerate, for an estimated $9 million.

But Do had no intention of resting on his bankroll. Next up: craft spirits. "I wondered why," he says, "no one was making single malt whiskey in Korea."

So of course he decided *he* would.

AT SEOUL SALON, a menu card attached to an alligator-clip card stand touts a Jung One Mini Martini Flight ($22) and a Ki One Highball ($22). Across the bottom of the card are the words: "Three Societies Exclusive Cocktails." Do orders both.

The Martini Flight arrives by way of four small white porcelain ramekins in the shape of egg cups, each filled with gin that has been stirred with a dash of *Won Mae*, a Korean plum liqueur subbing for traditional dry vermouth. Floating on top of each bowl of gin is a botanical oil infused with Korean leaves, berries and an herb used to flavor them: pine needles, perilla leaf, chopi berry (similar to Chinese Sichuan peppers), and ginseng. Each one tastes distinctly different, but the unifying factor is the gin, which is more like a lightly sweet, finely polished Junmai Daiginjo sake. "We created," says Do, proudly holding his bottle of Jung One, "a gin for people that hate gin."

Next up: the Ki One Highball, made with Do's Korean single malt whiskey as the base, along with nurungi (a tincture made with roasted rice), banana, chamoe (Korean melon), barley tea and seltzer. The barman stirs it masterfully in a tall Collins glass. Do takes a sip and smiles. This is not the Four Roses and ginger ale highball of old.

How he got from beer to here — the top of the Korean craft spirits market — is classic Bryan Do: He simply sensed an opportunity and seized it. "I was a big fan of Yamazaki [a Japanese single malt whisky that retails for around $200], and I always got the question: 'Why doesn't Korea have a locally made whiskey?'" He found investors, then sought out a partner to help make it, insisting that the distiller be from Scotland. An introduction to Scottish master distiller and master blender Andrew Shand, whose 40-year career has included stints at Glenlivet, Nikka and Speyside, clinched the deal. Together, they opened Three Societies Distiller in Namyangju, a city northeast of Seoul, where the severe seasonal temperature fluctuations gave them an unexpected gift.

"We determined that one year of aging in Korea is like four to five in Scotland!" Do says. The pair were truly shocked by not only how quickly the spirit matured, but also how elegant it turned out to be.

Once the whiskey was in barrels and aging, Do leaned into his years of marketing at Microsoft to create stunning packaging to appeal to both Korean and international collectors. The bartender places two beautiful, ornate rectangular boxes in front of Do — one with a matte black surface, the other dark green — each adorned with gold foil butterflies, flowers and symbols. "We put a lot of emphasis on the packaging for it to be very Korean, but still elegant," Do explains. He wanted it to "have the feel of elegant Korean cosmetics."

He opens the black box, revealing a bottle of Ki One single malt whiskey nestled in place, then flips the lid over to reveal a lining of graceful designs, reminiscent of toile. "This is what traditional room dividers looked like in the olden days," he says. Traditionally, there were different dividers for various social situations: drinking with friends, studying — even, he says with an impish smile, entertaining a mistress.

At last, he opens the bottle of Ki One Batch 1, aged in virgin American oak — Korea's first single malt whiskey. It's one of only 9,000 bottles produced. "Ki One" means beginning and hope; Do created the whiskey to showcase how Korea's four distinct seasons can impact the liquor's flavor. It's virtually impossible to find a bottle of Batch 1, but subsequent batches now fetch around $150 online. "We are still at the start of the journey to reach this vision of Ki One whiskey being a world-class whiskey brand, but I think we are on the right track," Do says, rather modestly. "Hopefully, this will make Koreans proud of the whiskey that is being made here locally."

A few days before arriving here in New York, Do made an appearance at the Los Angeles Whisky Club's May event on the West Coast leg of his promotional roadshow. Club member Esther Song '95, M.S. '96 was a very interested attendee at the downtown L.A. affair. "I started collecting [Ki One] because I was introduced to it being the first Korean single malt whiskey," Song says. "That's a very significant deal, because South Korea is one of the biggest consumers in the world of whiskey. The fact that there hasn't been a single malt whiskey that came out of Korea is astounding to me."

Anyone following Do's career might naturally wonder: *Now what*?

For the time being, he says he's happy to devote his attention to his wife, Korean supermodel Kyunga Song, and their 7-year-old daughter. "I am telling you and everyone that this is it, kaput, nothing else left in the tank," he insists.

Well ... maybe. "After I build this company to reach its goals, I'll probably end up doing something else small," Do says thoughtfully. He mentions doing something with his hands, like making furniture or farming. "I don't think I will be able to ever truly retire!"

There's always another river to row. ■

Do serves up tastings of his made-in-Korea Ki One whiskeys to more than three dozen members of the Los Angeles Whisky Club. The group hosted an event at a modern downtown L.A. furniture gallery in May.

LIBERATION

A first-of-its-kind UCLA program is transforming women's lives — and forging a path to lasting freedom — by bringing passionate Bruin teaching inside prisons.

By Delan Bruce ❋ Photography by Alexis Hunley

This is a story about avocados. And soft pillows. A fresh breeze coming in through an open window. Family — both genetic and chosen. It's about deep friendships that endure. It's about healing past traumas, transformation, changing perspectives and shifting paradigms. It's a story about steadfastness and dedication. It's about love. And it's about liberation.

Berenice Montano grew up in South L.A., where she was an honor roll student who played volleyball and basketball and ran track at George Washington Preparatory High School. Her neighborhood, she says, was impoverished. But that didn't stop her mother from insisting she always put education first. After graduating, Montano enrolled at Cal State Northridge. Life was great.

Then, at 19, she fell in love. For her first serious relationship, she'd chosen a nefarious partner who soon introduced her to the streets and selling drugs. She never tried the drugs, but did get "addicted to a certain lifestyle." After nearly a decade, that lifestyle caught up with her when she found herself facing charges for transporting methamphetamine. A lenient judge gave her an 18-month sentence, explaining that any future offense would see Montano facing a much longer bid. Montano told the judge not to worry. She thought, *You'll never see me inside a courtroom as a defendant again*.

She was sent to the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Victorville's medium-security prison camp for women. FCI Victorville is a complex of drab, low-slung buildings situated in a desolate section of wasteland in Southern California's High Desert. Roughly 1,300 people are confined at Victorville at any given time; Montano's time among them started off rough. She exchanged barbs with the prison staff because she "just felt like they didn't want the best for me. It was just like a defensive mode."

Battling her demons, and working through her past with a dangerous, controlling partner, she made a decision to focus on the next stage of her life. Then, she saw a bulletin board notice for an upcoming orientation for a UCLA course. Her interest was piqued. She decided that no matter what else she did, she would be at that orientation and find out what UCLA was offering in a place like this. When the date for orientation finally arrived, she was overcome by the welcome from the leadership staff of UCLA's Prison Education Program (PEP). Jai Williams '16, PEP's program coordinator, and Acacia M. Warren, then the program's managing director, won Montano over after just a few icebreaker exercises. "I sat down," Montano says, "and I automatically felt like everybody's energy was positive."

PEP sits at the axis of world arts and cultures/dance, law and African American studies. It also houses the Center for Justice, which works to end inequities based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation and disability. The program's goal: to create collaborative learning by bringing traditional UCLA "outside" students into prison facilities to take courses directly alongside incarcerated "inside" students.

But the program, and its visionary leaders, accomplish so much more than that. In PEP classrooms, inside students teach as many profound lessons as their professors do. Bryonn Bain, co-founding director of the Center for Justice and the founder of PEP, says he teaches "for very selfish reasons: because it's a way for me to continue learning."

In its 10-year existence, PEP has administered UCLA courses inside a half-dozen juvenile and women's facilities. Of the women who participate, Warren estimates at least half are mothers. She tries, she says, to bring joy — and a vision of a better future — into a place most people don't associate with either. The joy she transmits, evident in her broad, beaming smile, is fed by a simple abiding principle: "You are alive, and you mean something to somebody."

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BERENICE MONTANO'S first PEP course, in fall 2023, was "Justice of Theater," taught by UCLA lecturer Aaron Bray, a "scholar warrior" with a Harvard Law degree. Montano calls it a hands-on "critical thinking class," in which the students explored legal cases and engaged in impassioned debates. In winter quarter, she took "The Spoken Word," a creative writing and performance practicum with the indefatigable Bain, himself a champion of spoken word poetry and an activist, producer, director, hip-hop theater innovator and multimedia storyteller.

Born in Brooklyn to parents who immigrated from Trinidad and Tobago — his mother was a nurse, his father a photojournalist in the U.S. Army and, before that, an award-winning calypso singer — Bain had had a harrowing run-in with wrongful imprisonment in 1999 (ironically, while he was attending Harvard Law School). The story is well documented on platforms as large as *60 Minutes*, as well as via freewheeling wordplay in his one-man show *Lyrics From Lockdown*, produced by the late Harry Belafonte, which was developed in prisons in 25 states around the country over the past two decades (and is available on YouTube as a TED Talk).

So storytelling is clearly in Bain's blood. It's woven into the DNA of PEP's coursework, too. Claudia Peña J.D. '08 is on the faculty at UCLA School of Law and in gender studies and is the Center for Justice's co-founding director and the co-director of PEP. "Storytelling is one of the most important traditions that exists in humanity," she says. "It's the way that knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation forever."

It's a sentiment Bain echoes. "Across the world, we look at oppressed peoples — it's the stories that we tell ourselves that help us understand our place in the universe," he says. "These stories give us a sense of meaning and a sense of purpose. What is the story that you tell yourself about why you are here, what you're doing and who you are? That will determine the choices you make and the life you live."

With the launch of PEP in 2015, Bain and UCLA set off a movement, and other UCs and California universities followed suit. For the first time this year, 23 incarcerated students earned their bachelor's degrees from UC Irvine and UCI LIFTED, while Cal State L.A. offers a bachelor's to students confined in Lancaster. Both programs followed PEP. Bain's point: When a leading institution like UCLA dives into this work and puts the weight of its resources behind it, it sends a clear signal that other institutions should be doing the same.

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BAIN AND PEP LEADERSHIP are not merely teachers; they are advocates for the women they're pulling into their orbit. So it is of little surprise when they begin lobbying the Victorville warden to allow the inside students to come to the UCLA campus for a March performance. In week 10 of the quarter, the warden finally says yes.

Every Friday, Bain and the outside students enrolled in "The Spoken Word" take an early morning bus to convene with the class's 12 inside students at Victorville. Bain reveals the good news to the outside students during the two-hour trek to Victorville for their last classroom meeting of the term. The student reactions, even at that early hour of the morning, are loud and joyous, akin to the leaps and shouts of a surprised Academy Award winner. On March 15, Montano and her classmates will put on a live stage performance — titled *Literary Liberation* — at UCLA, featuring 19 pieces by PEP poets.

Four days before the performance, Montano transitions to a halfway house near her childhood home in South L.A. to serve out the remaining three months of her sentence. She sweats whether the director of the house will even grant her permission to attend the show; she pleads her case and gets the green light.

Before the performance, PEP holds a lunch reception for all of the students. It's the little things that Montano and her incarcerated classmates really enjoy — like fresh fruit. "Imagine avocado being one of your highlights of the day," she says. "In there, we don't get avocado. All the food and everything that was catered to us was a plus for us. We always talked about avocados in there."

PEP, she says, "gave me the opportunity to be a part of a community. I didn't *feel* like I was incarcerated. I felt like I was alive. 'My God! We actually have a support system that cares, that treats us like humans.' I think that was the best thing that could have ever happened."

In spring quarter, Montano has taken Peña's gender studies class once

Above: Mary (left) an inside student, collaborates with Skye Cato, a gender studies major; Bain gives last-minute instructions at the lunch and reception before the Labors of Love performance at the Fowler.

a week on campus, along with other formerly incarcerated women from another renowned reentry program, A New Way of Life (ANWOL), as well as traditionally enrolled UCLA students. The course (called "Isn't She Lovely?") focuses on reproductive health, Indigenous birthing practices and healing the family. Montano says the weekly guest speakers — midwives, doulas and birth spiritual guides — educated her about "things we're not really taught growing up" regarding women's reproduction.

Those guests include members of the Sugar Heal Gang — a local organization of Black and Indigenous practitioners who work with families who are pregnant for the entire birthing process and postpartum.

Courses like these resonate with both inside and outside students. Some are mothers, many others will become mothers — all *have* mothers. Birth is universal, but the traditional practices discussed in the course no longer are. It feels like a gift of esoteric wisdom is being passed down to the class's lucky participants. It's a reminder that the university can, and in fact must, still function as a place where learning for learning's sake is an unmitigated good no one should have to apologize for. Encouraging the holistic growth of a whole person, feeding their curiosity beyond how the material they learn affects their future job prospects, is as worthy a goal of education as any other.

Traditionally enrolled UCLA students and their professors travel to the carceral facility weekly for class. "There are so many students inside of facilities," Professor Peña says, "who desperately want access to classes, who thrive when they're taking our classes."

THERE'S A CHILL in the early morning air on Dickson Plaza. The grass is wet with dew, the skies gray, typical of late May. Students congregate at a bus bench across the street from Murphy Hall, chatting energetically as they wait for the black minibus to take them to the women's prison in Santa Fe Springs. They've taken this trip each Friday morning of the quarter to join 15 incarcerated women in attending a gender and African American studies course called "Women of Color and Social Movements."

Creating a blended learning community of traditionally enrolled UCLA students and incarcerated students has proven invaluable. "Our inside students tell us all the time that it's meaningful to them," Bain says. "It makes them feel like regular students, makes them feel humanized" when an entire class of UCLA scholars comes into the facility, as opposed to just a professor or two.

The bus rumbles down the 405 freeway to the 10 East, then 5 South. It eventually enters what looks like an industrial park but is actually the Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program (CCTRP) facility, a nondescript 60-bed facility. You leave your bag on the bus. Entering, each person signs in at a counter, not unlike checking in for a doctor's appointment, except in this case you hand over your ID. You can't bring in phones; only the one or two laptops necessary for teaching the course are allowed.

The women housed here — most with less than two years of their sentences remaining — don't wear uniforms, and they don't live behind bars. CCTRP provides rehabilitative services that assist with alcohol and drug recovery, employment, education, housing, family reunification and social support; there are monthly trips to Walmart. Classes take place in a roughly 2,000-square-foot room that resembles a high school library.

Seats for everyone in the class, PEP faculty and staff included, are arranged in a large circle. The agenda kicks off with a welcome and check-in ("How's your spirit?" "How's your mind?") followed by warm-up and community-building exercises — one, called Ochos Locos, has everyone on their feet for what looks like an adult version of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes." Bain is big on movement as a tool. It's important, he says, in two ways: the movement of bodies, motion, how we communicate nonverbally — and in terms of social and political justice movements.

The lights go off, and the class watches a 10-minute video from NBC News about Native Hawaiians protesting a proposal to build a giant telescope on a sacred mountain. A lively group discussion ensues. Fyrne, a 70-year-old, free-thinking prophet who has been incarcerated at CCTRP for almost two years, delivers a master class of a monologue pointing out the connections between white supremacy, colonialism and how Western scientific projects can be used to rob Indigenous peoples of their rights. Applause ripples across the room; a few students from campus hoot and holler in support. Bain voices his astonishment at Fyrne's brilliance before asking her, through a wry smile, "Do you want to take over and teach the rest of the class?"

One of the most moving elements of the class are the affirmations. Each person's name goes into a hat, which is passed around the circle until everyone is holding a name. Along with praise and positivity, there is also a sense of sadness that this is the last time this particular group will be together at CCTRP. It marks the end of something special that's transpired over the previous nine weeks. The affirmations elicit both laughter and tears: "You're a great conversationalist"; "Hearing you speak is such an honor. I learn so much from you"; "I really admire you because you are so in touch with who you are and how you see the world … and I love your style!"; "When I read your story for the first time, it was very moving. It touched my heart, and I'm so excited for everyone to hear it."

That last affirmation is about a CCTRP student named Demisha. Her deeply touching story is about having been the only Black child in a predominantly white neighborhood of Phoenix, and how she didn't realize that she was any different until a fourth-grade teacher pointed it out during a self-portrait art assignment. Determined to fit in, Demisha bleached her skin in hopes that it would turn white. The story is personal, comical and devastating.

This course is the first for Demisha, who anticipates being released from CCTRP in 2025. Demisha is also taking classes with Loyola Marymount University and Cal State Dominguez Hills. With every college course she takes, a week gets chopped off her sentence. Before she got to CCTRP, Demisha was at the California Institution for Women (CIW) in Chino, the oldest women's prison in the state — the same facility where, in 2015, incarcerated women penned more than 100 letters to UCLA requesting a center for incarceration studies. Bain launched PEP shortly thereafter.

One of the program's key goals is to "rehumanize" the inside students who serve their time in a carceral system that seeks to dehumanize them at nearly every turn. Demisha says it's the simple things she misses: Riding her beach cruiser up the coast in Long Beach. Opening a window. Sitting in traffic. Having her coffee from Starbucks. "Those are things I took for granted," she says. "There was no restriction. Now, I have to ask to walk out the door."

During five years at CIW, she dreamed about having a soft pillow. She used a balled-up jacket instead. Things are better at CCTRP. "My son," she says with a mother's pride, "made sure I got a *very* soft pillow." Now, deeply dedicated to her education, she feels she has a lot to look forward to on the outside. She hopes to give back — and down the road, to volunteer with PEP. And she's philosophical about her time in confinement. "When something happens that you don't understand, just keep going through it," she says. "The only way out is through."

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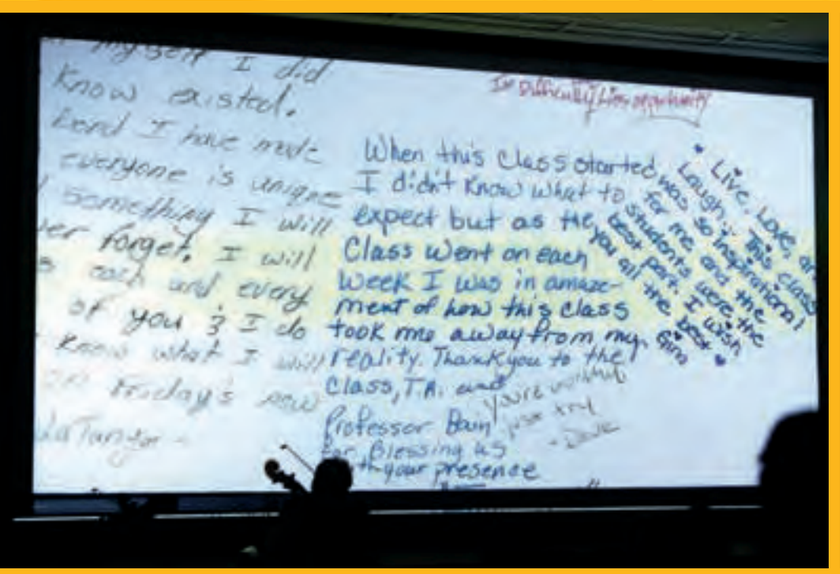
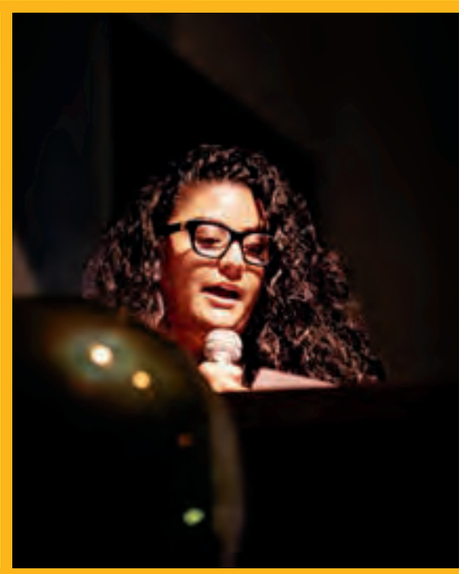
TRADE UNIONIST and Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene Debs, who was incarcerated for sedition (for speaking out against U.S. involvement in World War I), called prison "at best a monumental evil and a burning shame to society." He said, "it ought not merely to be reformed but abolished as an institution for the punishment and degradation of unfortunate human beings."

The situation in today's punitive system is somehow exponentially worse now than it was a century ago. Today, almost half of Americans have a close relative who has spent time in jail or prison. And the populations inside who occupy those prisons are not only some of the most vulnerable people in society, but also among its most traumatized. Peña talks about the "trauma to prison pipeline," because 96% of people in prisons have experienced some form of





trauma or another — or, just as likely, multiple traumas. Meanwhile, every meaningful metric on the topic points to education as the most powerful antidote to recidivism. While the national recidivism rate is about 65%, only 5.6% of incarcerated people who earn a bachelor's degree return to prison. Earn a master's degree, and that number plummets to zero.

Acacia Warren's father was formerly incarcerated. As a younger man, he was caught up in criminal activity. He now serves as a chaplain at Santa Rita Prison. "My father tells people all the time, education saved his life," Warren says. "If he hadn't gone the education route, he would be dead."

With all the good that PEP does now, the only question is this: How much *more* could they do? The desire is there: Peña mentions that more than 100 courses have been offered to PEP by professors who would like to teach in facilities. And the need is certainly there: While PEP usually accepts 15 inside students for any given course, that leaves out many students inside of facilities who are seeking access to classes. Currently, inside students can receive justice studies certificates from UCLA Extension after completing seven PEP courses, but ideally the program would like to offer UCLA bachelor's degrees to its students who are incarcerated. "The only thing that is limiting us," Peña says, "is lack of resources."

More resources mean potentially greater impact on more students — both inside *and* out. Justine Lightner, a third-year transfer student majoring in public affairs who took the "Women of Color" course, thinks every UCLA student should take a PEP course inside a carceral facility, especially those majoring in fields such as public affairs and sociology. "It's important to go into a facility and see that these students are people just like everyone else," she says. "They just happened to have made some mistakes. Those mistakes don't define them."

In fact, it's just the opposite. "Everyone in the course has been very open, and I think that's kind of my favorite part, because I think a lot of people just don't open up the way that we have in the last nine weeks, particularly in an academic course," Lightner adds. That experience isn't the norm. "This class has been really nice; I can actually get to know people. In my other classes, I feel like I'm just a number in a large lecture hall."

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THE FINALS FOR BOTH the "Women of Color and Social Movements" and "Isn't She Lovely" courses culminate in a stage performance at the Fowler Museum on UCLA's campus: *Labors of Love: A Storytelling Potluck*, where 18 storytellers will each relate a three- to four-minute story.

The show gets underway as Professor Peña, who has Indigenous roots in El Salvador, delivers a beautiful land acknowledgment. She tells a story about the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples native to what is now known as Los Angeles, whose traditional practice of seafaring in plank canoes, called *te'aat*, was lost as a result of colonization. She explains how they rebuilt the tradition with the help of other nations in an act of intertribal cooperation, a parallel to the way students with different talents and skill sets all contributed to the storytelling potluck happening here.

Narratives follow about overcoming obstacles, love, shame, regret and war. They are powerful, moving, funny, uplifting and often achingly personal. Every performer — and every PEP participant coordinating the show — is dressed in theater blacks. (The exception is, of course, Fyrne, standing out in a long pink cardigan.) The stories explore wildly different themes, ranging from body positivity, abusive partners, family tragedy and fishing to women in gaming, growing up in a war zone, podcasting and justice. By the time the last story wraps, there is nary a dry eye among the 200 audience members.

"That just does not get old," Bain says. "That we can fight for the freedom of our sisters who are incarcerated — even if it's one day at a time, we'll take every day we can get." He calls attention to the case of Monica Frazee, a student from the federal facility who performed her poetry and played the harmonica in a previous quarter while her warden was in the room. The warden subsequently signed paperwork to release Frazee four and a half years early to home confinement.

Berenice Montano takes to the stage to recite a particularly heartrending poem dedicated to an unborn child lost to abortion. She announces that this is also likely the day she'll be getting her ankle monitor removed. Triumphant shouts and applause thunder throughout the auditorium. It's another milestone on the path to complete freedom, a testament to how far she's come. She's working toward earning her associate's degree in sociology from Victor Valley College. Her ultimate goal? To get into UCLA as an undergrad.

Nearing the end of her time at Victorville, Montano suddenly found herself crossing paths with one of her old volleyball teammates from high school. Initially ashamed to be meeting under such circumstances, Montano realized she could offer her friend some advice and encouragement. She relayed to her old teammate all of the positive things that she might be able to take part in. The former schoolmate heard her and ended up taking advantage of numerous programming opportunities.

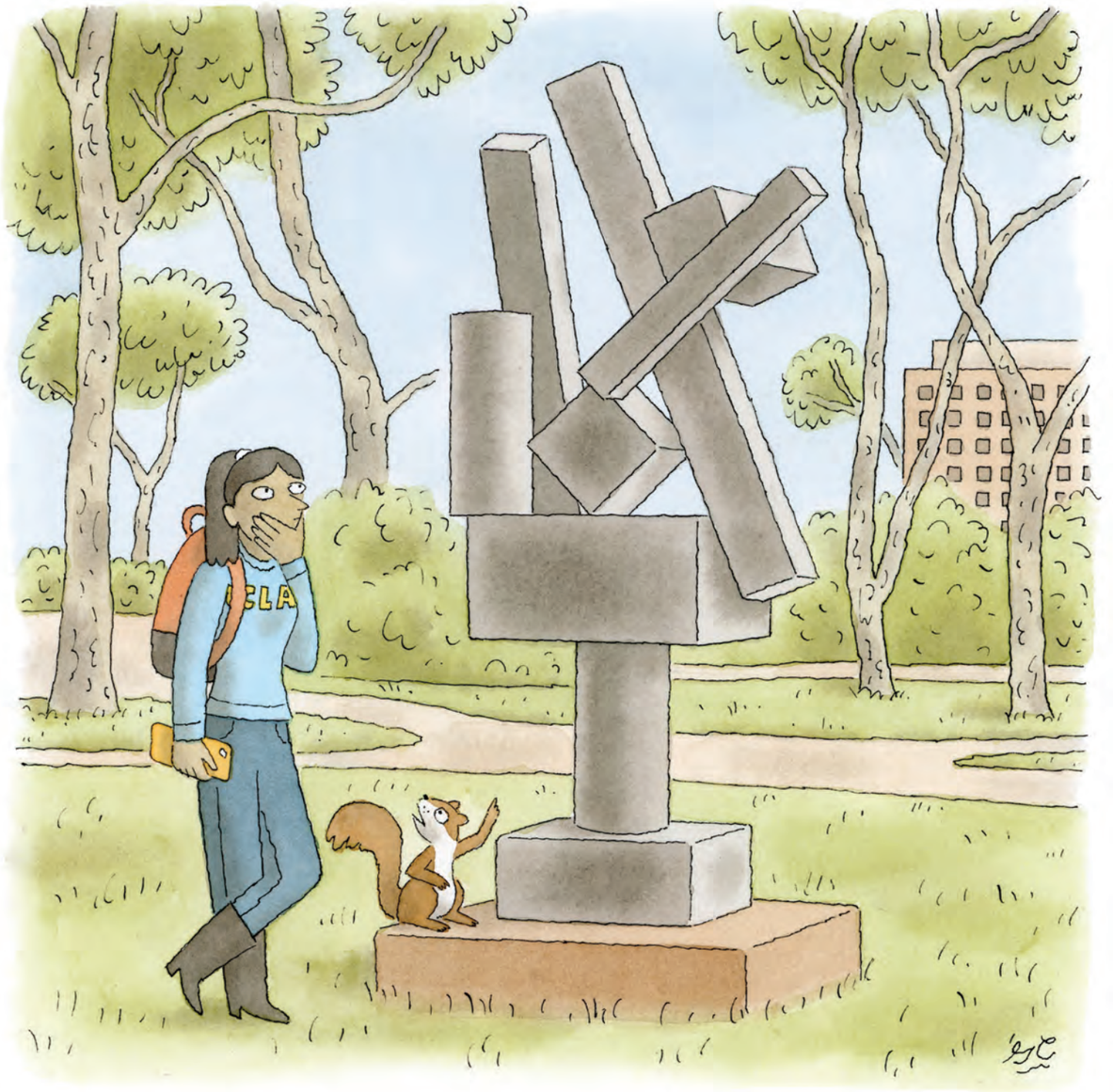
And that's all Montano wants. What all of them want. To motivate and inspire other women who are imprisoned to seize programs like PEP, programs whose light penetrates the walls that enclose them. Programs that offer women like Montano an opportunity to make the most of their time inside — and ensure they never come back.

"Seeing kindhearted people wanting to help us in there is itself a blessing," she says. "It's not just a program. They get personal with us. They want to see us succeed." ■

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The audience awaits the start of the *Labors of Love* performance; Professor Peña delivers the land acknowledgment; Berenice Montano performing; Juanita recites her uplifting poem; the curtain call; students' reflections from the end of the winter quarter course

The Great Cartoon Caption Contest

We asked alum **Greg Clarke '82** to create a *New Yorker*–worthy cartoon about campus life — then asked you, our readers, to submit possible captions via Instagram. After receiving almost 200 entries, we present the winning caption!



"Rent is 750 and I'm showing it to two other people today."

Submitted by Justin C.M. Brown '24, who wins our prize: a UCLA T-shirt!

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