Spanish Classes Carry On Tradition of Día de los Muertos

Students in Spanish classes created altars to remember loved ones and famous people who passed away as part of this mostly Mexican tradition.

What’s Life Like After Hancock?
By Daniel Guzman

As Hancock students reach the end of their high school career, it’s time to make big important decisions about post-secondary education. Juniors and seniors sometimes have no clue about what to do after Hancock. Some students want to easily find success after high school, but they are challenged in the search for it (finding a scholarship, finishing college, getting a job), so they give up. Griselda Guzman, a Hancock graduate from 2013, recently graduated from college and got a job as a registered nurse at Northwestern Hospital.

Guzman, 22, is from the most recent Hancock class who should have graduated college after 4 years. She went to St. Xavier University. She was highly successful, graduating college with relatively little debt ($14,000 in loans) and a 3.5+ GPA.

Guzman started off by saying, “I was the first one in my family to go to college, and I didn’t really know much about it, how to apply for it, or anything really... I had to do a lot of research myself. I had to research the types of programs that were offered at particular colleges, the types of clubs, how much money it would cost to attend a particu-
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would be for them. To be able to do this, students must dive out of their comfort zone and do a lot of self-research, which is not a regular thing for most students.

Once students are actually in college, after the scholarship and admission process, then the hard part begins. They must get through school, as different and hard as it may seem, and they must remain focused. Guzman explained how she got through this rigorous challenge. “I had to have a lot of dedication and focus to overcome the obstacles I faced before becoming a nurse. I had to really dedicate myself to my studies. Nursing, as well as almost any major, is a major that is extremely difficult, and takes so much time out of you. This has to be something that you really want to do, staying home on weekends, getting home and just studying. It has to be your main focus because it’s hard to do… I could not let any of those outside influences, easily found in the Hancock community, disturb me from reaching my goals. I could not let problems outside of school interfere with my studies. That takes a lot of dedication, but I did it. I’m glad that I did it.”

Hancock students have to realize that college will be much more difficult than Hancock, and very different from it. Only like this will students get through college. Guzman stated, “All 4 years of high school, I was an A+ student. I always attended classes, and I was still unprepared [for college]. This is because college was extremely different than my time at Hancock. You HAVE to know how to study, how to manage your time, and how to prioritize the correct things, while allowing yourself some time to relax. It was a really difficult first semester. I felt like I just wanted to drop out.”

Many students find that college professors just throw information at them. There are rarely any guided notes or guided learning that Hancock students are used to, so students must know how to process information and study it independently.

According to Susie An, from Chicago Public Radio, in an article titled “College Diploma Out-Of-Reach For Growing Number Of Low-Income Illinois Students” published on September 26, 2017, “About 50 percent of our state’s elementary and high school students are low income, and that brings with them some significant challenges as well as lack of resources when they are able to move into higher education.”

An also said, “The Chicago-based organization [Partnership for College Completion, or PCC] found that while middle-class families in Illinois need to set aside a quarter of their total income for a student to attend a four-year institution, low-income families need to set aside 63 percent, according to data from 2014.” These two pieces of information put into perspective just how difficult it may be for most Hancock students to get a good post-secondary education. Almost everyone here is part of a low-income family. With tough economic conditions like these, students must keep their studies as their number one priority in order to become successful.

Aside from the previously stated information to help students, the Hancock counselors, and Gear Up team, also provide a lot of help for students who are having trouble with making a post-secondary education decision, consulting them is highly recommended, which is something Guzman recognizes.
Whatchoo Had to Say about the October Issue

NFL Protests:

“I understand why others may see timing of the protest during the anthem offensive, but I truly believe the cause is right.”
—Natalia Vargas

“Overall I was shocked to find many of the students of Hancock to share very similar thoughts on the subject as freedom of speech may be interpreted differently by everyone.”
—Froylan Castillo, Jr.

“I agree with the movement of the protest. It isn’t wrong to take a knee during the national anthem because it’s part of our freedom of speech.”
—Rudolfo Villanueva

The Status of DACA:

“It may not directly have an impact on me, but it does to many of my peers. It is hard for me to just sit here and do nothing while my friends live in fear everyday.”
—Bianca Salazar

“It made me think about the many families that have to deal with this problem that is arising and it sucks to go through this.”
—Jonathan C. Rodriguez

“If no one fights back, then nothing will happen. We need to start proving that people with DACA aren’t criminals or a waste of time.”
—Sujae Velasco

“My mother works with lawyers that helped a lot of people get DACA. I think this all gets my attention because it’s interesting to see that our president does things that hurt people when he should be helping us.”
—Kianna Negron

“America is supposed to be the ‘land of the free,’ yet there are always new laws or actions taking effect that strip people of their rights.”
—Mauro Ramos

“It’s a good topic to talk about since we don’t stop to think what life is like for people who struggle with DACA, especially someone so young like a high school student who is about to start to live his or her life.”
—Jose Pelaez

“Everyone especially Donald Trump is always talking about how immigrants (Mexicans) are bringing drugs and violence, but here we have young people wanting to study and work hard to achieve that American Dream.”
—Dayana Ortiz

Group Therapy Programs

"I joined BAM, and have been part of it since freshmen year. I can say that it has truly changed me as a person and the way I act towards others."
—Alexis Rios

"W.O.W was where I got to meet new people and understand more about them and others."
—Emely Salgado

"These programs can make students feel safe and cared for. They should be advertised more around the school to encourage more students to join."
—Samantha Campos

"Youth Guidance shouldn’t leave Hancock next year. In my own experience, they’ve helped shape me into a better person and gave me a connection with my counselor."
—Fabian Chavez

Engineering Internships:

"I got to meet new people and I was paid for the internship. I recommend more people to try it out. Hopefully more teachers will also help students find paid internships over the summer so that students will be able to try something they may not be familiar with."
—Angel Cepeada
On September 20th, students were told to go to the auditorium for a mandatory, schoolwide event during academic lab. Following the announcement, students expressed their enthusiasm with complaints and groans. The school bell rang, signaling the end of seventh period classes and lunches, and students began to pile into the auditorium. As students were finally settled, the event began with introductions of the USHLI Student Leadership Summit presented by McDonalds.

Carlos Ojeda Jr., a motivational speaker from Hablo Cool Speaks, explained a situation that had changed his perspective about himself and the way people viewed minorities. Ojeda’s family relocated from the outskirts of New York City to a small town in Pennsylvania. Experiencing prejudice as early as elementary school, Ojeda was placed in a bilingual class because his mother spoke differently from the rest. “We moved all the way to Pennsylvania. I hated it because every time we went to school, they’d take one look at the way my mom was dressed. They’d hear her heavy, thick accent — they knew exactly where to put me. They put me in bilingual classes,” Ojeda disclosed.

Minority students often find comfort in silence, because they don’t see anyone else taking the initiative of speaking up for something as simple as questioning a math calculation. After spending some time in bilingual classes, Ojeda questioned why he was placed in the category if he spoke English well. Shortly after, he decided to tell his father of the incident and his father said he’d go to the school to fix the problem. “My dad walked up and said, ‘Excuse me, why is my son in bilingual?’ And they didn’t have an answer.

Ojeda explains the “box” the school staff had placed him — making assumptions about the person he was and what he was capable of. His father asked the staff if there was an exam his son could take in order to determine whether he was being placed in the right classes: Ojeda aced it.

Jokes were made by Ojeda about the situation and bursts of laughter followed. The laughter subsided when he mentioned how disappointed his father was as they left the school that day: “You let them put you in a corner. You let them take your voice. Tu voz es tu poder. Your voice is your power. It is the one thing given to you at birth that lets you stand your ground, to speak your mind, to speak for those who can’t or won’t speak for themselves. Tu voz es tu poder.”

Students clapped, whistled, and yelled in agreement. No longer upset about the obligatory event, rather glad they were able to experience it.

Ojeda’s journey inspired Hancock students to open their eyes to the reality of our current conflicts or situations. During high school is when adolescents determine different aspects of themselves to answer the ultimate question: who am I? Whether or not students were able to connect to the shortcomings of Carlos Ojeda, Jr., everyone left the auditorium that Wednesday afternoon with a powerful message: “If you see there’s a problem, if you see something needs to change, if you see people being treated the way you or a friend don’t want to be treated, if you see injustice—you question it, because your voice is your power. Because questions give you answers, answers give you knowledge, and young people—knowledge gives you power.”

“Your voice is your power. It is the one thing given to you at birth that lets you stand your ground.”
Chris, 16, is a Mexican teen on the South-west side of Chicago that, over the course of his life, has seen the constant negligence of mental health in Latino culture.

“I could see a lot of stigma when my friends would speak with their parents. . . let’s say, they’re having a really bad day or they just don’t feel right, their parents just usually just shrug it off as like they’re just feeling blue; it’s nothing big,” he says.

Chris had always been in the midst of guns, drugs, and gangs but he confesses that in spite of tragedies, he didn’t care, because it was as though his body “did not recognize grief at that point.” Things progressively got harder when he began experiencing his own difficulties with his mental health, confessing that as he got older, so did his irrational fears and depression.

“I noticed something wasn’t right, I could almost feel it, but I just didn’t understand what it was,” he confesses.

Greg Staszko has worked as a clinical psychologist at Mt. Sinai for 11 years. Besides direct communication through patient and family therapy sessions, he has also completed 4 different year-long training experiences while pursuing his doctorate where he was able to work in community settings with diverse populations, including many Latino families. In his experience, the basic knowledge of mental health facts may be unknown to many people, especially if the people in their environment and within their culture were also never familiar. Some of the biggest issues is the reluctance to acknowledge a problem and the refusal to seek treatment.

While the top percentage of mental health illnesses in the country falls on the White population, The Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved by Rodney A. Samaan, observes that “after controlling for socioeconomic status, African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are less likely to report or be reported to have such mental health problems,” which can be directly related to the cultures as a whole.

Chris believes that the cultural beliefs of parents are so deeply rooted that we can’t blame them for initially not knowing how to react, saying that “they probably got the same attitude from [their parents] too with anything they weren’t familiar with. They react how they were raised and use that on their kids.”

Culturally, the majority of Latino community believes in the privacy of struggles and problems, keeping issues inside the family in order to avoid being judged or asking for help. According to the National Alliance of Mental Health, discreet customs can be shown in sayings such as, “la ropa sucia se lava en casa,” meaning “don’t air your dirty laundry in public.”

“Many parents may feel that having to take their child to see a therapist reflects poorly on them as parents, and this shame may prevent them from seeking treatment,” Staszko laments.

Fortunately for Chris, sharing his thoughts and emotions with his parents was never a difficulty, but that didn’t stop him from being concerned for the people who don’t have that relationship, “especially in today’s political situation,” Staszko mentions, because of how many Latinos were impacted by the election, causing “experiencing heightened levels of fear and anxiety.”

The correlation between politics and mental health is more prominent than ever due to the “real negative impact on peoples’ mental health and wellbeing due to both increases in overt discrimination and uncertainty over their families’ safety,” Stasko claims.

In any given treatment plan, for it to be successful, there has to be an understanding between the patient and the therapist. Stazsko believes the psychologist must be knowledgeable about the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the families they work with, and the family must be open-minded of treatment plans.

As for Chris, evaluation made him realize that he has anxiety and derealization. While he has not fully recovered, he shares that even acknowledging and talking about the issue was a big step forward for him and his family.

“It’s important to talk to a friend or a parent, but they aren’t therapists. People my age need to realize that therapy isn’t shameful, it’s life-saving.”
We all have a background, talent, or interest that plays an important role in our identity. Sometimes those talents and interests are discovered at our lowest moments in life. My secret talent is belly dancing; however, I was not always aware of it. In this world of the unknown, of loneliness and of sadness, I found out that my body is stronger than I thought. This newfound talent and passion was not revealed to me by the divine, Holy Spirit. This isn’t a happy story; on the contrary, this is the story of how I was forced to rebuild myself through and after my experience with bullying.

This was the first day of seventh grade. It was a warm morning in Chicago but it was so busy and rushed. Mothers were rushing their kids to school, helping them carry bags with school supplies. I had just returned from Mexico and school was the last place I wanted to go. My soul was mourning the loss of my uncle. He was my mother’s brother and died of cancer. As soon as I got to school my friend met me at our class’ line and hugged me.

“I heard what happened. I’m sorry.”

The wound was still fresh and these words sounded to my brain like an, “Okay, we can cry.” What I didn’t know was that along with the loss of a family member, I should have been mourning the loss of a friend. At the moment I was vulnerable and breakable. My guard wasn’t up nor was it built. I didn’t expect drama or backstabbing. And so, it came as a surprise when one of my “friends” suddenly refused to talk to me.

The first week passed and I felt so confused by her silence. By the second week, I began to realize that things weren’t going to be the same between us. She had changed, times had changed and our friendship had changed. She was full of rage and I was the only one who was weak enough to be her target. I made various attempts to communicate with her but she ignored me. The first month passed and she began talking to me, ugly and nasty talk, but still talk. I couldn’t speak without her rolling her eyes at me and telling me to “shut up.” At first it was just verbal bullying.

She enjoyed name-calling and body shaming, tearing away at the little bit of self-esteem that I had. I thought, “If she says these things about me, surely they must be true. This must be the way that others see me too.” This lasted a few months before escalating. If she was in a bad mood she’d scratch me and pinch me to add the cherry on top of the pile of insults she gave me. No one ever really noticed and I let it stay that way.

I preferred to let her continue than have others think of me as a snitch; in addition, I believed that the things she said were the truth. Truly this was a wonderful year so far, right? She must have been blessed by the Gods and given the gift of knowledge and wisdom over all. I couldn't take it anymore.

Submit your writing, photography, or art to the school newspaper!

Email Mr. Salazar at rsalazar@cps.edu or stop by 201 during AC Lab.

You know you got somethin’ to say.
Bellydancing continued

“What did I do wrong?” I wondered, “Do I deserve this?”

Meanwhile, my new neighbor was moving in. She was hilarious and was the coolest adult I had ever talked to. I got attached to her and she became like a friend to me. She was a fan of Shakira and would let me listen to and watch her music videos on the computer. I was amazed, enchanted by the way the woman behind the screen could move. She looked gracious and happy. Shakira became the representation of beauty, confidence, and grace that I strived for. My curiosity and interest led me to search for more videos of women performing the same style of dance.

Belly dance is a majestic form of art. It originates in the Middle East and is an expressive dance that focuses on the torso. Dancers must make it look graceful, natural, and elegant. I learned of the types of movements and the isolation of different body parts (hips, chest, belly). This dance requires an extreme amount of self-control to make the performance look and feel natural. Belly dancing is not as easy as it looks but it makes me feel alive.

As I began to try it, I noticed my body changing; consequently, I felt a bit of confidence growing in me. I was stronger and better than before. I keep practicing this now; however, it has been a challenge to continue learning and practicing. On the Internet, my only available resource, there are many amateurs. The Internet is big, but it's not as reliable as a real instructor would be. It's also a challenge to do this without getting teased by my family although they have grown more used to it now. The main difficulty I have is in finding time to practice, as I grow older, I know that I will keep getting busier.

I have never danced this way in front of others because I am a shy person. My discovery of belly dance is what helped me survive 7th grade. This “friend” of mine later asked me for forgiveness. I couldn't give it to her completely. I have tried to move on. I told her that it was in the past. I may be older now. I may be different now; still, I can't seem to completely forget the things she said then. She has no idea just how bad she hurt me.

It has taken this long to be able to wear something without first thinking about it for hours. I couldn't put on a nice dress without hating myself. “I look fat, my legs are too thick. Why do my thighs touch?” I didn't even need her to be present. I pinched myself and I tormented myself. I felt that everything was too tight and that nothing would look right. I know that others may be going through this. I am here to tell them that it takes long but we can't give up. We must learn to love ourselves. There are days, too many for my liking, when I will look at myself and begin hating what I see. But then I remember that I am not the person that others tell me I am, only I can decide that. I am who I say I am. Belly dancing helped me learn this.

Others can't know my true identity just from looking at me. They don't know what I can do. They don't know how strong I am. I might not be absolutely confident; still, I know that I can't let anyone hurt me the same way again. I would like for others to find something that makes them feel good and do it. We only have this one life so who cares what others think of us? As long as we feel comfortable in our skin we'll be fine.
Hancock Students Participate in Hyde Park Art Center Gala

Every year, the Hyde Park Art Center hosts an annual celebration for the unique institutions and the individuals who make their work possible, according to their Web site. The Art Center plays a distinctive role in the arts landscape, supporting contemporary artists throughout their careers at every age and stage, while promoting high standards of arts investment and access in Chicago. From teaching artists working with our city’s youth and adults to the exhibitions, the center invites people to celebrate, connect, and amplify the work they do and the world we want to live in.

Hancock senior Citlalli Alcazar participated in the Document Bureau experience because of the guidance of Mr. Martinek. Documents Bureau exploits our familiarity with bureaucracy and turns it into an opportunity for creativity and play. A cast of performers embodying office workers collaborates with the public to produce official-looking documents that attest to all the small, personal, and mundane goings-on of daily life. Documents Bureau is a playful, critical arena for questioning our daily interactions. Typical forms—certificates, licenses, and affidavits—serve as vehicles for warm, interpersonal, meaningful exchanges.

More Día de los Muertos Ofrendas from Hancock’s Spanish Classes

Hancock College Prep High School

A Chicago public neighborhood high school with a Selective-Enrollment program serving mostly Southwest side students that remains committed to preparing all students to be critical thinkers and life-long learners

Principal: Devon Herrick  Asst. Principals: Natalie Garfield & Vanessa Puentes-Hernandez

Journalism Teacher: Ray Salazar, NBCT

4034 West 56th Street  Chicago, IL 60629  773-535-2410  www.hancockhs.org