



The Amplifier

Plug into news that informs and encourages

April 2017

Manny

There are approximately sixty EJP students at Danville. I'm willing to bet you don't know them all. In this issue we are introducing our first student interview. Manuel Garcia was memorable for being our youngest student, for his long hair, and most of all for his infectious energy. This interview was conducted a few days before his release.

After seven years you are finally going home. What is the one thing you are looking forward to experiencing above all else?
Everyone who knows me knows that my daughter is my biggest motivation, so I am most looking forward to spending time with her. She loves school and I want to help her with that. I also want to experience all of our "firsts" together.

After having spent a significant portion of your youth in prison, do you have any fears about returning to a strange new world? Are you feeling any anxiety?

To be one hundred percent honest I'm scared that after all these years away my daughter won't accept me; to be rejected by my daughter . . . that scares me. I actually had my first anxious moment about going home the other night. I couldn't get to sleep because I kept thinking about going home. I'm really ready to go be a father and a son for the first time.

How old were you when you were incarcerated, and what was your level of education?

I was seventeen years old. And I only ever completed the eighth grade.

Do you remember why and when you decided to educate yourself?

The only reason I wanted to get an education was because I was scared that I couldn't be able to help my daughter if she asked me for help with her homework. I realized that I couldn't be the father she needs me to be if I didn't better myself.

I know that you were able to earn a GED and your associate's degree in less than five years here at Danville. That means you have been really committed. Why did you decide to get your GED, and was your ASA your goal from the beginning?

No, it wasn't. I had a really great cellie who pushed me to get my GED and go to college. He was very encouraging. The truth is that without him I wouldn't have gone to school, all because I didn't want to move to two-house. As was I going to school, I found out that I was good at something for the first time in my life. I was in school five nights a week, and I came to love it. It gave me a peace that I didn't have before, and it kept me out of trouble. I will be forever thankful to all the teachers that helped me along the way.

Trying to get those 60 credits wasn't easy, I'm sure; that's a lot of homework, a lot of tests, and a lot of hours in a classroom.

What kept you motivated through it all?

I wanted to be successful at something good just once in my life. Also, the fact that I was going to be the first in my family to receive a degree motivated me.

How did you come to learn about EJP?

In 2012 and 2013 I would walk past the EJP classrooms and see the students and professors, and I wanted to be a part of that. To me they represented what success looked like. I want to say "thanks" to those guys. Even though they weren't aware of it, they inspired me to want to reach that level.

Your first class was the new student reading group with Dr. Ginsburg. How was your experience?

At first it was intimidating. She is one of the smartest women I've met in my life. And she exudes a strength that made me give two-hundred percent at all times. Anyone who has taken her new student reading group knows that they will never look at a book the same way ever again.

You mentioned to me in the past about the meetings you had with the academic advisors. Would you like to share with us your plans for your education when you are released? How were the academic advisors able to guide you through this?

I am currently corresponding with Roosevelt University, and I plan to visit UIC. I am hoping to enroll in some business classes. Prior to my incarceration I learned that I was good at sales, and I developed a keen sense for business. I believe that my skills could translate to a legitimate business. I am going to own businesses soon, and I want to develop some patent ideas I've been thinking about the last few years.

Ms. Pickett was incredibly helpful. There are a lot of hurdles and paperwork that you have take care of before you enter college. She was able to explain to me everything I was going to encounter, as well as give me guidance about how to approach successfully continuing my education when I come home.

I know you were in EJP for a brief period of time, but could you please share your impressions of the program and what role you feel it played in your development?

I saw that EJP gives purpose and hope in a place where there is none. I took every workshop because I didn't have time to complete a credited course, but I am completely confident that those workshops helped prepare me for my education when I go home.

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Manny—continued

What if any advice would you give EJP students? Any last words of wisdom?

The future of the program is in your hands. Make it bright. Never take it for granted. Step outside of your comfort zone, ask for help when you need it, and extend help to those who need it. This might be a cliché, but we are all we got.

On the morning of February 3, 2017, Manuel Garcia was released from Danville prison into the arms of his loving parents who were waiting for him at the front gate. Today he gets to sleep on a memory-foam mattress with sheets that have a thread count, and he will lay his head on a goose-down pillow. He will no longer have to suffer sleepless nights atop a steel slab on a mattress that has collected the fluids, odors, and souls of the previous hundred users. I'm fully aware of all the other privileges that accompany his freedom, as are you. But let us not lose sight of the fact that even the most trivial aspects of our lives will be transformed—even a good night's sleep is something to be appreciated.

For the last seven years Manuel had been incarcerated away from his parents and his daughter. Today he will spend more than the allotted four hours with his family. We often found ourselves in the chapel, standing in front of five tables covered with children's books, looking through them, hoping to find the right one to record for our daughters. I can't remember the title of the last book he chose, but the last page had a picture of a dad holding hands with his daughter as they were walking through the park. I told him, "That's going to be you real soon." He just smiled as he thought of the prospect. Well, today his little girl doesn't have to put on a CD to hear her daddy read her a story. She can climb on his lap and have him read her a story as he wraps his arm around her.

I woke up early that February morning because I wanted to see him leave, and offer him some parting words. I wanted to repay him for everything he'd done for me. I thought I would encourage him with some enlightening wisdom, letting him know that he had a positive and profound impact on my life. But the only thing I could come up with was, "I'm expecting you to do great things out there"—damn, that was horrible!

What I wanted to articulate was, "Thank you for being a great friend in a place where you aren't 'supposed' to make friends. May God bless you, little brother."

—Angel Pantoja

Newsnotes

Representative Carol Ammons, in association with the Illinois Campaign for Phone Justice, is sponsoring the following two bills:

HB2738: Protect Prison Visits Bill

This bill would ensure that the adoption of video visitation systems would not eliminate in-person visitation, that fees not exceed the operating cost of visitation, and that all Illinois prisons allow at least one visit per seven-day period.

HB3887: Responsible Use of Electronic Monitoring

This proposed amendment to ILCS 730 would: provide time-served credit for people awaiting trial on an electric monitor; end user fees to electronic monitoring programs; eliminate land-line requirements; eliminate lifetime monitoring terms; and support the user's participation in work, education, and community activities.

Second Sight

I make art, write about art, teach art, and curate art shows. Also, I'm severely nearsighted—which, with correction by contacts, means that I can bike but not drive. I can't read menus on the back wall at fast food places. When I was younger, I had to wear huge thick concave spectacles.

I was touched when asked by *The Amplifier* to write about the relationship of my interest in visual art to my visual disability. The request was inspired by a reading group I led last summer on a great Luis Camnitzer book about 1960s and 1970s Latin American conceptual art. Conceptual art is a relatively recent area of art in which the visual aspect of the work is diminished in importance, sometimes to the point of being done away with altogether. Conceptual artworks are about ideas before, or instead of, imagery. This led to the astute conjecture that my appreciation of conceptual art might be in some way related to my visual disability, which is straightforward enough.

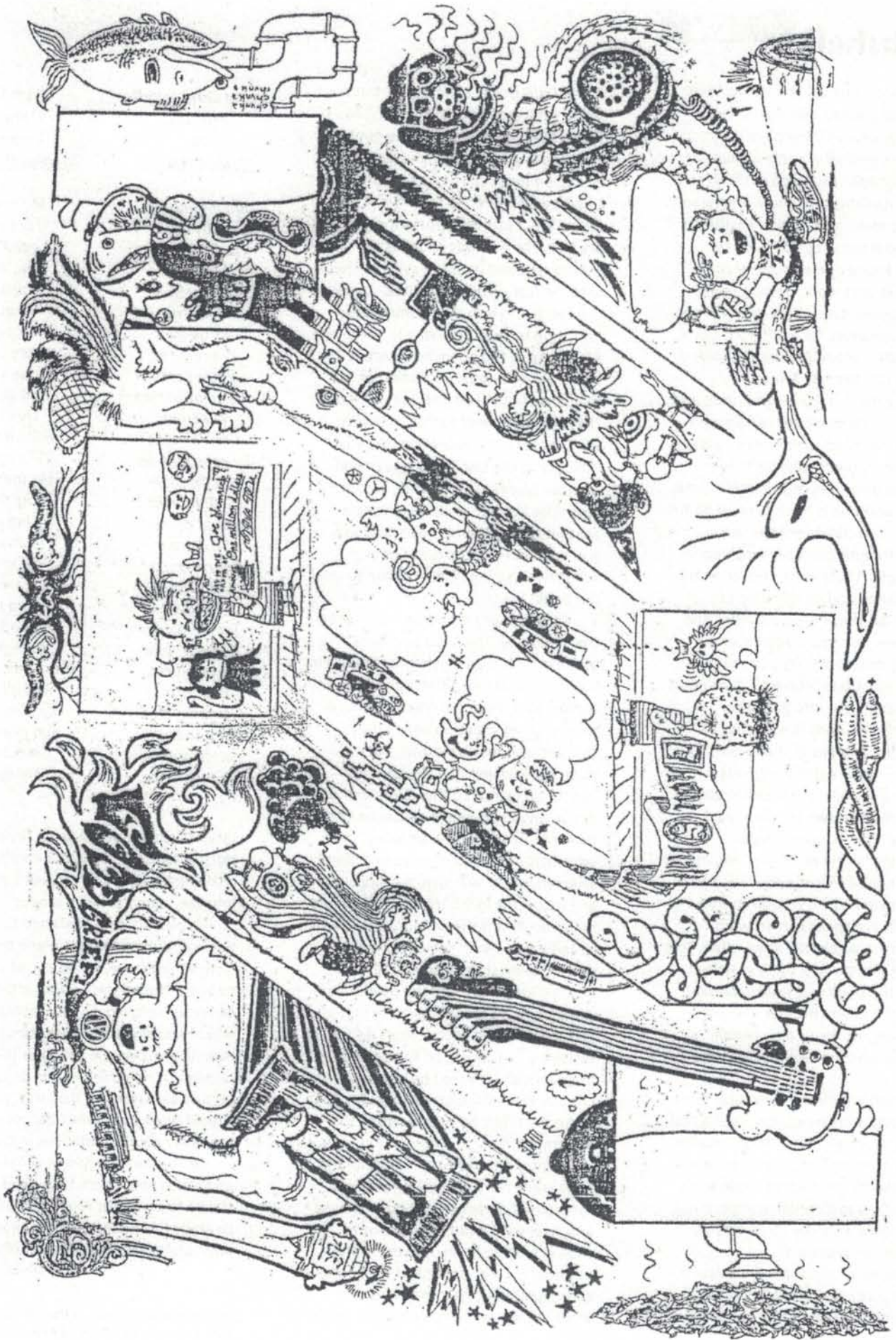
Indeed my artistic interests are straightforward and prosaic, while also inscrutably deep-wired. Some kids, especially semi-blind kids, might be given musical instruments, but I wasn't—I was given markers and paper and books. I've tried (with middling success) to make something of myself as an artist and a writer, and one thing this resulted in is many years in Chicago as both an art reviewer and a high school art teacher. In both of these, transmitting and justifying art as an idea require a vigorous effort. An artist that I met at the time makes art out of her social justice lobbying; there are occasionally visual artifacts, but the lobbying itself is the primary art piece. When I came to graduate school at the University of Illinois, I decided to write about this artist for my dissertation. This required me to get up to speed on conceptual art.

But the visual art I've made has always mostly been drawings, and this remains the case. Being severely nearsighted offers only a small impediment to reading and drawing, as long as I'm willing to bump my nose against the paper I'm reading or adorning. In many of my drawings, as well as my tight needle-point pieces, I still take out my contacts and exploit the considerable advantage of staring at a piece from one inch away. I still often do the same for reading—although in this case it (usually) offers no technical advantages.

This macro-lens vantage point gives me access to a level of fine rendering, but I try not to leave it there. I aim to exploit the odd scale-shift between my perfect view of a limited visual world, and my compromised version of a somewhat more extended (and "normal") visual world, so as to simultaneously convey the interiority, privacy, and isolation of the former with the ambiguity, insufficiency, and confusion of the latter. I perhaps end up, ultimately, with a conceptual element baked into the purely formal visual aspects of my artwork. I hope that this work is pretty, and suggests ideas, but I also hope that it seems slightly, imperceptibly, just a bit off.

—Bert Stabler

Facing page: a sample of Bert Stabler's microscale artwork from his Nanonuts series.



Are you fanatical about how your ideas are expressed *and* about how your text appears on the page? If so, Douglas R. Hofstadter is the author for you. Regardless of subject, each of his books is an example of and a discourse on how to meld content and aesthetics into a masterpiece. *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* is his best work, despite being published seventeen years after he was awarded a Pulitzer for a different book: *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. *Le Ton beau de Marot* is informal, candid, auto-biographical, and most rewarding to those readers who take their time and savor every passage. Hofstadter certainly took *his* time—almost ten years—in creating this tome.

The backbone is a selection of about 70 English translations of the sweet, elegant fifteenth-century French poem at near right. These were chosen as the most polished and imaginative of hundreds produced by Hofstadter and his relatives, friends, students, and other acquaintances. Why so many? Isn't there just one "correct" translation of a particular text into a specific language? This book is a playful, meandering analysis of those questions, complete with insightful answers but also with a sincere invitation to readers to come to their own conclusions.

At far right is, according to Hofstadter, "as bland, boring, and literal a translation of Marot's poem as could ever be imagined." It reveals to those of us who do not speak French *what* Marot wrote, as exactly as possible. This would be embraced if the translation was of a textbook or a legal document instead of a poem. But the interpretation does not reveal *how* Marot expressed what he was saying in the poem.

Hofstadter defines translation as the art of recognizing *all* attributes of a text, deciding which are most indispensable, and only then crafting an artistic equivalent that retains each of those traits in proportion to its relative importance. Rarely should a strictly literal fidelity dominate this process to the exclusion of all other considerations. *To a Sick Damsel* fails this test.

In addition to the literal meaning of

A une Damoyse malade, the translation retains the poem's length (28 lines), Clément's name (in line twelve), the twinning of the first and last lines, and the midstream change in formality of address ("vous" to "tu," "you" to "thou"). But lots of important elements are lost. The rhyming couplets of *Damoyse* and its three-syllable lines—with the last syllable accented—result in a catchy rhythm that *Damsel* does not begin to capture. Visually, the svelte silhouette of the poem has morphed into a bottom-heavy distortion of its former self. All in all, precious little of "the graced tone of Marot" remains. But *Damsel* is the exception; the vast majority of the translations in *Le Ton beau de Marot* are beautiful, sacrificing very little literally while gaining scads aesthetically. (Where are *those* gems, you ask? Sorry; there is not enough space here, so you will just have to read the book.)

Paradoxically for a *tour de force* on translation, *Le Ton beau de Marot* features an intriguing chapter titled "On the Untranslatable." Hofstadter argues therein that there are "many pieces of writing on all scales [in which the] content is so melted in with the medium conveying it that the content cannot be extracted therefrom without destroying the passage's essence." For example, in a 26-letter alphabet, the odds that a string of nineteen randomly selected letters will form a palindrome are about one in 5.5 trillion. So it would be miraculous if the palindrome, "Ma is as selfless as I am," remained palindromic when translated literally into another language. And the palindrome is the point. It follows logically that any text infused with palindromes and other wordplay—including *Le Ton beau de Marot*—may very well be untranslatable. Yet Hofstadter encourages us to make the effort before declaring the task impossible.

A most entertaining feature of the book is the bevy of challenges posed throughout. Readers may opt to pause and seek out a solution, usually my choice, or to read on until the author presents his. For example, I spent about 45 minutes crafting a rhyme for the word orange, and discovered the same

A une Damoyse malade
by
Clément Marot

Ma mignonne,
Je vous donne
Le bon jour;
Le séjour
C'est prison.
Guérison
Recouvrez,
Puis ouvrez
Votre porte
Et qu'on sorte
Vitement,
Car Clément
Le vous mande.
Va, friande
De ta bouche,
Qui se couche
En danger
Pour manger
Confitures;
Si tu dures
Trop malade,
Couleur fade
Tu prendras,
Et perdras
L'embonpoint.
Dieu te doint
Santé bonne,
Ma mignonne.

To a Sick Damsel
trans.
Douglas Hofstadter

My sweet,
I bid you
A good day;
The stay
Is prison.
Health
Recover,
Then open
Your door,
And go out
Quickly,
For Clément
Tells you to.
Go, indulger
Of thy mouth,
Lying abed
In danger,
Off to eat
Fruit preserves;
If thou stay'st
Too sick,
Pale shade
Thou wilt acquire,
And wilt lose
Thy plump form.
God grant thee
Good health,
My sweet.

tactic (though not the same rhyme) as Hofstadter did. His most thematic challenge is to convert Marot's poem into the reader's native tongue.

I now offer that challenge to you. Having perused the poem and the translation above, you know all you need for the attempt. What attributes of *Damoyse* would you prioritize and which would you care less about or even ignore? Would you alter the number of syllables per line or hold that feature sacrosanct? Of course, you should make your effort **before** reading the really good translations in the book.

Le Ton beau de Marot will teach you and touch you. There is no need to translate poems or read French in order to enjoy this book. You only need an appreciation for the music of language.

—Edward Viens

Submission Guidelines

Comments and submissions may be addressed to *The Amplifier* and placed in the EJP suggestion box or handed to Ms. Cumpston or a member of *The Amplifier* editorial staff.

Submissions may be in any legible format.

Submissions will be selected for publication according to:

- 1) EJP values and standards as outlined in the EJP handbook
- 2) Editorial needs

Submissions will be edited for clarity, length, and technical issues, using the *Chicago Manual of Style* and AP guidelines as authoritative. When possible, editing will be done in cooperation with the author, and greater latitude will be given to creative/personal pieces.

The deadline for the June issue is April 28.

The Amplifier is a publication by the students of the Education Justice Project, a unit of the University of Illinois, at Danville Correctional Center in Illinois.

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Eddie's Enigmas—UNSEEN COINS

There are thirty coins lying on a table in a totally dark room. Twelve are heads and eighteen are tails. In the dark you cannot feel or see if a coin is heads up or tails up, but you may move them around on the table or turn any of them over. Explain how you would separate these coins into two groups so that each group has the same number of coins heads up. (No tricks, such as placing all of the coins on edge, are involved.)

Rating = ●●●●○

Solutions to EDDIE'S ENIGMAS can be found on the bulletin boards in the Computer Lab and Resource Room 1.

PBS Programming in April

Monday, April 3, 9:30pm : *POV "Listening Is an Act of Love: A StoryCorps Special"*

An animated special featuring six stories from ten years of the innovative oral history project. (Repeats Friday, April 7, 9:30pm.)

Tuesday, April 18, 8pm: *Frontline "Last Days of Solitary"*

Profiles recently released inmates as they go from the SHU to the streets of Maine, in an examination of solitary confinement's long-term effects and the movement to reduce its use.

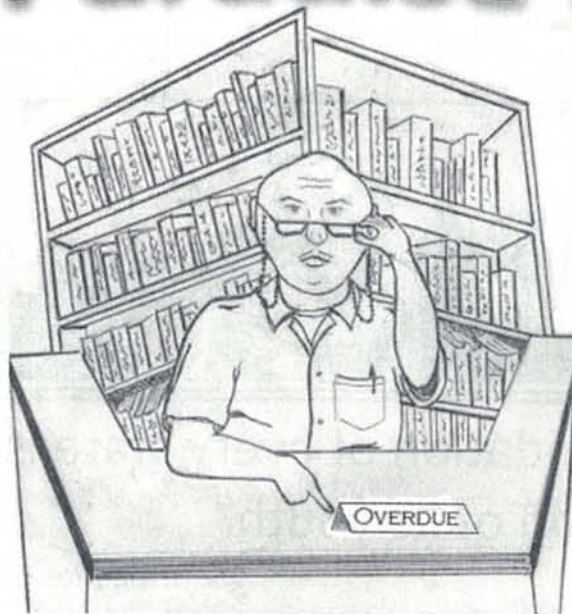
Wednesday, April 5, 9pm: *Secrets of the Dead "Leonardo, The Man Who Saved Science"*

Evidence that many of da Vinci's inventions had been realized before his time.

Grand Paradise Library

Attention! Attention! Read all about it! Hurry! Hurry! EJP students, we have a shortage of books being checked out of our "Grand Paradise Library." Don't be afraid. Try it, you'll like it! Education is a truly intellectual learning experience in life; why not contribute to your witty brain some inspirational reading? Don't have me body-hunt all of you students. Because you'll be sorry!

This is your library worker and EJP colleague Francisco Valdez inviting all of you to get on board and broaden your education with plenty of interesting, educational, and good books to read. The saying is "if you are thirsty, you drink water; if you are hungry, you eat food; so in order to learn and grow your comprehension and understanding, what is needed is to read, read, read."



So let me help all of you with my mission to find every book possible for any subject you are interested in. We have quite a collection of different books to help you along the path of making your brain a library. The types of subjects available in our Grand Paradise Library are many: sociology, psychology, religious studies, literature, calculus, algebra, geometry, histories of wars, biographies, linguistics and languages, mindfulness meditation, biology, graphic novels, fictional novels, philosophy, writing and reading skills, and plenty of others. In order to see what kinds of books are in the library, all you have to do is hop aboard my reading caravan. Check out some books for your growth and goals. So . . . Hurry! Hurry! Step right on my caravan!

—Francisco Valdez

APRIL

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
5p WAMP 5p TP Training 3	8:30a Workshop: Bioinformatics 11:30a SRR 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 6p Advising: Vocational education 4	6p GUEST SPEAKER Critical Climate by: Mark Becker 5	8:30a Workshop: What makes you tick 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 6	9a Newsletter 9a CAVE 5p For-credit courses: 396 Russian Revolution 350 Intro to African Art 420 Journalism 486 Linguistics 7
5p WAMP 6p Advising 10	11:30a SRR 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 11	6p Library Work 12	8:30a Workshop: What makes you tick 11:30a Workshop: Python 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 13	9a Newsletter 9a CAVE 5p For-credit courses: 396 Russian Revolution 350 Intro to African Art 420 Journalism 486 Linguistics 14
9a Language Partners 5p TP Training 5p WAMP 17	8:30a Pit Crew 11:30a SRR 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 5p Advising 18	5p All Student Meeting 19	8:30a Workshop: What makes you tick 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 20	9a Newsletter 9a CAVE 5p For-credit courses: 396 Russian Revolution 350 Intro to African Art 420 Journalism 486 Linguistics 21
5p WAMP 6p Advising 24	11:30a SRR 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 25	5p Workshop: Nonprofit Business 26	11:30a Workshop: Python 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 27	9a Newsletter 9a CAVE 5p For-credit courses: 396 Russian Revolution 350 Intro to African Art 420 Journalism 486 Linguistics 28



UNSEEN COINS HINT
The number of COINS in each group does not have to equal each other. Only the HEADS in each group must be equal.

The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.
Diogenes Laertius