

# UC Riverside

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THE NOMI PROJECT

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A Capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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## ABSTRACT

What if we were able to bring the dead art of print back to life in our modern era? To diversify and bring to light major cultural moments which are relevant to the everyday person, and not just for the elite. To discuss and argue how diversity and lack thereof plays into all of this as we move forward in the world. Today, major magazine companies draw attention to mostly celebrities and influencers, dressing them in designer clothes, and discussing their upper class lives. I'd like to change who we read about in our media, and do this in a way which is accessible and enjoyable for anyone to consume. Through the course of the online magazine itself, we will take a closer look at the media we absorb, and create a wider lens which a diverse set of people will be able to relate to and understand in one way or another by implementing 'the people' into this project. I hope by the end of going through these stories, those reading will look more critically at the world of media. I hope they are able to see themselves, and see beauty in the everyday world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On my website page I briefly mention those who helped me work on this project, but it does not speak to the depth of my appreciation for these people. Since it was a creative process, it took a lot of effort and collaboration from me and the wonderful team of people I worked with. To start off, my mentor Yunhee Min helped me organize and guided me throughout the project. She was very patient with me this past year or so, and I'm so glad that she even agreed to be my mentor in the first place. My main photographer and photo editor on this website, Jerry Hernandez, who's work I trusted so much especially when it came to his editing skills. Nicholas Roach, another photographer for this website, my emotional support system, and the person who inspired me to end up making a website for my project. My sister, Janine Hunter, who used her artful eye and helped me very much with editing the design of the website itself. Last but definitely not least, the writers of the project: Randall Hiemstra, Julian DelaRosa-Billings, Diego Albarran, Amanda Schwarz, Isaiah Viramontes, and Raelin Martin. They are the heart and soul of the project, and the whole reason why I wanted to make this website in the first place. Their willingness to be intimate through their writings is something that I appreciate deeply, and their patience with me is something that I'm even more grateful for.

## BEGINNING OF CAPSTONE PROJECT

When starting this project, I originally intended for it to be a physical print magazine. It was going to be passed out for free to the students on campus at UCR, and the goal was to spread the stories of the writers who got involved with the project. One of those things stayed consistent throughout these past two years, I created something that allowed people to have a voice and tell stories that aren't typically seen in mainstream media. As a queer, woman of color, I wanted to provide the space to be able to tell these stories that show an intimate side to people's struggles that aren't "good enough" to be read.

The transition from print magazine to an online magazine was one that took place over the course of these two years and happened due to my struggles with mental health. I understand it's not "appropriate" or "acceptable" to talk about mental health in an academic space, but it has been a very prominent aspect to my life which affected the creative process for this project. It's the very reason for the transition from print magazine to online magazine, and most of the bumps in the road on the way. I believe my experience in being diagnosed with anxiety, severe depression, and PTSD has been a large part in my journey and has affected the creative decisions I've made in that I was limited in what I was able to do.

It was difficult for me to stay motivated and had actually caused me to stop the project almost completely for about maybe four months. At this point I'd fallen so far behind, it was difficult for me to see a version of myself finishing the project at all. I had only started again because my mentor, Yunhee Min, reached out to me once again concerned about my progress. Reflecting back on that time, I was so glad that she had contacted me because I wasn't capable of doing so myself. I was so embarrassed of the

lack of progress I made and I was honestly afraid to speak to my mentor again or anyone for that matter about this project. I wanted it to just disappear.

In the wake of this major setback, I worked on getting back into contact with my writers and mahjong sure I edited and paid them in a timely manner. On that note, I went into this project with the intention of offering to pay everyone. I don't believe in free labor, and I definitely think that my writers and photographers deserved to be paid because they worked so hard for this project. I will say there had been an incident with one photographer who I worked with that I had an unsavory experience with to say the least. I still paid him for his work, but it was simply less than what we agreed upon since I had to pay someone else to go back and re-edit the photos to make them more presentable. Other than that, I had a few friends that helped me with the project for free- one of them being a writer!- and he was the first official writer on this magazine which inspired me to keep looking for more people.

Having to find writers was the first step of this whole project, and it was quite the undertaking. I had printed out flyers and hung them up all over campus and even made announcements in some classrooms. I made posts for social media and had my friends and family share, and so on and so forth. I had actually gotten about 27 people who were interested in writing and ended up with only 6 writers in the end. This, however, was a lesson in quality over quantity because I was trying too hard to make a large amount of stories work- at one point I was working with 13 writers- and was struggling to keep track of them all and help them edit and rewrite their stories. On top of this, I was trying to start planning out photoshoots and finding different photographers to do so. So the campaign for that was taking up even more of my time. I was essentially doing a full-time job on top of the already two jobs I was working at the time as well as being a

full-time student. I'm not too sure what I was thinking because I burnt out to the point of no return.

What motivated me at this time was the writing that was being done. Some of these stories I was reading were so good, it made me want to work hard for them so they could have their work published by me. It was important for me to have their stories told, it was the very core of the whole project, and to be able to relate to so much of their work and feel their emotions through their words, it was enough for me to keep going for a while.

To mention each of my writers specifically, we have Randall Hiemstra, Diego Albarran, Amanda Schwarz, Julian Dela Rosa-Billings, Isaiah Viramontes, and Raelin Martin. Randall Hiemstra wrote about his experiences in dealing with workplace discrimination and dealing with his ADHD, autism, and chronic back problems. He discusses the assumptions people make about him since he looks as if he is an able-bodied man, but he speaks on the importance of understanding the severity of living with hidden disabilities. Diego Albarran interviews his friend- who wishes to stay anonymous- as they talk about his place in his culture, his music, and how these two intertwine with one another. Amanda Schwarz takes us through her story of exploring her sexuality while dealing with the nuances that come with religious guilt. Julian Dela Rosa-Billings discusses his life without a father figure before finally coming face to face with him and realizing that he's been supporting him from afar all along. Isaiah Viramontes details his journey with being diagnosed with OCD and how that has affected him and his current lifestyle learning how to cope with his mental illness without medication. Raelin Martin explores navigating generational trauma within her Filipino family while the feeling of love for her culture coexists whilst dealing with grief,

body shaming, and a breaking family. These stories are the six that inspired me to keep going, and they are the six writers who stuck with me through my own struggles.

To trail back around to my previous ideas about the transition from a print magazine to an online magazine, it was partially due to my lack of ability to do so and also it was due to reading the stories. In my abstract I ask “What if we were able to bring the dead art of print back to life in our modern era?” I also said I wanted this magazine to be accessible. I came to the conclusion that having a print magazine was no longer an accessible medium and would not be considered bringing “print back to life.” I originally wanted to make it a quirky zine style, like how vinyls had become popular again, I wanted to make magazines popular again- at least within my local community. Reflecting back on this, only aiming for my own community wasn’t large enough and didn’t speak to my mission statement in the way that I aimed for. It needed to transcend a piece of paper, and for me to return back to its original medium wouldn’t be doing my own project justice. I also considered having an almost sculptural form to present the stories, having it displayed on a sort of printing press construction.

At the end of March, I was just about to start teaching my class about social media and I was experiencing a very bad depressive episode. I still had no clear idea of how to present the stories, and I was running out of time. I spoke to someone very close to me, and he suggested the website, the thing that I mentioned as a joke because I never thought I would be able to actually make it. The website was perfect and felt so obvious and so on brand to my own major and the type of work I’m interested in for my career. He saw through my cloud of depression and helped me find motivation to get back to finishing my project.



On the actual website, there is something important which I wanted to note that I thought was necessary to note and was essential to my inspiration. On the home page, when you first open the website, there's a video that plays behind the main title. In this video are clips I took of the home I've stayed in the past two years during which I've been working on this project. When going through the process of making the website, I would walk around my house- my sister's house who I was staying with- mindlessly until I felt ready to keep editing the pages in my own strange way of trying to find inspiration. This home page was one of the last pieces of the project to come together, and before it actually was just a stock image of a stack of magazines that I thought looked nice. It wasn't until my mentor pointed out that I should have something more thought out for the very first thing you see when you open my website. So, I did my rounds and walked up and down the stairs of the house while my dog followed behind me wondering what I was doing, before it hit me that I needed to include the thing that's been inspiring me this whole time. Our home is filled with trinkets and knick-knacks we've collected over the years and I've grown to be a part of my sister's new life where we created a new safe place for us to be a family.

This project was one that I've dreamt up as a pipe dream when I was younger that I somehow managed to turn into a reality. My inspirations and motivations came from the very people I was working with and the surroundings which were curated with love by those I love. It was the patience of those around me and the willingness to create something that's important that led to this website to come to fruition, and I'm grateful for every moment of this experience because it allowed me to create a space for people like me: queer, mentally ill, daughter of an immigrant, a young girl who wanted to see herself in the mainstream.