

# *CELAC Student Voice*

Spring 2022 Issue 2

The Student Voice publishes creative work in a variety of multimedia made by and for other CELAC students. Our second Spring 2022 issue focuses on the relationships between mass media and popular culture.

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# Fresh Works



## *Jimena Alvarado*

Social media is often blamed and criticized as an ill in society, but in her convincing essay, Jimena argues that we should embrace it for many right reasons.

*Scroll down to read Jimena's full formal argument.*



## *Yuliia Kashuba*

A free press can be considered a cornerstone of democracy, but what "free" means varies from nation to nation. Here, Yuliia analyzes debate surrounding the flow of public information.

*Scroll down to read Yullia's formal analysis.*



## *Liliana Alva Regalado*

Streaming media's current obsession with "narco-culture" has produced a vast array of shows portraying criminals as glamorous stars. Liliana asks us to consider what these shows legitimize and whether they do more than just entertain.

*Scroll down to read Liliana's formal short Research Paper.*

# Fresh Images



The beautiful day for CELAC's spring outing to El Morro National Monument, also known as Inscription Rock, was captured in photographs by Claudia Blanco and Zakia Noori. The sandstone cliffs have been a pop culture graffiti wall for passing travelers for over 400 years. The oldest legible signature is that of controversial Spanish conquistador Juan de Onate, who scratched his name into the rock in April of 1605.







### THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

My name is Claudia Blanco, and I am a Low-Intermediate student from Colombia. I have been in the United States for two months and UNM is one of the most beautiful experiences I have had. I have been able to meet people, different cultures, and I have some passionate teachers. El morro was my first trip and I hope to repeat this experience.

This is Zakia from Afghanistan. I study in the Low-Intermediate level. I am a new refugee here, and I am studying English to become a nurse in Albuquerque. I have 2 kids, Zainab and Asghar, one girl and one boy. I am married to Nabi, an ex-Afghan fighter pilot. I am very happy to have them.

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## Social Media Has Benefited Our Society More Than It Has Hindered It

*By Jimena Alvarado*

So often in our society social media faces an endless stream of negative criticism, so much so that sometimes it seems like there are no positives to it. While the negative aspects that social media brings cannot be denied, there are benefits that come with it that make facing the hindrances worth it. Realistically, social media is not going anywhere. Wallowing in the negatives attached to it will only make things worse, so why not fix one's attention towards the benefits of social media so that these can be enhanced?

### **A Tool for Businesses Development and Marketing**

It isn't hard to realize the massive role that social media has played during recent years in the business world. The way in which businesses are born and marketed is, not entirely, but greatly dependent on social media presence. Jonathon Tanner, CEO and Co-Founder of Social Media College, shares this view. As Tanner states, "social media offers so many benefits that traditional media formats like television, radio, and outdoor simply can't offer" (2020). Social platforms have made it possible to group hundreds of customers in a single "space" and to make sure that they are an audience who will possibly be interested in investing on a specific business. As CEO of one of the leading social media analysis firms, Jan Rezac (2014) believes that everyone has power to change companies, businesses, and even governments because of how posts in any social platform serve as amplifiers for thoughts, ideas and even complaints. This ability to communicate with many people in such a short period of time allows businesses, no matter how small, to promote themselves without having to blow half of their budget (as is usually the case with television and radio advertisement).

### **Quick and Big-Scale Communication Can Be Used for Good**

The positives of social media don't only encompass the benefits linked to business. It also affects something that has been part of human nature from the very beginning: socialization. Throughout history, the need to keep in contact with others has brought about many ideas and devices that allow humans to maintain communication with each other. Out of all of these, social media has had the biggest impact. As someone who has worked in marketing for companies like Google, Gopi Kallayil (2012) knows and has stated that 6 billion people have access to a mobile device. This means that most of the world is connected and can interact with almost anyone, anywhere, at any given time. This advantage has brought about countless acts of good. An example of this is how movements such as MeToo and Ni Una Menos, which strive to stop sexual abuse and harassment towards women, have become trending topics many times in the last few years.

### **Benefits of Anonymity Vs. Its Dangers**

The amount of people that social media can reach is also used as an argument to discredit the good that comes of it by those who are too closed minded to accept the positive side of it. Many people bring up how dangerous it can be and how meeting or simply talking to people online can jeopardize one's safety and privacy. While this opinion holds a certain truth, as can be seen in the phenomenon that is cyberbullying, the anonymity that social media provides can bring about many positives. Cliff Lampe, an associate professor in the School of Information at the University of Michigan, shows an example of this in his 2015 TEDTalk. In said conference, Lampe shows a screenshot of a series of posts following one in which an anonymous person expressed that they were thinking of taking their own life. After that, a couple of posts are made by others who show concern for the original poster, encouraging them to talk about their situation. Lampe states that it is the anonymity surrounding each post that allowed this person to be probably even more honest than they would have been with their friends and family.

### **A Way to Remain Connected Under Otherwise Impossible Circumstances**

as social media has only been around for roughly 15 years, it's quite normal to hear older generations complain about how it has destroyed socialization. This type of criticism and apprehension towards new ways of communication is not new. As Lampe (2015) stated, "the telephone was criticized because it would lead into a rude uncivil society". Many are the people who disapprove of others when they communicate via text messages or dm's. What they don't realize is that this type of interaction only covers a fraction of the relationships each person's has. While most people still maintain a face-to-face relationship with their close family and friends, keeping this type of relationship is not possible when it comes to what Lampe defines as "weak ties" (people who are just acquaintances). Nowadays, people's interactions with their weak ties happens over the internet. If it weren't for having social platforms, people who share that type of relationship might lose contact altogether.

### **The Issues Are Real But Worth Facing**

Evidently, there are real issues and negatives attached to social media, but not nearly enough to

overpower the overwhelming proof of the benefits that come with it. With the way it has helped businesses grow and thrive, how it allows people all around the world to remain connected, and how it can be used as a vessel for good, how can the positives not be more valued? Whether people like it or not, social media is here to stay, so instead of remaining hung up on the meager hindrances it brings to society, the good should be appreciated, and the conscious decision to use it for the sake of creating a better world should be made.

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***Hi! I'm Jimena Alvarado, and I'm currently studying in CELAC at the Academic Bridge level. I just graduated from high school in Costa Rica a few months ago, so I'm studying at CELAC while I decide what path to take as a future college student.***

## Words Are Also a Weapon

*By Yuliia Kashuba*

Your rights end where another person's rights begin is a fundamental phrase. The existence of freedom of speech is the key to the existence of freedom of the people. These are two main aspects that result in the existence of democracy in the country. Many people know that censorship is a risk that leads to the establishment of authoritarian power. The media need to be free and independent from censorship. Freedom of expression is an aspect of human rights most closely linked to the media.

### Legal Regulation of Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression, as affirmed in human rights instruments, includes the right to receive or impart information, the right to remain silent, and the right to form personal opinions. In modern media, the reader has the right to choose information. In this case, journalists have the right to create material without outside interference and changes in the text. In accordance with Amendment 1. Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition, "... the government may not jail, fine, or impose civil liability on people or organizations based on what they say or write..." (United States Congress, 1789). Others say such material can be subjective and biased. In this case, journalists will create articles based on one accurate view. Due to this the articles were written without taking into account the opposite views. Content may not be true or may not be completely true. The article can have a negative color and cause unpleasant emotions in the reader. If articles are not censored, their content may violate rights.



from <https://rsf.org/en/ranking/#>.

The media should not be subjected to political censorship. It is generally accepted that in a democratic society, where there is a pluralism of opinions, ideas, views, the media reflect the interests of different political forces.

In conclusion, the media perform a number of functions in the political life of society. One such function is cognitive. The cognitive function of the media helps citizens to create an idea of the political life of the country and its main participants. The next function is control. The media promote public scrutiny and monitoring of government actions. The last function performed by the media is civic, because the media contribute to the formation of the civic position of individuals. Citizens have the right to receive information that reflects different positions and points of view. Censored information may contain distorted reflections of events and substitution of concepts.

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***Hi, I am Yuliia Kashuba, and I am an Academic Bridge student. I have a Master's degree in International Relations, Social Communication, and Regional Studies, from Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine. My professional qualification is Specialist in International Relations and Political Science. I chose CELAC to get a new cultural experience first and then improve my English.***

## Confronting Ideas About Narco Series

***By Liliana Alva Regalado***

Narcos; The Chapo; The Cartel; Narcos: México; Rosario Tijeras; Surviving to Escobar: Alias JJ; El Señor de los Cielos; The Cartel of Los Sapos: The Origin; Queen of the South; Pablo Escobar, The Patron of Evil are some titles of Netflix series about Latin-American mafia. Those titles are also famous in North America, where people have started to watch them. Watching series or movies about cartels where it shows its leaders as successful people just encourages young Mexicans looking to follow that criminal path. They want to be famous; they want to be rich; they want to look like the successful cartel people in series on Netflix. On the other hand, some people like to watch those TV shows as a fun way to learn.



### **Social Acceptance of Narco-Leaders**

There are more than 12 series in Netflix (in Spanish and English) where narco-leaders are characterized as successful people. The fallacy that the narco-leaders are successful is causing internal conflict among young people in Mexico. They are seriously thinking to follow the criminal path because it looks amazing. For example, *The Queen of the South's* trailer starts with a voice telling the audience: "My name is Teresa Mendoza, I was born poor in Mexico. That was bad. I have been poor, and I have been rich. Rich is better. Believe me, because now I run the biggest empire in the western hemisphere." (Fortin, 2016) While the voice is talking on the screen a beautiful young woman is getting on a helicopter and walking to a luxury mansion. She is dressed in white and looks respectable, rich, and successful. Is she real? No, but in this story, as many others, it looks like she was part of the real world in Latin America, thanks to Netflix's productions.

*The Queen of the South* is a novel written by Arturo Pérez-Reverte in 2000 after he visited Sinaloa, Mexico, and he listed the song "Contrabando y Traición" where a woman killed her lover after smuggling in Texas. Then, Pérez-Reverte returned to Spain and wrote a total fictional novel "based" on the problem of women in the narc. (Sinaloa por Cien, 2002.) By making cartel leaders look like handsome (beautiful), famous, wealthy, respectable men surrounded by admirers, the series are playing with social acceptance of those characters. According to Azucena Lemus, researcher from Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás del Hidalgo in Mexico, "The drug culture has not only created strategies that have transformed economic capital, but also social and symbolic capital. In other words, if fortunes are legitimized with money laundering, names are legitimized with social laundering" (2014). The series on Netflix are helping social laundering of cartels leaders. Yes, they are the bad people, they go to the jail or die, but for a while they were rich and wealthy. This fairy tale might have no logic in North America, but in Mexico where there are eleven cartels (the Mexican president has recognized only three of them) and the poverty is wide, the promise of richness convinces a lot of people about the cartel life as an option for a better life.

### **A Story or The History**

Some people, even Mexicans, do not know about the spiderweb behind the Mexican mafia and they want to understand it, hence they watch narco series looking for information. The problem with this idea is that the viewer might think that those TV shows are real when they are not. According to Janny Amaya, professor and researcher in the Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico, the phenomenon of believing a series as a real history, it is common. In their research, "An exploration around Narcos series as a story of transnational memory" Amaya and her colleague Adrien Charlois Allende, concluded that Narcos is considered an objective account of the facts by the receptors. From the perspective of people who are watching it, the TV show is real without doubts. Some of them even have called it as an "educational" series. (Amaya and Chaloi, 2018, p. 18). In their investigation, they demonstrated that the series takes some part of the real history and the production makes up the rest, because Netflix wants to have more audience beyond the Colombian's frontier (Amaya and Chaloi, 2018, p. 27). Period.

On the other hand, another people want to learn about the narcotraffic, its culture, history, its consequences in Latin-American as well in the rest of the world, and for that reason they are watching the narco series. If it is true that a viewer can find some information in series, they are not a source of real information. In this case, documentaries should be the visual source. Also, Netflix is a good producer of those, but maybe documentaries are not attractive because they do not have drama, richness, and beauty around the mafia leader. Documentaries add more real information about the real life contrary to the series. Alzate Giraldo, professor and researcher in the Faculty of Communication in the University of Medellín, Colombia, establishes in one of his articles in Spanish that in 20 audiovisual adaptations about Pablo Escobar, the documentaries were supported by facts and information. Alzate and his colleagues, reviewed that most of the documentaries are 50% interviews and 50% archival material accompanying the speeches. (Alzate, 2021, p. 24) Also, he adds that there is some information from the family and governments areas which add more credibility to the documentaries.

Watching series about Mexican cartels is another way to support the illegitimate business that is causing a lot of deaths every year in Mexico. Indirectly, the viewers are helping with the social laundering. Being a narco looks like a permissible job. This phenomenon is named narcoculture and has been studied for decades, but viewers of this series should be aware about it. For young people in Mexico, who are in the middle of the spiderweb of narco, it is difficult to see that they are part of this narcoculture watching those series, but this scenario might not be difficult to see for other people out of the Mexican country who are sitting in their couch, with a remote in one hand and in the other a full container of popcorn watching the last episode of Narcos: Mexico.

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***Hi, I am Liliana Alva Regalado, and I am an Advanced student from Mexico. I have a degree in Journalism, and I want to teach Spanish, but for now I am refining my English. I really enjoy being part of the CELAC community because I learn a lot from my classmates, their countries, and their cultures. My mind has changed thanks to them.***

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