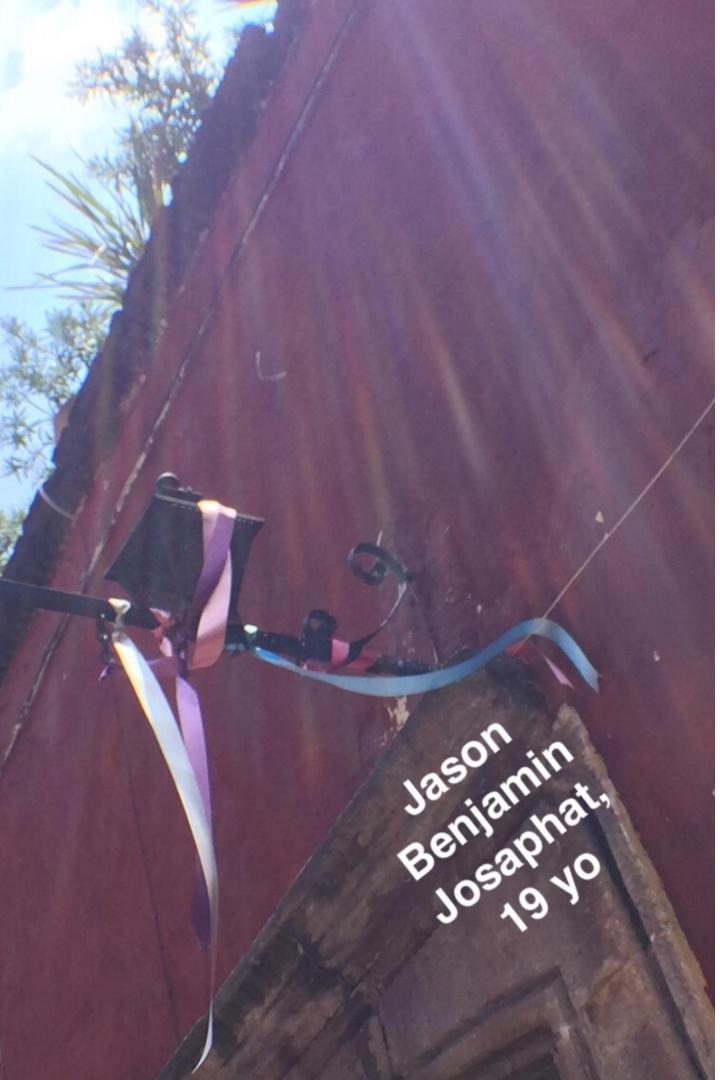


LAS CINTAS



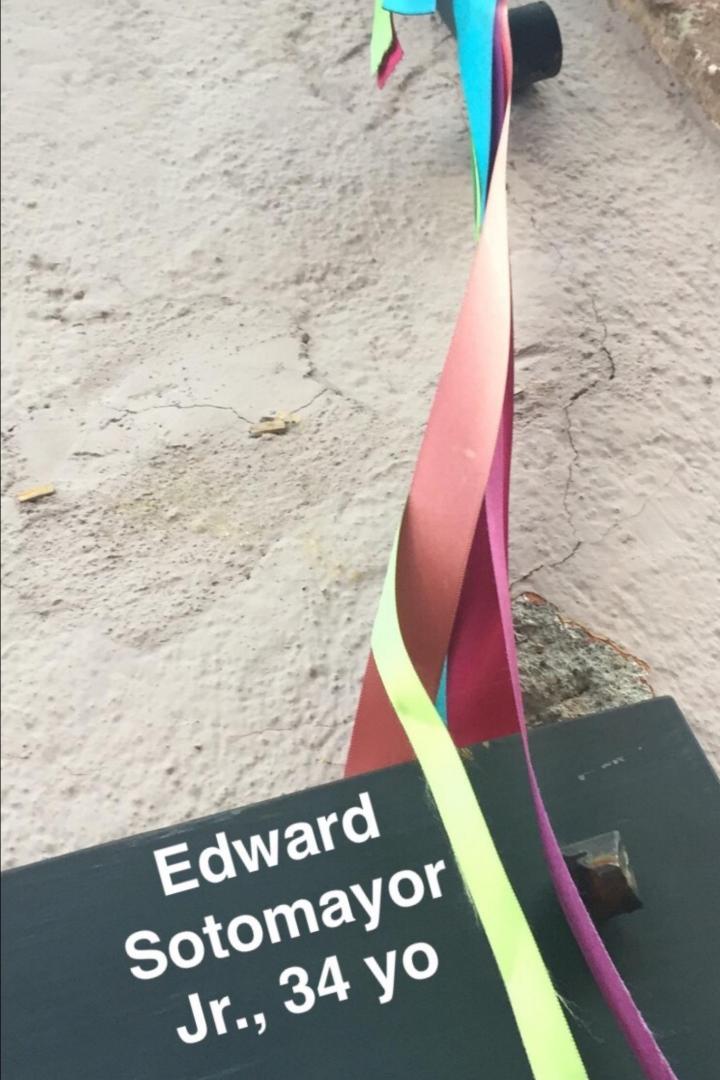


I desperately don't want to be an outsider.

Stanley
Almodovar
III, 23 yo



On June 11th I left Florida for Mexico. Everyone warned me to be careful.



That Mexico is dangerous.



In the raw morning hours after the night of the same day I departed from Florida, the deadliest mass shooting of modern U.S history occurred in my backyard.



The irony is tangible.

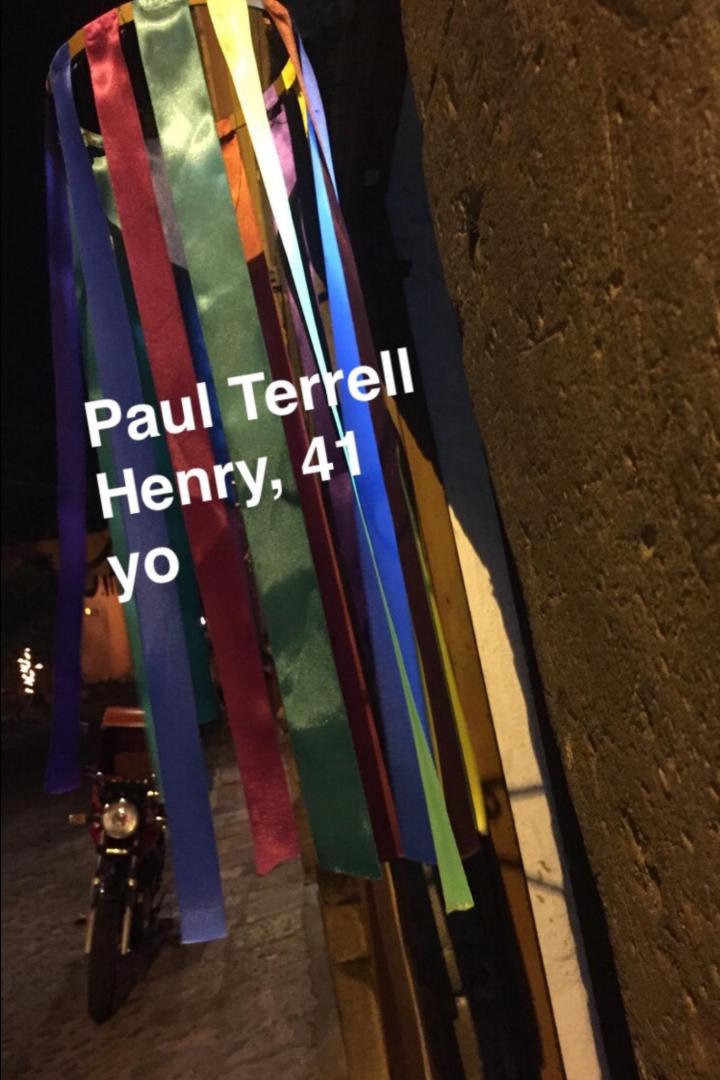
**Antonio
Davon
Brown, 29
yo**



Or is it a coincidence?

Angel L.
Candelario-Padro,
28 yo

I can never really remember the difference.

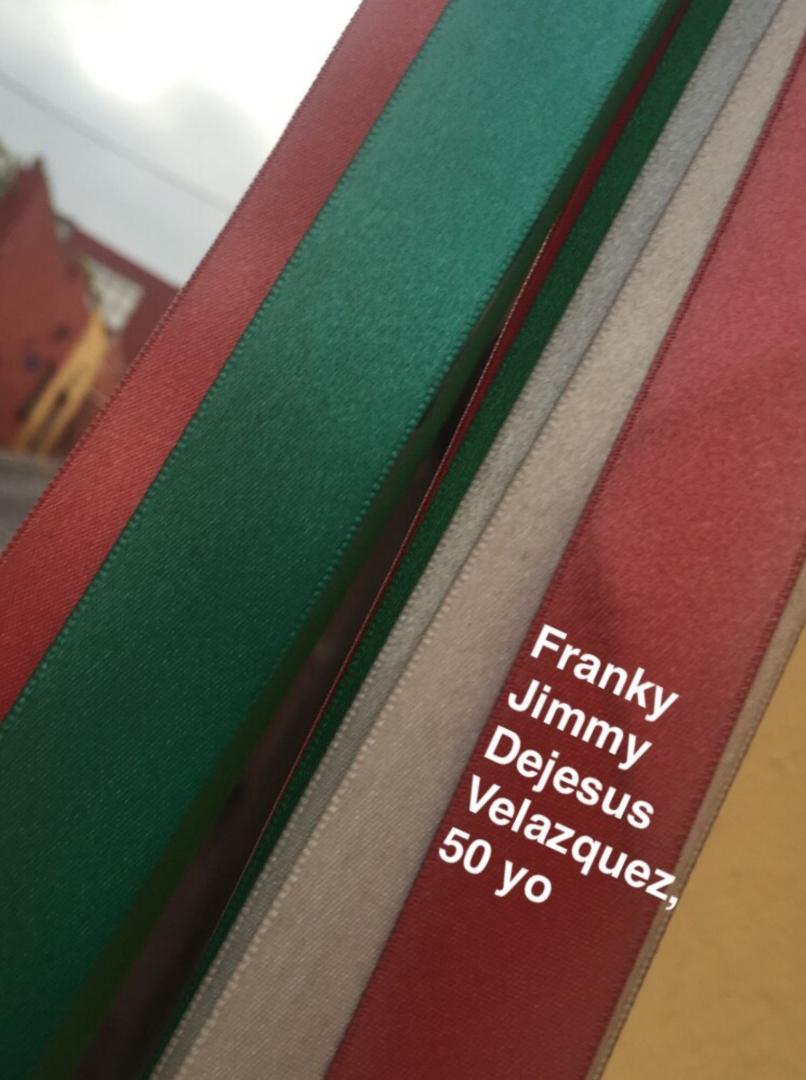


June 12th drifted into screen-lit days of appropriated headlines, disjointed and misplaced Facebook tributes, and lines of clumsy poetry.



I struggled to find where my own grief belonged.

Xavier
Emmanuel
Serrano
Rosado, 35
yo



As I wandered San Miguel de Allende's uneven streets, my eyes fixated upon multi-colored ribbons in entryways and windows.



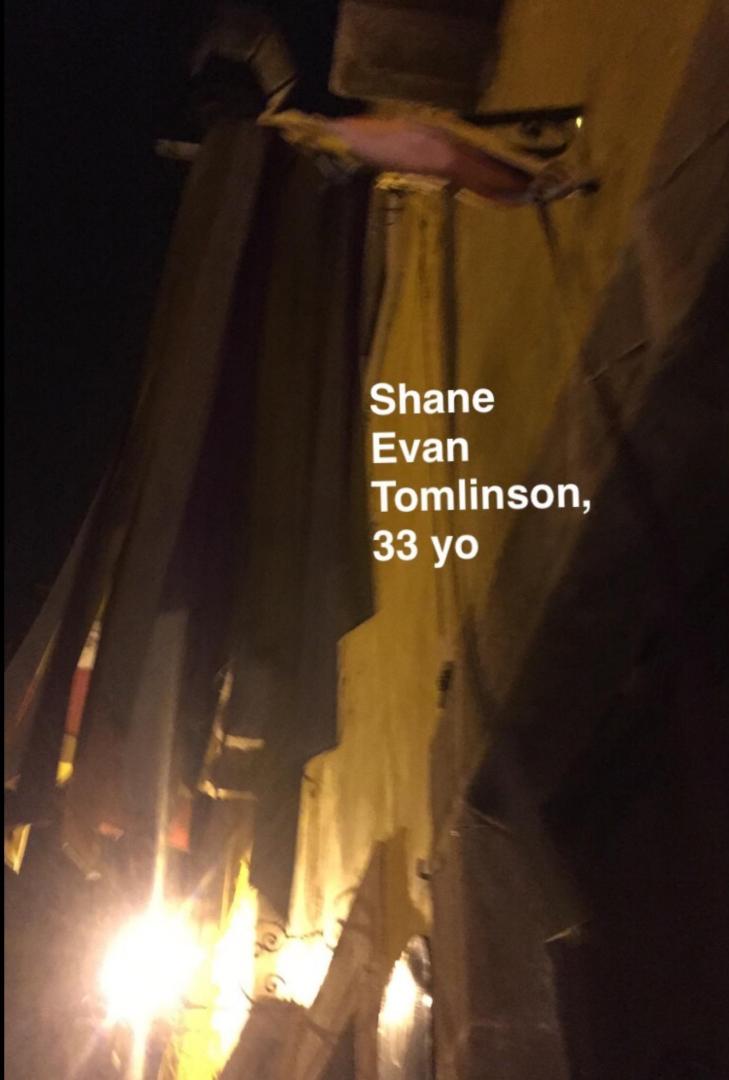
Initially I assumed them to be a sort of memorial but not for home.



It was too soon for global commemoration. We did not yet know the names to remember.



The city seemed woven together by the ribbons, swaying in constant motion.



As if they had a pulse.

**Shane
Evan
Tomlinson,
33 yo**



Yilmary
Rodriguez
Solivan,
24 yo

The question consumed me, and I unraveled my time in Mexico chasing a tangible answer I would never receive.



¿Cual es el significado de las cintas encima de la puerta?



I only understood the first couple words of la chica de dulce.

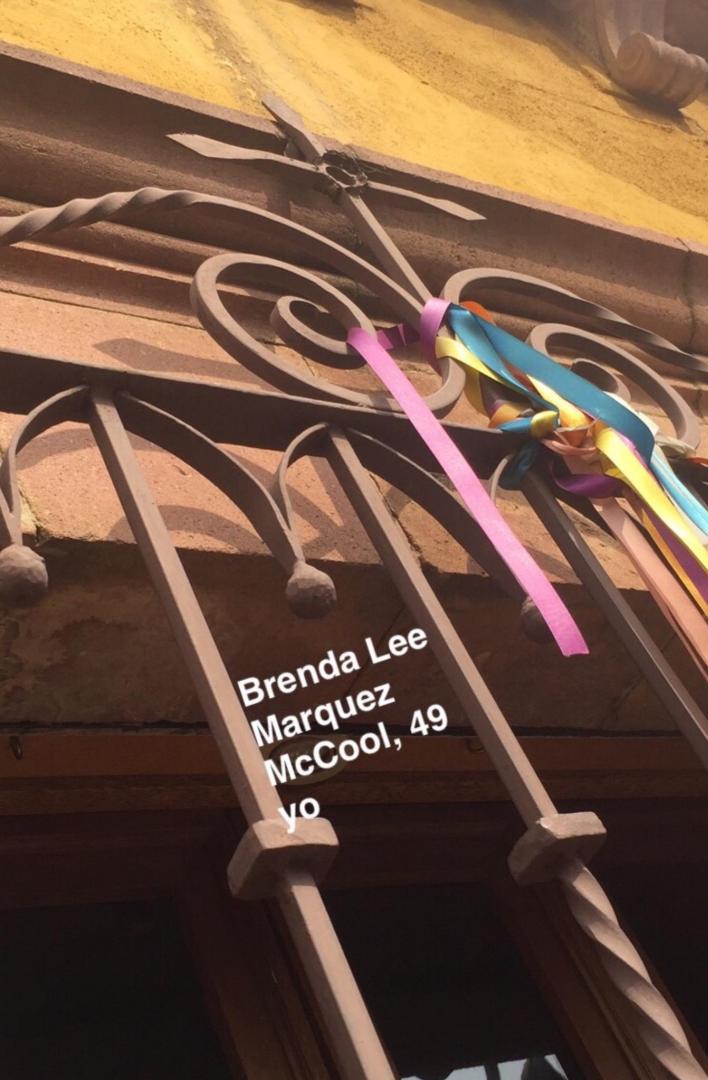


“No sé.”



Juan Chevez-
Martinez, 25 yo

The rest of the words were too rapid. They fluttered from her mouth.



My envy grew as a trilingual classmate reacted to the words I could not tie together.



She patiently explained that the candy maker believes the ribbons signify importance, so the tour bus drivers know where to stop.

Oscar A Aracena-
Montero, 26 Yo

“But I don't buy that.”

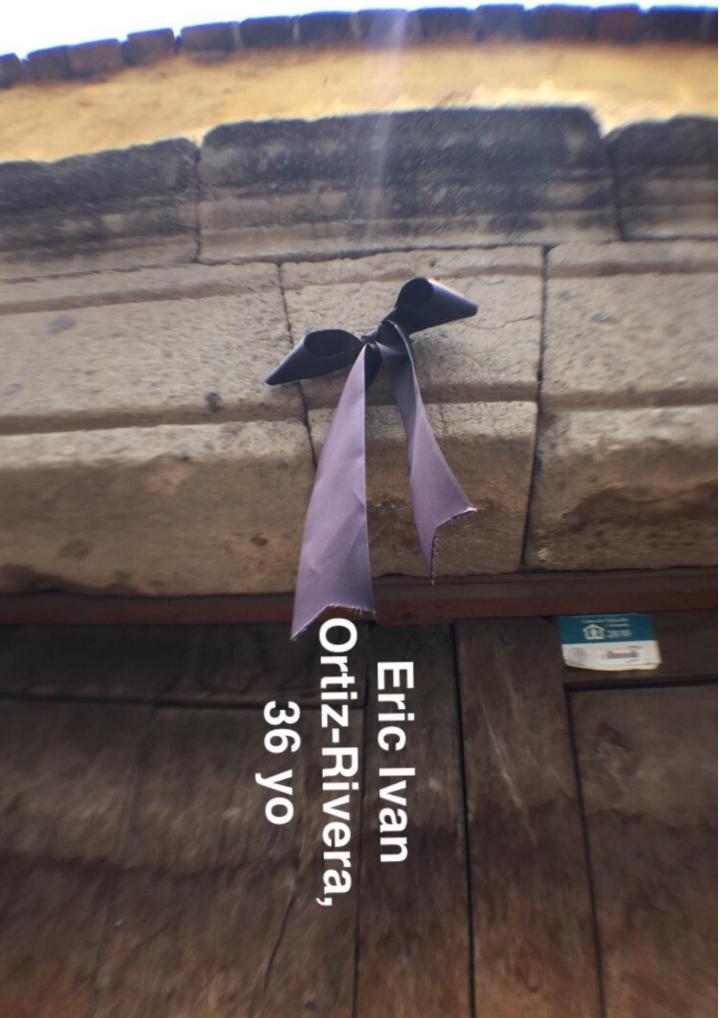


The front desk staff at Hotel Real de Minas worked as a team to answer. The young receptionist, who spoke English, consulted the young bellhop, who did not.

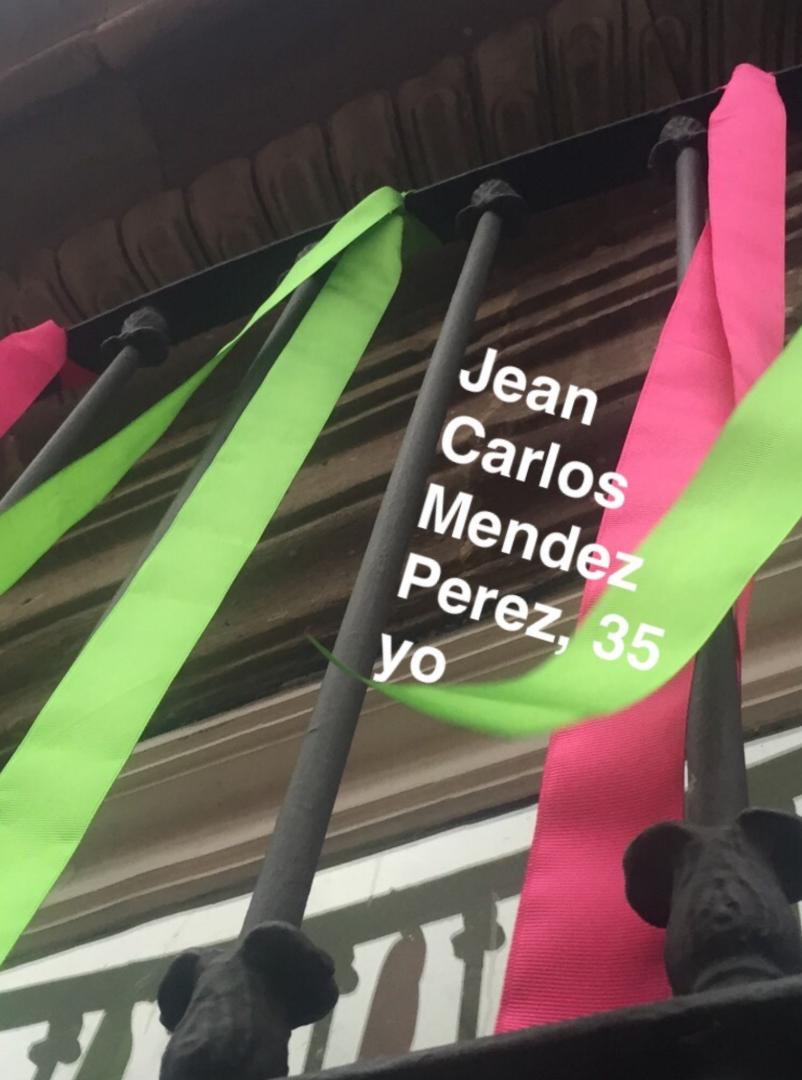


Anthony Luis
Laureanodisla,
25 yo

She relayed with a smile, "It's just decoration."



An older British woman at the pool explained to me that the drug cartels don't interfere with San Miguel de Allende, since this is the city in which they place all their mothers, wives, children.



That same night in Daytona Beach there was a deadly shoot-out on Ridgewood, blocks away from my favorite bar, over a drug deal.



Meanwhile, I walked through the streets of Mexico with two other young American girls for a bar that was not open.

Six months later, a classmate told me about a bombing in San Miguel, conducted by a drug cartel.





The young man working a la Cafe Rama answered my question in tethered English, allowing me to fill in the pauses.

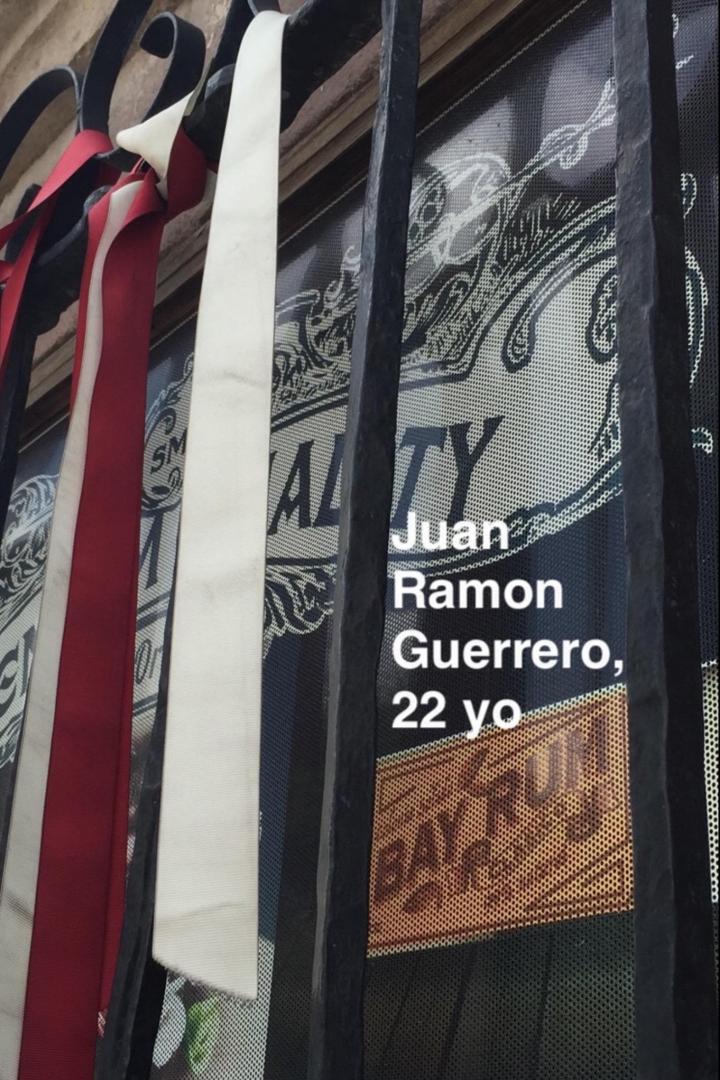


"They welcome all. American. Mexican. British. It shows an acceptance of..."



“Diversity?”

“Sí.”



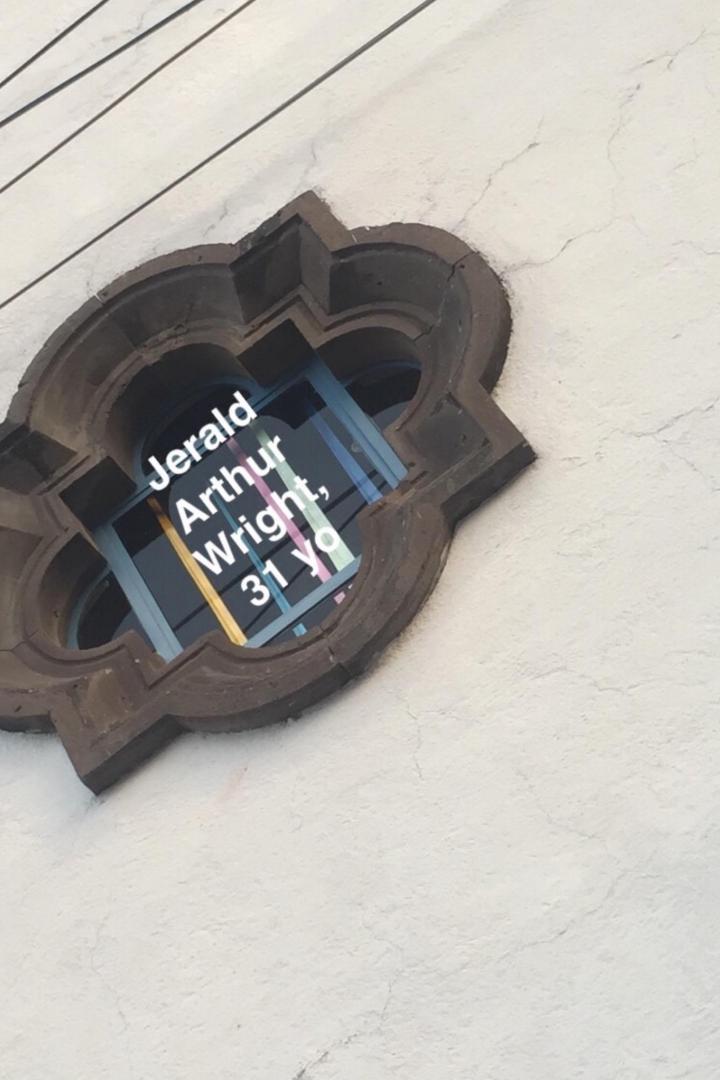
Juan
Ramon
Guerrero,
22 yo



Threading through the list of victims, I caught myself trying to recognize at least one name. Maybe someone from the soccer fields. Even a forgotten friend request on Facebook.



Anything palpable to supply me space within a tragedy I wanted to understand. Anything that could act as a compass to direct me to where my own hurt and anger should reside.

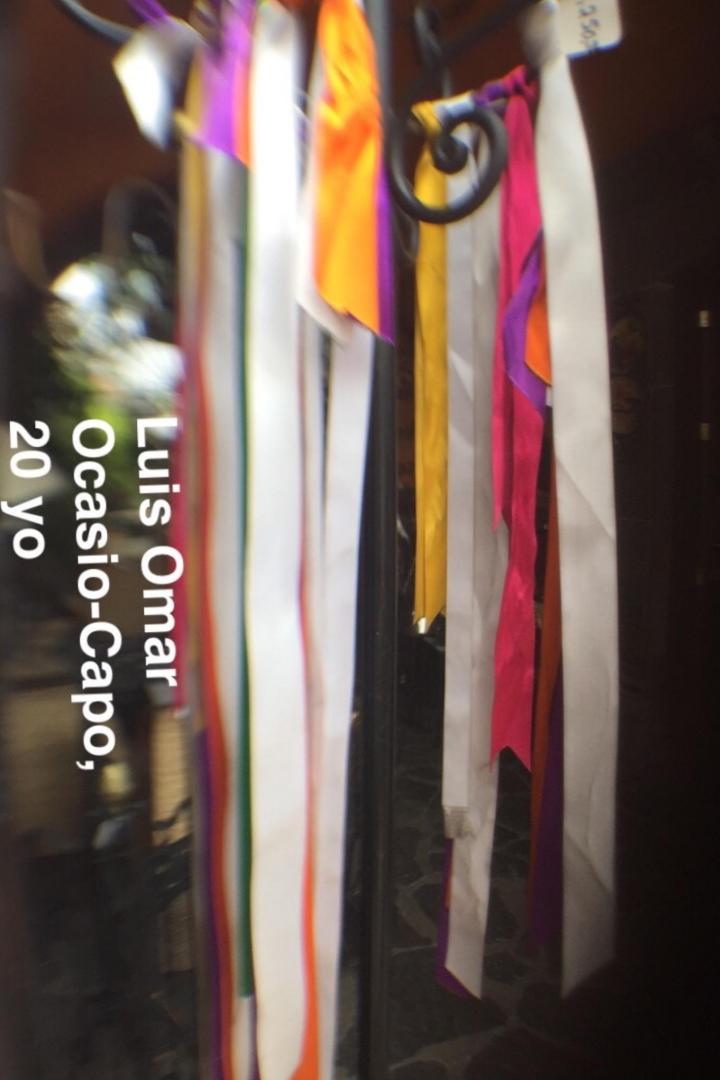


But Orlando does not belong to me.



And neither do the ribbons.

Luis Omar
Ocasio-Capo,
20 yo



When we landed in Mexico City on June 11th, we stood in the foreigners' line for customs.



Jean C.
Nives
Rodriguez,
27 yo

The sign above us read, *extranjeros*.



My wild haired professor smiled.



“How wonderful it is to be strange.”

Geraldo A.
Ortiz-Jimenez,
25 yo

In dreams ribbons ceaselessly flow from my mouth.





La señora de la queso told us the ribbons hang in the window to ward off evil spirits.



She said that las cintas move in the window to show the negative energy being swept away.

Tevin
Eugene
Crosby, 25
yo

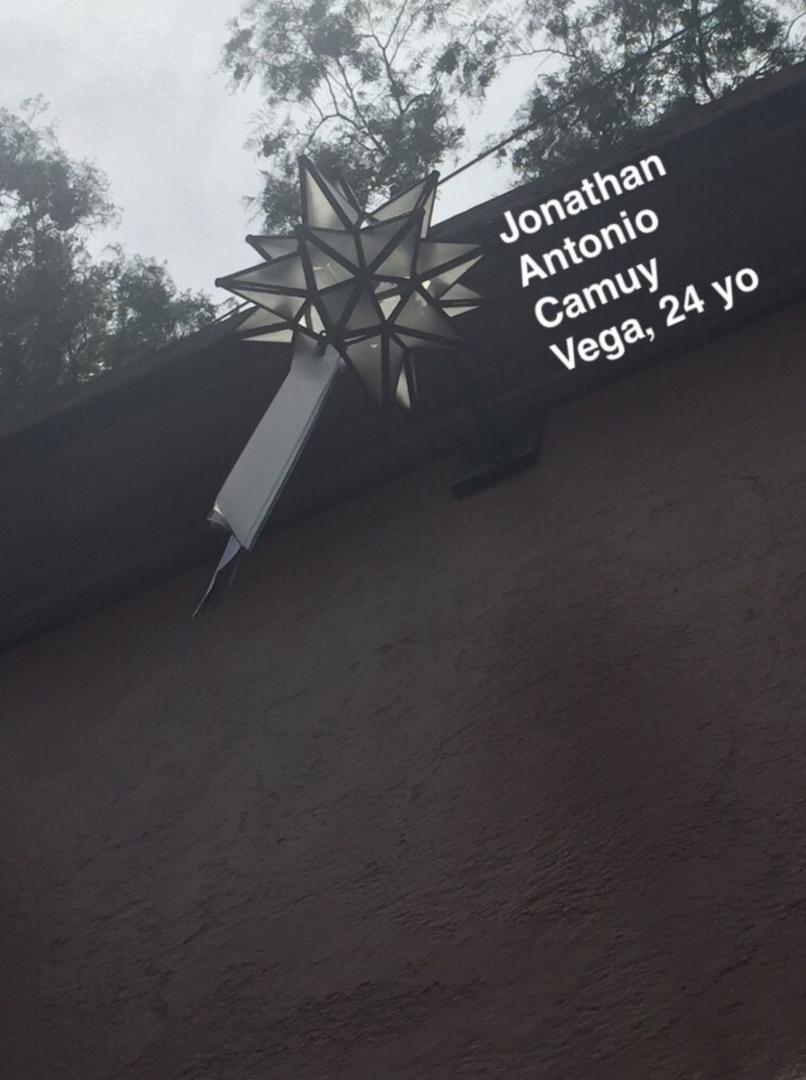


The monks came and taught the people how to hang the ribbons in their puertas.

A close-up photograph of a dark brown or black wooden door. On the left side, there is a brass door knocker shaped like a stylized human figure. A vertical strip of bright green paint runs down the center of the door. To the right of the green stripe, a small portion of a window frame is visible, showing a textured, light-colored surface outside.

Every morning shopkeepers sweep their cobblestone
sidewalks with dried out branches.

**Christopher
Joseph
Sanfeliz,
24 yo**



Perhaps it cleanses the residual dew of those evil spirits.



Javier Jorge-
Reyes, 40 yo

If only it could be that simple.

A close-up, low-light portrait of a person's face. The features are partially hidden behind long, dark, translucent ribbons or strips of fabric that are draped over their head and shoulders. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side to highlight the contours of the face and the texture of the ribbons.

Deonka
Deidra
Drayton, 32
yo

“The bad energy is taken away with the wind.”



Or at least that's how it was translated to me.