

## HUMANS OF ISLA VISTA: Portraits of a Changing Landscape

Isla Vista—a cocktail of equal parts sun, sand, and sky; as we know it today, marked by footprints and bicycle tire treads; our own tiny hidden gem of a town, tucked away in a corner. But its landscape is fluid. It is no longer a blank canvas, but layered and textured and shaped by its inhabitants. From its early days as a Chumash mesa to its longstanding presence during World War II and the student union-dominated movements of the '60s and '70s, Isla Vista is drenched in its own unique culture. We are temporary residents, but in the midst of perfect days and hazy nights, we leave our mark on our town. We are unsilenceable, we are boundless, we are in love with our lives and all the people in them. We are faces in time, we are the protectors of an evolving culture. We are Isla Vista.

*Victor Bergeon, 3<sup>rd</sup> year Philosophy major*

“Tell me about something that changed your life.”

“Meeting a guy called Farouk. We took drugs together, and I really understood the meaning of love without sexual intent, just loving my environment. It was clear that it was real.

“Where do you want to go in your life?”

“Brazil, because of the world cup. And Asia, because I’m a bit scared of it. I want to go to really get out of my comfort zone.”

“What scares you about it?”

“Japanese culture scares me a little, because I don’t understand it. I guess most of what I’ve heard is clichés.”

“Like what?”

“That it’s not easy to meet people. Just...the distance between people.”

*Big D, 28, tattoo artist*

“Guys, take our picture. Here we are.”

*Darian Fathi, 2<sup>nd</sup> year Biology major*

“What’s the best advice you’ve ever gotten?”

“To not judge yourself.”

*Melvin Richon, 3<sup>rd</sup> year Sociology major (transfer from France)*

“What’s the main difference between France and California?”

“I guess the environment. Some details are different. Here it’s paradise, the way people live. But we’re all a part of the same culture. Everything’s bigger here than in Europe. The food, the parties. People are more welcoming of us. In France, we are not so friendly.”

“Why is that?”

“The French don’t like people in general [*laughs*]. We love our language and we love our own history, our own culture. If you want to discuss it with us, you should speak French.”

“What do you want to do before you die?”

“Be useful to society. Or at least part of it.”

*Amy Romeo, 22, tattoo artist-in-training/body piercer*

“How many tattoos do you have?”

“I’m gonna say twelve. Yeah, twelve.”

“Do any of them have special meaning?”

“I have one here [*points to forearm*] for my mom. She passed away my freshman year, when I was 18.”

“Can you tell me about her?”

“She taught me everything I know about gardening and flowers. I can walk down the street and identify all the flowers. She had a great sense of humor. I got her eyes and her smile.”

“What’s something that you regret?”

“Regret? Not really anything, I guess. I mean, it got me here, and I’m having a great time. And I always have the option to change that.”