

2007/08 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Mohawk Paper Award

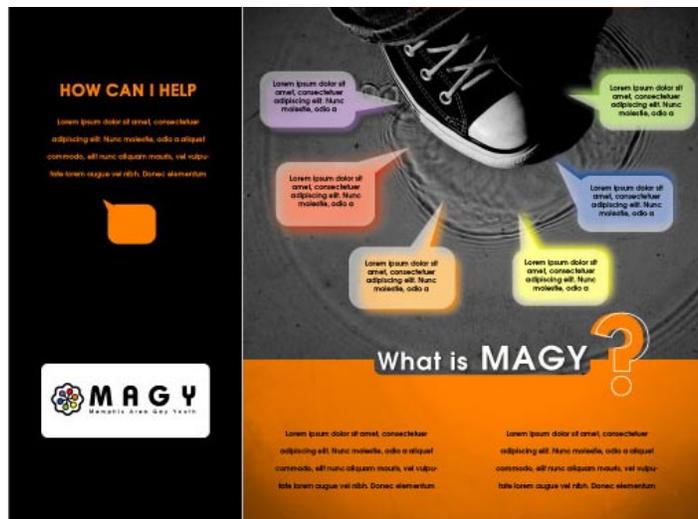


EDWIN M. OLIVERA
Graphic Design
Senior
University of Memphis

Writing this is particularly hard for two reasons. The first is because English is not my first language. The second is that part of my values as both a future designer and sociologist teach me the importance of “us” rather than “me,” and how that mentality could positively affect society.

To begin, like other minorities in the U.S. People frequently ask me, “Where are you from?” I don’t have a straight answer because when it comes to nationality, I feel Bolivian, since I was both raised and socialized into that context, however I was born in Providence, RI.

My early exposure to Graphic Design came from the print shop owned by my grandparents in La Paz, Bolivia. The print shop was a hard working environment that unfortunately, because of local socio-political instability, did not succeed as hoped. Having been raised in a developing country, seeing the poverty and hunger of others, made me appreciative of the things I had and the things I gained from that experience. Having my early experiences as a mixture between visual communication and strong sociopolitical movements helped me develop a different perspective on what I do today.



the professional association for design

EDWIN M. OLIVERA

Graphic Design

Today, I never turn down projects for causes and organizations I believe in. When I was 15 and had recently moved to the U.S., I found comfort and information in a gay youth group called MAGY (Memphis Area Gay Youth). Recently, I decided to give back to them by becoming active in re-designing their identity system and other collateral materials to help confused youth find simple answers. On campus, I became involved with the sociology club by both designing their identity and posters as well as taking part in activities such as going to inner city schools to pose as a positive role model for children. I found, sadly, how many kids were already discouraged from future education, some of them referring to college as "that place where rich white kids go." After sharing with them a little about my designs and what I do, I could feel a positive response toward higher education. Among other projects I am helping my university's environmental club developing promotional materials pushing an initiative to change a third of the campus energy to a cleaner more sustainable green energy. I also started an AIGA student chapter at my University with the plans to work in groups for organizations that need a hand with design and advertising. With a growing Hispanic community and the city of Memphis having some of the highest crime rates in the U.S. there are many organizations and clubs dedicated to find positive solutions to these issues. With the AIGA student chapter I have found a connection between three things I love to do: to help, to teach and to design.



Part of my future ambition after completing my two degrees is to get a graduate design degree that would help me go back to Bolivia and work on social campaigns. I want to design concepts that teach people to value their culture and understand the effects of globalization. I want to explore how a positive shift in attitude and a renovation of their own heritage might cultivate better education and a stronger national identity.

In my view many Latin-American societies suffer from the aftermath of the histories of brutal colonialism and corruption that left them with a frustrating self-image.

My dream is to use graphic design as a vehicle for positive changes both behaviorally and culturally, traveling to developing countries, exploring creative solutions to social issues.

