Portraits of Resilience

Samela Satere-Mawe
Manaus, Brazil

BIOLOGY STUDENT SAMELA SATERE-MAWE, 23, serves as secretary of the Association of Satere-Mawe Indigenous Women in Manaus, Brazil. Despite her youth, Samela—whose indigenous name means “bee”—is already committed to fighting for the rights of her people.

But the association—which has long thrived by selling handicrafts made from Amazonian products, mainly to tourists—has seen its usual activities come to a halt, thanks to COVID-19. The group began making face masks—initially for its members’ own use and later for sale more broadly. Their work drew the attention of organizations that donated sewing machines, material, and even food. Samela coordinates the production of face masks that are now the lifeblood of the association, which has successfully pivoted to stay afloat during the pandemic.

Photography and reporting by RAPHAEL ALVES in Manaus, Brazil.
Sonia Satere-Mawe, coordinator of the association, displays with her daughters Samela (right) and Sandiely (left) the masks produced at the association.

Members of the association sew face masks.

A bundle of face masks to prevent COVID-19, packaged by the association.

Residents of the Association of Satere-Mawe Indigenous Women gather for a group photo in July after receiving gift baskets from the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation.
Lupe Salmeron Ibarra  
**Madison, Wisconsin, USA**

Lupe Salmeron’s coming graduation from Edgewood College in her hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, was set to make her the first in her family to obtain a degree. Family in Mexico would fly in to celebrate. And with a spring internship in Washington, D.C., she was poised to snag a full-time job in American politics.

COVID-19 dismantled it all. When both her congressman’s office and the restaurant where she worked part time were shuttered in March, Lupe, an undocumented immigrant who came to the United States at age six, returned to Madison. For a time, she worked as a credit union teller to help defray the steep tuition that noncitizens like her must pay. And then she contracted COVID-19 herself.

After isolating with mild symptoms, she returned to her job before joining the staff of a local nonprofit that helps Latinx youth prepare for college. While helping others achieve their goals, she keeps sight of her own. “If more people in my generation get into politics, we can reflect on how the system is broken,” she says, “and focus on what we want to change.”

Photography and reporting by ARIANA LINDQUIST in Madison, Wisconsin.
Lupe watches the television show Grey’s Anatomy on Netflix after dinner. While Lupe was sick with COVID-19, she had to be isolated for 10 days.

Lupe bikes with an old friend from high school, Damien Burke. Madison is a politically progressive city, and there are many reminders to vote. Although Lupe is politically active, she cannot vote because she is an undocumented immigrant. Her younger brother, who just turned 18, will be the first in the family to vote.
RAJA MIA, 45, is a rickshaw driver who lives with his wife, Beauty, and youngest son, Bishal, age 7, in Bangladesh’s capital. Their house has just one room, and they share cooking and sanitary facilities with members of other families.

Originally from a rural village, Raja moved to Dhaka in hopes of making a better life. On a normal day, Raja makes $7, barely enough to provide for his family. When the COVID-19 crisis hit and things officially closed the city down on March 25, his work slowed to a trickle and his family had to rely on neighbors for food. Raja’s daily income dropped to $2.50. Some days, he just stays at home. He doesn’t worry too much about getting COVID-19. “If I don’t work, we will die anyway,” he says.

Photography and reporting by K. M. ASAD in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
Raja lives with his family in a 10 by 10 foot room in the capital city.

A customer pays Raja for the ride.

Raja covers his face now.