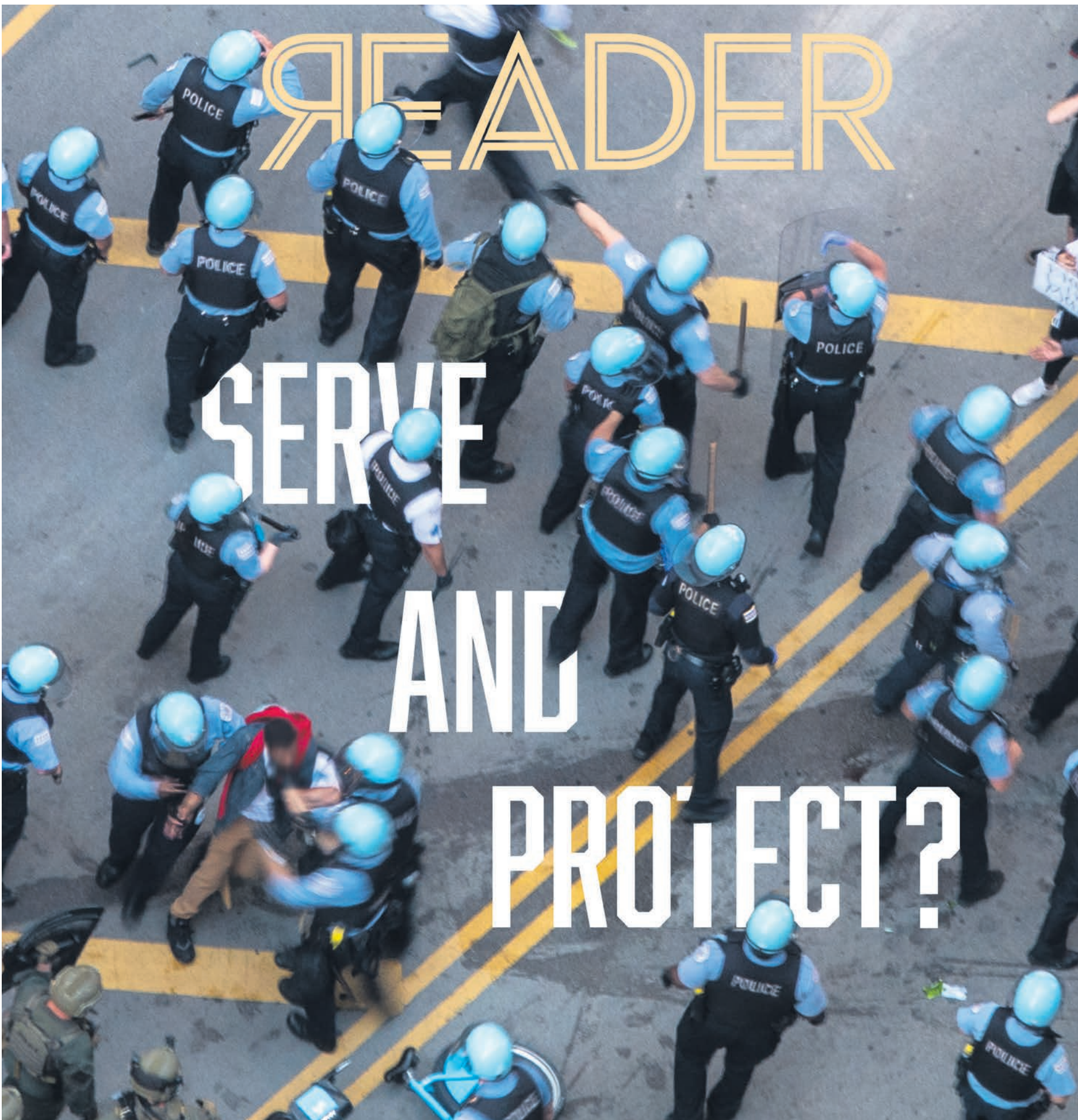


READER

SERVE
AND
PROTECT?



IN THIS ISSUE

FOOD & DRINK

03 Feature *A supper club and a caterer turned on a dime during quarantine.*

NEWS & POLITICS

06 Joravsky | Politics *Sarah Cooper demonstrates how in times like this, it sort of helps to bash Donald Trump.*

08 Dukmasova | News *Police abolitionists find fuel in the protests.*

10 Essays *How are Black writers coping right now? We're chanting, fact-checking history, and envisioning a tiny future.*



ARTS & CULTURE

14 Design *Inside the intricate world of Polly Pocket*

16 Lit *Poets come together to share the joy, pain, and hope from the pandemic in a new video project.*

THEATER

17 Streaming Reviews *Three streaming productions to ponder for pandemic and protest*

19 Pivot *A multidisciplinary arts fest lives up to its name.*



FILM

20 Movies of note *Lulu Wilson remains a force to be reckoned with in Becky; director Abel Ferrara once again teams up with Willem Dafoe for the semi-autobiographical Tommaso; the formal trickery in the mistaken identity film Yourself and Yours is absorbing.*

MUSIC &

NIGHTLIFE

21 #ChiMusic35 *Veteran rapper and activist Rhymefest remembers an all-star festival by and for the community.*

22 Records of note *A pandemic can't stop the flow of great music. Our critics review releases that*

you can enjoy at home.

27 Early Warnings *Rescheduled concerts and other updated listings*



27 Gossip Wolf *DJ and producer Jordan Zawideh drops an homage to oddball old-school house, sheet-music institution Performers needs help to survive the pandemic, and Tenci celebrates the reissue of her debut with an online Hideout set.*

OPINION

28 Savage Love *Dan Savage offers advice on what to do when your sex life just isn't hot enough.*

CLASSIFIEDS

30 Jobs

30 Apartments & Spaces

30 Marketplace

ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY SAMANTHA BAILEY. FOR MORE OF BAILEY'S WORK, VISIT THOUGHTSINBUTTERMILK.COM.



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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Abolish the police?

Organizers say it's less crazy than it sounds. In an August 25, 2016, cover story, Maya Dukmasova profiled the grassroots movement already putting abolitionist ideas into practice.



FOOD & DRINK



Cholent, a slow-simmered stew of brisket with pearl barley and potatoes. EVE STUDNICKA

FOOD FEATURE

Dinner at the Grotto and Black Cat Kitchen make staying home deliciously weird

A supper club and a caterer turned on a dime during quarantine.

By MIKE SULA

Some of the rare bright moments in this slow terror are the random porch presents from masked bandits bearing treasures. Last month, prompted by a text, I leapt from my desk (couch) and found a bag of perfect morel mushrooms at the door, purchased by one friend, delivered by another, and foraged in

central Illinois by someone I'd never met before but had been curious about for a long time.

Last week, the forager herself showed up on the porch with a hefty serving of everything-bagel-seasoned mac and cheese, another of cholent—a slow-simmered stew of brisket with pearl barley and potatoes, cooked

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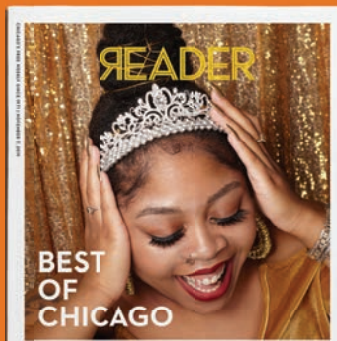
Important Reader News

Due to business closings and for safety purposes, the Chicago Reader is going biweekly with a print run to 600+ locations, including our box route. On the off weeks (June 4, June 18) the Reader is just being distributed as a free PDF, with a small press run to fulfill subscriber and library mailings.

We are also making a limited number of copies available for special short-term subscriptions, 12 weeks for \$50, and every week's issue will be mailed to your home.

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Thank you, The Reader team

FOOD & DRINK



Alexis Thomas and Eve Studnicka ALLY ALMORE

continued from page 3

down and enriched overnight with bone marrow—and a deli container of raspberry-rose-water jam.

The food was prepared in a Logan Square shared kitchen and delivered via a beat-up 2005 green Chrysler Town and Country by Eve Studnicka of the long-running underground supper club Dinner at the Grotto and her business partner of three months, Alexis Thomas of Black Cat Kitchen, a bespoke caterer I'd also just realized I'd been eyeing with curiosity all season at last year's Lincoln Square Farmers Market but somehow failed to check out.

Sometimes you have to stay inside to get out.

Separately, in early March, Studnicka and Thomas were gearing up for a busy spring. But on March 10, the day Governor Pritzker declared a state of emergency, Studnicka had to postpone (and later cancel) an almost-sold-out April 1 "Soviet Soul Food" dinner, and was later furloughed from her job at Finom Coffee. On the same day, all four of Thomas's upcoming catering gigs canceled, including a Friday the 13th dinner party at Helix Café. "I had a big

sad day," says Thomas. "Is my business even a business anymore?" But within a week the pair had joined forces and pivoted to a weekly mid-western-forward and wonderfully weird meal delivery system that's sold out within a day for 12 straight weeks.

Thomas, 27, grew up in small-town Byron, near Rockford, the daughter of police officers. "My mom cooked out of function, not out of any joy," she says. "I was never allowed to cook, so I would steal cookbooks out of the library. I had a fine of like \$16 that I couldn't/wouldn't pay, so I would put cookbooks in my backpack, take them home, copy them down into notebooks, and then return them in the book chute. I didn't start cooking until I moved out on my own in my early 20s. I grew a real love for it."

Similarly, Studnicka, who's 25, grew up in the rural Driftless Region in southwestern Wisconsin. As a young, homeschooled then-vegetarian, cooking her own food became part of the curriculum. "Neither of my parents love cooking, so instead of making me a separate meal they kind of assigned me with that task." As a freshman studying film at

FOOD & DRINK

Columbia College, she started Pancakes at the Grotto, a LGBTQ-friendly breakfast series, out of her apartment “in the purgatory” between Logan Square and Avondale. “All of the parties sucked, and I wanted to be able to gather with friends and not have to play beer pong,” she says.

Studnicka and Thomas met two years ago while working at Katherine Anne Confections. Thomas had just quit her special-ed social work job, burnt out on compassion fatigue. “I had no formal training but really loved food,” she says. “I had a lot of knowledge and not a lot of actual practice, but that’s when I decided I really wanted to open my own business.” As for Studnicka, Pancakes at the Grotto had evolved into an all-consuming passion project, sometimes hosting up to 45 people for the redubbed Dinner at the Grotto. She figures she’s served some 3,000 guests during her six-year run—last year they voted her best up-and-coming chef in the Reader’s Best of Chicago poll. Dinner at the Grotto won best underground dining.

They both struck out on their own a year ago, Thomas going full steam with Black Cat, and Studnicka supplementing Dinner at the Grotto by working as Rafael Esparza’s chef de cuisine at Finom. But they collaborated, too, notably on a Nordic-inspired dinner in the winter of 2019, and in January for a cannabis-infused dinner party to celebrate the state’s new recreational marijuana law.

The pair had learned they had a lot of opposing but complimentary culinary traits. “Being around a lot of wild game and foraged ingredients, and bar food, and corn and cheese growing up, that was what I was familiar with and what I was most connected to, so it’s what I naturally gravitated toward in the cooking I do,” says Studnicka.

“Eve loves meat,” says Thomas. “She cooks a lot of nose to tail. It’s indulgent. It’s comfort food to the max. I live with a vegetarian, and though I’m not one, most of my food is super veggie heavy.”

When all plans were canceled, the pair decided to collaborate and pivot to a weekly pay-what-you-can meal delivery service. Within a week they announced their first menu on Instagram, straddling the realms of indulgent midwestern comfort food and immunity-boosting health trends: a wellness soup kit, building on a 30-hour roasted duck bone stock enriched with lemongrass, ginger, star anise, shiitake, and turmeric; creamy polenta with mushrooms, greens, and farmers cheese; blackberry ginger coffee cake; pine-smoked-tea drinking chocolate.

They sold out the next day, and the next week, and the next, and the next. As conventional supply chains weakened, they increasingly sourced more from their farmer friends, and the menus became progressively more appealing and wonderfully midwestern-strange: pork belly potpie with Publican oat porridge; Chicago mix popcorn-infused drinking chocolate; venison summer sausage and duck heart cassoulet; ramp potato chowder.

One week Studnicka made a surplus of beehive-and-smoked-salt bagels for herself and ended up giving them away to a randomly selected customer. That instituted weekly giveaways to customers who donate to a different charity, such as water rights advocates We the People Detroit, or Youth Act Chicago, which raises money for homeless kids.


Studnicka and Thomas agree that the day they announced their first menu was “the worst day of our lives.”

“By the time we landed on what we wanted to make, to the time we put the last lid on the last dish, it was 14 hours, and that included shopping, packaging, figuring out finances, and how the ordering system would work,” says Studnicka. “We’d never done deliveries. We didn’t know how to do spreadsheets. It was excruciating.”

They’ve since streamlined and gotten nimble. Each week’s menu is announced Sunday at 3 PM. By Monday they’re sold out of 50 orders for each of five items. Tuesdays and Wednesdays they shop and cook. Thursday and Friday they deliver. They don’t communicate at all on Saturday until the evening, when they start texting ideas back and forth. There’s a Sunday phone call to finalize the next menu. It’s posted, then they start all over again.

But with the governor and mayor phasing normalcy back into the economy, what’s next for an on-the-fly partnership dependent on a stay-at-home customer base in need of comfort and delight?

“That’s something we talk about every week, and we don’t have any answer for it,” says Studnicka, adding that a brick-and-mortar cafe is a topic of discussion. “She is the best collaborator I’ve ever worked with. She’s made so many facets of this possible and not scary. It’s the best part of working with a teammate in an uncertain time. Everything feels less daunting.”

“I wouldn’t be doing this without Eve,” says Thomas. “I know she wouldn’t be doing it without me. We would both be stuck at home.” 

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POLITICS

Thank you, Sarah Cooper

At times like this, it sort of helps to bash Donald Trump.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

When I need distraction from the madness of our times, I turn to a particular bit by a comedian named Sarah Cooper.

And thank you, Mick Dumke, for sending that bit to me.

Cooper has been doing perfect lip syncs of the latest idiocy from our president. It's really funny to watch Donald Trump's words come out of Cooper's mouth. I urge you to watch her videos—I'm sure they will help you, too.

Trump is, of course, a horrible human being with no redeeming qualities, and the faster we get him out of office, the better we will all be. But on occasion, he says something so batshit crazy that it's sort of funny—in a dark and depraved way.

Like the recent riff that Cooper satirizes

about “the Black people.” It takes place at one of those impromptu press conferences that Trump frequently holds as he's about to board a helicopter whose engines are running, so it's like he's yelling to be heard above a vacuum cleaner. This gives him the opportunity to say what he wants while having an excuse not to take questions from reporters.

In this case, Trump said: “MAGA is make America great again. By the way, they love African American people. They love Black people. MAGA loves the Black people.”

Don't blame me, folks. I'm just quoting the guy.

It's that last line that gets me—“MAGA loves the Black people.” In one sentence, Trump turned a thing (the acronym MAGA) into a col-

“MAGA loves the Black people.” YOUTUBE

lection of people, while turning a collection of people into a thing (“the Black people”).

As you can see, I'm making a pitch to vote against Trump. But it's not really a good time to make a campaign pitch, as everyone's upset, though for vastly different reasons.

Black people are justifiably enraged that Derek Chauvin, a white Minneapolis cop, thought he could get away with killing George Floyd, a Black man, while being filmed. As if white people really don't care what you do to Black people, even if they see it with their own eyes.

And white people are unjustifiably upset that Black people are so enraged over a white cop murdering a Black man.

Well, not *all* white people. Just many of the aforementioned MAGA species of white people.

For instance, when Chance the Rapper was pictured in the *Tribune* protesting George Floyd's murder, some white guy from the suburbs felt compelled to write a letter to the editor saying something along the lines of: Hey, Chance, why don't you protest when Black people kill Black people on the south side?

Then he threw criticism of Father Pfleger into the mix—just 'cause, well, why not?

So predictable. It's the knee-jerk reaction MAGA has when they see Black people protesting racism.

It reminds me of the time Troy LaRaviere—president of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association—was on my old radio show. He mentioned a *Tribune* story about the fact that police write more bike-riding citations in Black neighborhoods than they do where white people live.

The phone rang, and a caller said: “I didn't vote for Trump, but . . .”

I was like—uh-oh. Starting a comment with “I didn't vote for Trump” is a little like starting one with: “Say what you will about Hitler . . .”

You know that what follows can't be good.

And sure enough, the caller said something like: Hey, Troy, stop complaining about bike citations and start doing something about Black-on-Black crime.

So I suggested that white people try really hard not to respond to Black people protesting racism by telling Black people to do something about Black-on-Black crime.

In other words, stop trying to divert attention away from your unwillingness to take a stand against racism.

As soon as I said that, man, callers started

giving me grief about political correctness and freedom of speech—a favorite MAGA talking point when they're feeling aggrieved, which is pretty much all the time.

MAGA has a curious attitude about freedom of speech—they want it for themselves but no one else.

They certainly didn't want it for Colin Kaepernick. I can't recall MAGA protesting when the NFL banished Kaepernick for protesting police brutality by taking a knee during the national anthem.

Instead the reaction of MAGA was much like Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys, who commanded his players to “stand at the anthem, toe on the line.” Or else.

While I'm on the subject, want to know how much hatred white people had for Kaepernick for taking that knee?

In 2017, the Bears shunned Kaepernick—even though they desperately needed a quarterback—and instead spent over \$18 million on Mike Glennon.

Not to pick on Mike Glennon—but he sucks! A team signing Mike Glennon over Colin Kaepernick tells you everything you need to know about the depths to which white people will go to avoid doing the right thing when it comes to fighting racism.

Hold on, just thinking about the Bears's quarterback situation has gotten me so upset, I've got to watch that Sarah Cooper video again.

OK, back to my mission of rallying people to vote against Trump and for Joe Biden. President Obama agrees with me on this.

Of course, I remember Obama urging us to reelect Mayor Rahm. Which Chicago did. Only to discover that Rahm was concealing evidence of the murder of Laquan McDonald.

It was all on a videotape that Rahm fought like hell to keep from being released. Remember that?

Rahm had a chance to take a strong stand against a serious problem of police brutality. And instead, he buried it. Because he had to make sure he could get reelected so he could dole out more TIF handouts to his pals.

Now I see in the newspaper that Rahm is whispering advice to Joe Biden. Hey, Joe, do everyone a favor—don't listen to what Rahm tells you!

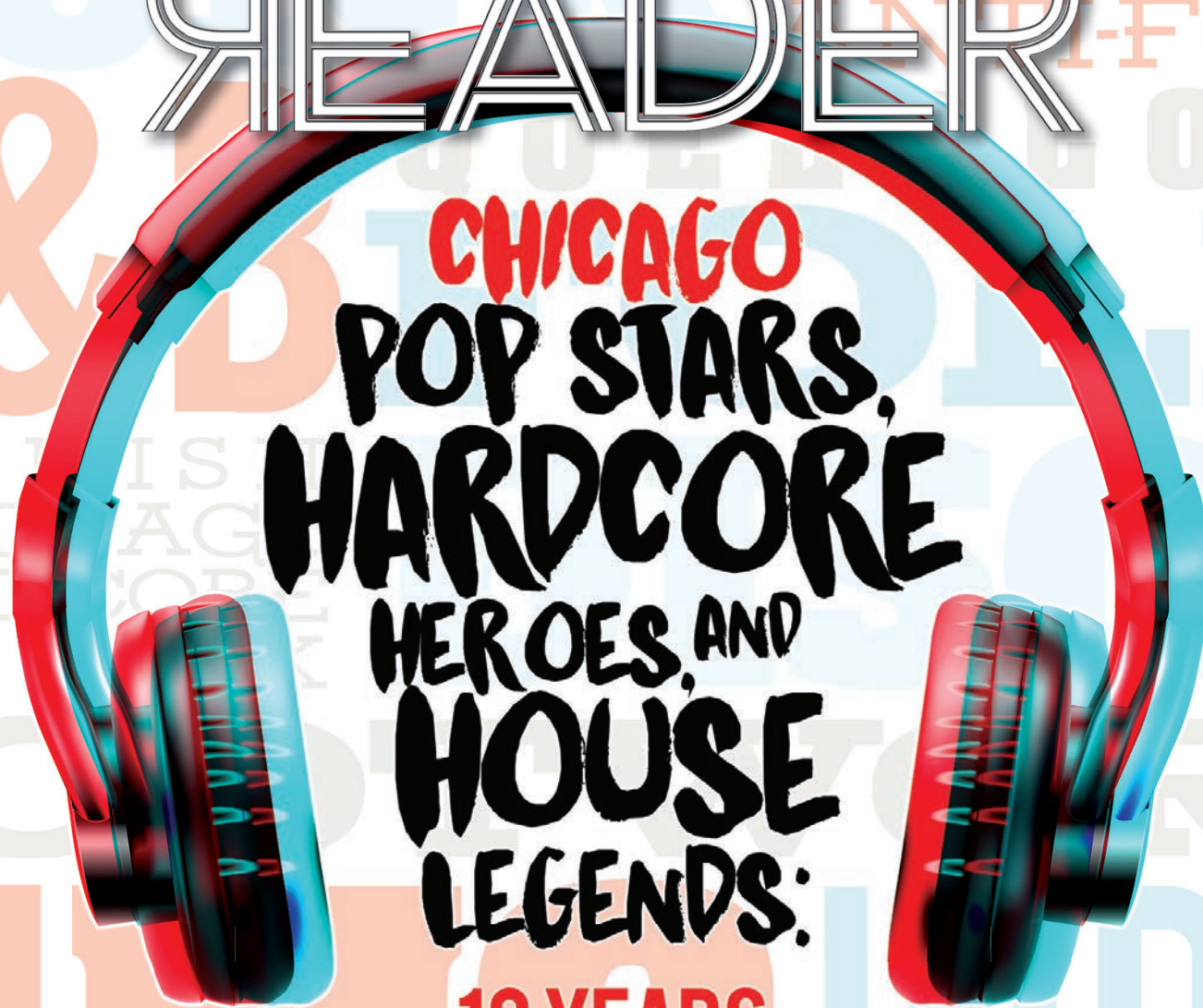
Especially if he's telling you to take Amy Klobuchar as a running mate. Oh, Lord, it will take more than a Sarah Cooper comedy bit to get over that.

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The city lifted bridges and shut down the CTA as cops flooded the streets. SAMANTHA BAILEY

NEWS

Police abolitionists find fuel in the protests

As more people lose faith in the state, organizers offer alternatives.

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

Here's what's true no matter how you look at the events of the last week:

Cops and vigilantes are continuing the disproportionate extrajudicial killing of Black people in America.

Police departments around the country are armed with state-of-the-art riot gear, and even supplied with decommissioned military equip-

ment (through a program that began under the Clinton administration in the 1990s).

Hundreds of thousands of people are willing to gather en masse despite a global pandemic.

This country is experiencing an economic crisis on a scale unseen since the Great Depression.

One's interpretation of just about every-

thing else that's unfolded as people took to the streets in protest over the police killings of George Floyd in Minnesota, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, Tony McDade in Florida, and countless others, will depend on one's life experiences, political persuasions, and where one gets information. Narratives of the nationwide protests range from "the peaceful demonstrations were disrupted by unhinged cops who want to sow chaos to discredit the Black Lives Matter movement," to "outside agitators and antifa are instigating riots and looting to destroy America." Amid the chaos of millions of simultaneous events flashing across screens and streets, how might one understand the call to abolish the police?

Police and prison abolitionists, as we've explained over the years, do not subscribe to the idea that policing is somehow "broken" and in need of reforms. They do not see an idyllic past in which policing "worked" for communities of Black, poor, or queer people, for people experiencing domestic violence, housing discrimination, and other forms of state and interpersonal oppression. Instead, abolitionists propose—and indeed demonstrate through their work—that community order can be maintained without the intervention of an armed representative of the government and that justice can be accomplished without punishment.

Abolition can be challenging to imagine because many assume that the absence of harsh punishment for behavior considered to be socially harmful or unacceptable will lead to increased disorder and violence. But abolitionists tend to point out that America's prison-industrial complex and the increasing militarization of police hasn't rooted out en-

democratic pathologies like pedophilia, or mental illnesses that drive people to behave in socially frowned-upon ways, or made people less poor. Indeed, as abolitionist educator and organizer Mariame Kaba often argues, police abolition already exists for the wealthy. In communities with well-funded schools, food security, ample jobs, reliable transportation, and access to health care—communities where people's needs are met—police are mostly invisible. "People in Naperville are living abolition right now," Kaba told me in 2016. "The cops are not in their schools, they're not on every street corner." The abolitionist proposal is to redirect the resources the state has allocated toward prisons and police for decades toward community-directed and community-endorsed education, health care, food, jobs, and housing.

"We have this abolitionist framework where we want to see the policing institution dismantled and we want to see it transformed into something that centers community and restorative justice," said organizer Kofi Ademola, an adult mentor with GoodKids MadCity, as he prepared to march in the demonstrations on Saturday. "The minimum [police officer salary] is a good salary to start on. If you gave folks in a community \$65,000 a year to keep their communities safe you'd see communities transformed."

But, Ademola said, abolitionist work is gradual and long-term; changing a society that took hundreds of years to reach its current form takes time. "As we reach towards that goal we still have to think about harm reduction," he said. "We don't believe abolition will happen overnight."

Harm reduction usually marshals community resources to fill in gaps left (or created) by the state and the private sector. It takes the form of mutual aid networks that collect money and essential items and redistribute

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NEWS & POLITICS

them to people in need, or bail funds that get people accused of crimes out of pretrial detention in dangerous jails, or collectives that offer child care, transportation, and medical services, or reclaiming abandoned land to feed the neighborhood. It may look like charity, but abolitionist organizations tend to eschew the private philanthropic models of large nonprofits which they see as self-serving and out-of-touch with community needs.

On Saturday night, in a move that echoed Mayor Richard J. Daley's cordoning off of Black neighborhoods to confine riots within them after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Mayor Lori Lightfoot decided to kettle thousands of angry people in the Loop. The city lifted bridges, shut down the CTA, and imposed a sudden curfew, as cops brandishing weapons, tear gas, and handcuffs flooded the streets. Abolitionists at the Chicago Freedom School, meanwhile, opened their downtown office to offer shelter, food, and water to stranded protesters. As arrests surged (the city still hasn't been clear on how many people were detained over the weekend, but estimates range from 240 to 1,000), the Chicago Community Bond Fund was raising so much money to bail people out that their website crashed. On Monday morning, as Chicago Public Schools suspended its food distribution program for kids, community groups throughout the city mobilized to make and deliver meals.


"There were all these narratives in the media that Mayor Lightfoot has criticized Minneapolis PD and so I think a lot of people went down with the assumption that our police wouldn't mirror some of the activities we saw in Minnesota," said Richard Wallace, founder of the community organization Equity and Transformation, who participated in the demonstrations. "There are people who might have come to the protests who weren't radical but that left radical, or left abolitionist because of the way the city of Chicago handled that."

The organizers interviewed for this story all said that while the killing of George Floyd may have catalyzed the mass protests, people's rage has deeper roots. The structural, institutional inequities that lead to disproportionate police violence leveled against Black people is also fueling the grim statistics of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is disproportionately claiming Black and Latinx lives. (As Block Club Chicago recently reported, it's also led to disproportionate police enforcement of quarantine rules in Black neighborhoods.)

The pandemic "is laying bare how different our world could be and even more it's laying

bare how terrible our world actually is," said Black Lives Matter Chicago organizer Ariel Atkins. "More and more people are being touched by what's happening personally and are way more awake than they have been in a long time . . . watching [the government] save corporations and banks, watching Jeff Bezos become a trillionaire while the people working for him are dying and being overworked and underpaid."

From the vantage point of abolitionists, the disease has also shown that the police, rather than being an institution that promotes safety, is one that's a threat to public health. "It's not insignificant that we had, in recent memory, two Black men whose last words were 'I can't breathe,'" said Page May, cofounder of Assata's Daughters, a youth political education group that runs a community garden to provide free produce to Washington Parkers, among other initiatives. "In a moment where everyone in the world is afraid of a respiratory illness that takes away our breath, it's a metaphor for how we've been living: We can't breathe. There's people on our necks literally and metaphorically."

As protests continue around the country, and the pandemic shows no signs of abatement, abolitionist organizers are expecting interest in their vision to increase. "There are more and more people every day that want to get plugged in and that makes the work more possible," said May. "I think people are seeing that no one is coming to save us and that it's up to us and we're all we got." 

 @mdoukmas

artist, writer, performer?

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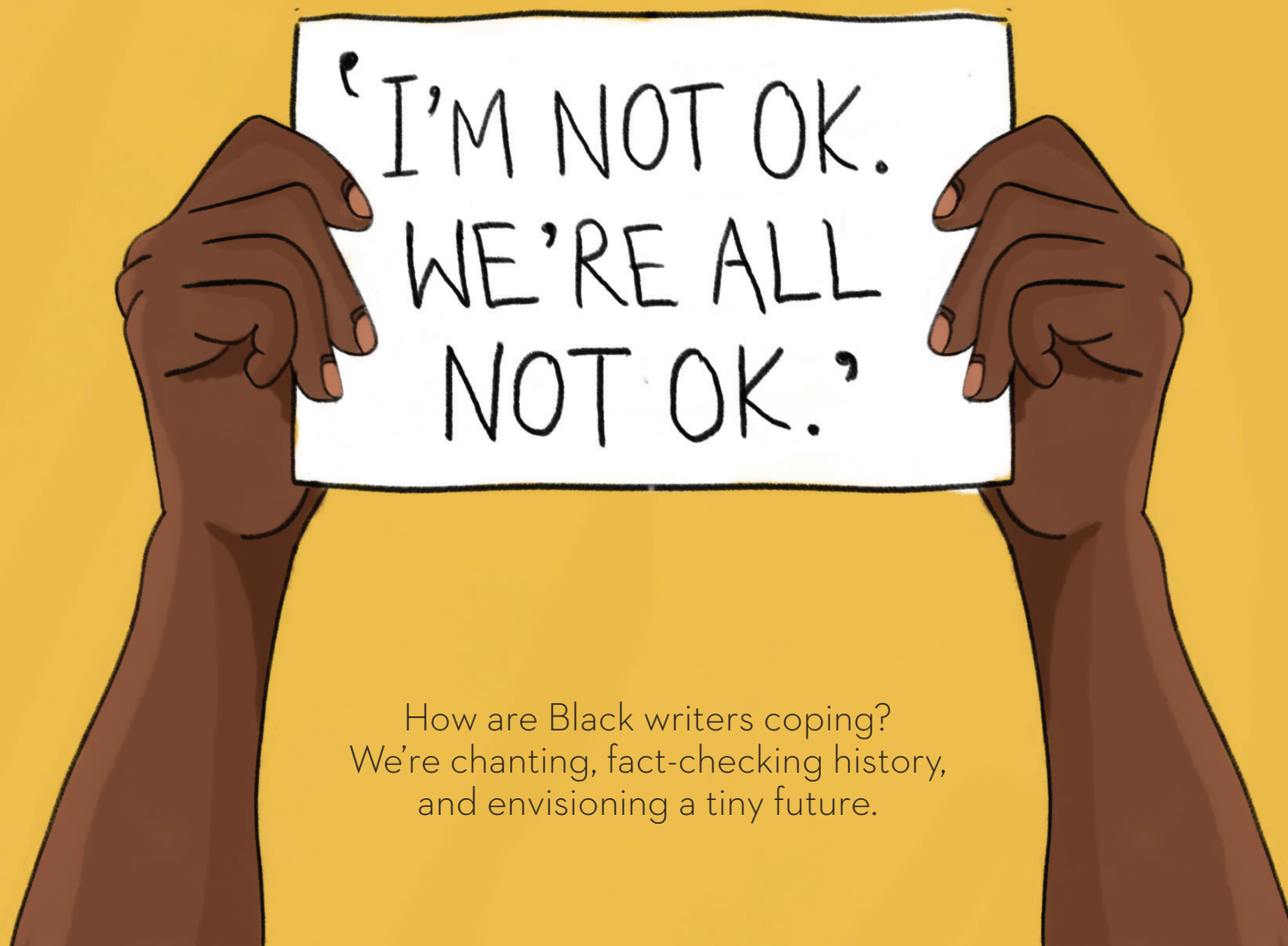
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READER



How are Black writers coping?
We're chanting, fact-checking history,
and envisioning a tiny future.

KAREN HAWKINS

THE DIFFERENCE IN the texts I got over the weekend from Black friends and other folks of color versus the ones I got from white friends is a good place to start for why I reached out to this particular group of writers for essays.

White friends: OMG, are you OK? I can't imagine what you're going through, I'm sure this is hard for you, the world is burning, let me know how I can help, I'm so sorry, white people are the worst.

Black friends: I'm not going to ask if you're OK 'cause I'm not OK. We're all not OK.

I get it, white friends. I know you're trying to help, and I know that you care. But sometimes, I just can't. I can't spend any more time easing your white guilt, I can't keep explaining why proclaiming #BlackLivesMatter while you do nothing to address your own biases is meaningless and offensive, and I can't pretend that I don't resent that after this is all over—whatever “this” means to you—your whiteness will continue to protect you in ways you don't even realize.

Last Friday feels like a year ago. In the e-mail I sent that morning asking for these essays, I put it this way:

You're getting this e-mail because when I made the mistake of doomscrolling Twitter at 5 AM today, I found myself wondering what you're all thinking about this awful effing moment in time. Yes, I'm enlisting you to be my group therapists.

The request: we're looking for essays (you're all Black folks, btw) about how you're coping. You can write about COVID-19, police brutality, the exhaustion of white supremacy, how much the mainstream media absolutely gets things wrong sometimes—or not. Write about what music is getting you through, how Zoom therapy is going, how much you miss your mama's mac and cheese (omg I miss my mama's mac and cheese). I'm really just trying to put together a package that captures voices we frankly don't hear enough from in the Reader.

I will admit that this request was as much about journalism as it was about my personal sanity. I wanted these thoughtful and witty Black writers to tell me how to feel. I wanted to know how they're coping, both as an editor and as a Black lesbian journalist who's been in this unforgiving business for way too long. I wanted to compare notes on how we're getting through this.

And they didn't disappoint.

As I edited these essays, I cycled through

all of the stages of grief. I laughed and cried, felt hopeless and despondent, dug in on my commitment to making Chicago a better city, and fantasized about moving into a custom tricked-out van down by some distant river. We've arranged these essays to reflect this emotional journey, and I hope you read this package from start to finish, from Derrick's palpable anger and delete-button self-care to Terrence's Buddhist chants as a way to channel the rage we all feel.

The only author missing is Energizer bunny Matt Harvey, who started his new gig with our friends at the TRiiBe by providing the city's best on-the-ground coverage of the protests with nonstop reporting from midday Saturday into late Sunday. I really hope he's still asleep somewhere. If you, like me, hung on his every word and image over the weekend, consider this: coverage from a young Black reporter working for an independent Black media outlet is something many of you have never witnessed in your lifetime. His passion and perspective are what's possible when people of color have the power to tell our own stories in our own way.

I am so grateful for the voices of these writers and their willingness to share their thoughts. I hope they bring you as much solace and insight as they've brought me.

As for how I'm coping, I'm taking things one day at a time while trying to plan for the future. I spent Saturday watching and listening to crowds break windows up and down my street, setting things on fire—including a police SUV less than a block away—and fearing for both my own safety and everyone else's. The streets momentarily felt lawless, but I knew the law was never very far away. While the heavily armed police may have been outnumbered at times, they were never outgunned. The image on this week's cover was taken from my balcony. It's one instant in a confrontation that felt like it went on forever, that is going on forever.

I don't know where we go from here, Chicago. But I do know who I want to lead the way. And who I hope will document it.

DERRICK CLIFTON

I WOKE UP lighter.

The early evening before, in my own little act of calm resistance, I took a stroll at a forest preserve, marveling at nature within the cityscape to clear my own mind, if only for a moment. I'd been exhausted while processing the brutal killing of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police department, and frustrated

at the news of Amy Cooper weaponizing her white womanhood to lie to New York police all because a Black man, Christian Cooper, asked her to leash her dog in Central Park.

But then I checked my Instagram. After seeing news that an Afro-Latinx CNN journalist was unjustly arrested by the Minnesota state police, I came across a message in my inbox from a white man who demanded I educate him about how race and privilege operate in America.

“The way you talk about white people is counterintuitive,” he wrote, referencing work of mine he encountered from six years ago: a crash course on simple yet meaningful ways that white people can challenge everyday racism in themselves or in their environment. One of the ten main points from the listicle asked white folks to “educate yourself about racism as much as possible before asking people of color for help.”

But he didn't want to do his own work. Instead, he wrote to demand I “explain myself” to him, questioning the validity of a 1,500-word article that had already explained quite a bit. He couldn't be bothered to even politely ask for further reading, which I might have obliged, even though I'm not obligated to offer titles that could be found within a few Google searches.

I was already exhausted by the week's news. His message drained me of anything that was left from the little bit of joy I woke up with. But then I decided to reclaim my time and my humanity. I hit “decline” on his message request, rendering the message automatically trashed without Instagram notifying him that I'd interacted with it.

Black people, and other people of color, encounter enough exhaustion from having to fortify against white supremacy and racism on any given day, in addition to the usual ups and downs of life. When news about racist policing and vigilantism dominates social media, trust and believe that Black folks are checking in on each other, processing their anger and disappointment at yet another act of injustice, or simply trying to give each other moments of levity.

When struck with grief, if not terror, the sadness and exasperation may take hold, but Black people are often left with little choice but to either numb themselves or find a way to choke it up while continuing with work and other daily obligations. We may not even get as much as a moment to cry, even though we feel like it. Some of us don't have the health care and money to take our troubles to a therapist, either. And with stay-at-home orders still in effect, even with a partial reopening,

Black people can't even take out their frustrations on a gym's punching bag. We may be even bobbing and weaving through social media and TV stations trying to avoid seeing footage of a white police officer fatally kneeling on a Black man's neck.

So, then, what would compel any white person to think that Black people—especially people they do not know—owe them the time and energy of explaining how race and privilege operate?

It's called entitlement.

It's the literal definition of pulling a “Karen” and demanding to speak to the manager. It's an act of privilege in itself to demand free labor from people whose ancestors were ripped from their homeland and forced to build the nation's economy on their backs, with no reparations yet to be given to their descendants.

Pay us our respect by, at the very least, respecting our space to grieve and process without having to assume the responsibility of entangling white thoughts and feelings about racism.

As the Menominee poet Chrystos wrote about the tears of white women, like those of Amy Cooper, “Give us our inch & we'll hand you a hanky.”

PRINCESS MCDOWELL

TINY HOMES. I'M coping with our current darkest timeline by researching absolutely everything tiny homes. Shipping container homes, tiny homes on trailers, skoolies, converted vans, sprinter vans, adult treehouses! Off-grid living, homesteads, convertible furniture that turns walls into tables, and couches into beds and storage. I've fallen down so many YouTube rabbit holes of TV shows and DIY builders that I'm determined to buy a school bus and “start my build process” soon, even though I haven't seen one builder of color.

Exploring the tiny living lifestyle started as a fun way for me and my partner to imagine ourselves somewhere else, surrounded by trees or water or mountains, instead of inside our 800-square-foot apartment. Tucked under trees or poised on a cliffside, we wouldn't need anything because everything we owned would always be right within reach, in a home that's paid for, that we designed and built custom. With the next big economic depression barreling toward us, I suspect more people will try to “go tiny” when they can't pay rent. I've seen some pretty beautiful spaces that, by house standards, are cheap as hell.

Be clear: I've been talking about tiny homes nonstop for three months. If I'm sitting too long, I start designing rooms around the furniture I own or think through how I can convert shelves into tables. I take inventory of all my stuff in my mind and decide what I'll sell or attempt to downsize. I look for perfect storage for the things I plan to keep.

When the virus hit, we were finally settling on our plans for 2020, and savings meant we could actually follow through with them. I used to tell people we were lowkey prepared when coronavirus grinded life as we knew it to a halt because our routine didn't need to drastically change, and our plans for finances were still pretty solid. But the past four days, as cities across the nation have burned, my friends have been shot with rubber bullets and have needed to seek shelter from police dogs and canine units. More people have been murdered by police officers, and I'm terrified to join the rebellions in the streets because I don't want to die from the virus. My moms called me to tell me not to go to a scheduled protest I hadn't even heard about yet. Because I was watching tiny home videos.

Thinking about life on a piece of land, building community with my partner and our friends and chosen family (who I'm slowly convincing to go tiny too) is how I survive. It's my escape from a world that rejoices in telling Black people that our pain and death and lives don't matter, that we are so small and insignificant, even when we say every name and lay it alongside 400 years of racial injustice.

When I'm scrolling through Craigslist looking for short buses, or watching videos of clever design tricks in small spaces, I'm transporting myself to a future where I can live free. How ironic it is that I desperately want to go tiny, to shrink the footprint of everything I've been working toward, in a country that already makes me feel so small.

EVAN F. MOORE

IN 1773, FRUSTRATED at the British crown's taxation and tyranny, American colonists—disguised as Mohawk Indians—boarded docked British ships and dumped 342 chests of tea imported by the British East India Company into Boston Harbor.

One of the colonists who participated in the Boston Tea Party, George Hewes, said this about the British reaction to their civil disobedience, which took nearly three hours to accomplish: "We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us."

"RAGE TAUGHT ME TO DEAL WITH MY PROBLEMS BECAUSE WHEN I DIDN'T, MY PROBLEMS DEALT WITH ME. RIGHT NOW, RACISM IS DEALING WITH AMERICA."

Three years earlier, in 1770, British soldiers murdered Crispus Attucks, a Black man, during the Boston Massacre, which was one of the events that led to the Revolutionary War. Attucks's killers never spent a day in prison.

And let me know if you've heard this scenario before: A Black man was gunned down by law enforcement. The men who murdered him were acquitted on the grounds of self-defense, and their defense attorney went on to bigger and better things—he's the second president of the United States, John Adams.

This is a train that is never late.

Black bodies are discarded, and the people responsible get to go home—sometimes, they build a career off of it.

The colonists are often described in American history as patriots, while modern-day patriots are pilloried by right-wing media at the behest of President Donald Trump.

Let me give whoever reads this essay a deep cut on American history.

The same people we're seeing in the streets of Minneapolis and other cities who are outraged at law enforcement for once again snuffing out a Black life have the same demand the colonists had for the British crown: freedom.

The colonists, like modern-day protesters, were at their wit's end.

Make no mistake, I do not cosign protests that turn violent and stray from the message at hand. However, if there were less police brutality, there would be no riots—except when your favorite ball club wins a championship.

The protests to reopen the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic don't pass the smell test.

And at that moment, "Blue Lives" didn't matter and any and all talk of "We're in this together" was discarded by white people who foolishly believe that their rights are being infringed upon.

This is America; it's what we do when all other means of communication fall on deaf ears.

What took place in Minnesota, Chicago, and other cities last week isn't a surprise to those who've been paying attention.

Why don't we call the colonists "social justice warriors"?

After all, history is often written by the victors, which means they have the money and the power to curate history in the way they see fit. For further clarification, look up the white conservative backlash against the *New York Times Magazine's* Pulitzer Prize-winning "The 1619 Project."

See how they cut up when Black folks run point on our own stories?

The people in Minnesota are running point on their freedom.

It's the American way.

TERRENCE F. CHAPPELL

THE DAMAGING EFFECTS of COVID-19 are symptoms of a much larger pandemic in America—racism. But because it's much easier for me to talk about it, let's discuss my rage.

James Baldwin's quote, "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time," cuts particularly deep today. Rage is an emotion that I have worked, and worked, and worked to control. While it has gotten me into a great deal of trouble in the past, my rage has evolved over time to inform my coping mechanisms.

When I'm self-assessing and optimizing, I'm really redirecting my rage in a way that acknowledges it, is sustainable, and moves me forward. I don't care to navigate life enraged; that's a life not worth living. Racism will kill you, but so can rage.

Black Americans were already in a state of emergency before COVID-19, the crisis just amplified underlying issues. I won't list all the conditions we over-index in, because I think we could all use less bad news. I'm balancing being desensitized versus internalizing this

saturation of police brutality, villainization, and senseless violence.

The murder of Ahmaud Arbery unnerved my spirit. Since shelter-in-place, I've taken up jogging outside as a healthy escape. Ahmaud wasn't granted this escape solely because of the color of his skin. When I jogged that day in honor of what would've been his 26th birthday, I felt a very familiar feeling—rage.

I went to a dark space and almost forgot about my own humanity. But that's not who I am. Just because there are people who have no sense of humanity doesn't mean I forget mine. I refuse to let this world change me, and I attribute this relentless sense of self to my parents and Buddhist practice.

Similar to millions of other Black families, my parents prepared my sister and I for a world that isn't prepared for us. They laid a foundation of awareness and resiliency that continue to serve and course me out of setbacks, challenges, and at times a toxic culture. I also practice Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism.

As a member of Soka Gakkai International, the lay organization of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism, I chant *nam-myoho-renge-kyo* daily. I chant for human revolution, which is what Soka Gakkai describes as a "never-ending process of continual self-improvement. It describes a Buddhist way of life that eternally seeks growth and personal development. It is about how much we are growing and improving right now rather than what we have achieved in the past."

Chanting has enabled me to center my energy and prevent it from going to extremes. Saying *nam-myoho-renge-kyo* rhythmically formulates a personal awareness that transcends what it is aware of.

I'm grateful for the most basic necessities. My family and friends are safe and healthy. I'm still working; I have clean water and food. I take breaks from the daily news cycle because, frankly, it's depressing and repetitive. I just finished an amazing book, *The Untethered Soul* by Michael A. Singer, which guides readers on sustaining an inner peace.

I chant for this country every day. I chant for compassionate leadership that will unite, not polarize. I chant that America will uproot systemic racism and prioritize our nation's most resilient communities.

Rage taught me to deal with my problems because when I didn't, my problems dealt with me. Right now, racism is dealing with America. And speaking from personal experience and the current state of our culture, racism will continue to terrorize America until the country deals with it on an institutional level. 📌

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Interiors
from Julia
Carusillo's
collection
JULIA
CARUSILLO

DESIGN

Inside the intricate worlds of Polly Pocket

An interview with collector and Instagrammer Julia Carusillo

By MEGAN KIRBY

Oh, to quarantine inside a Polly Pocket, safe and enclosed, all the comforts of home sculpted in colorful plastic. Browsing the Instagram account @polly_pick_pocket might be the next best thing. Logan Square-based artist Julia Carusillo works as a set and exhibit designer, creating sets and displays for theaters, nature centers, and aquariums—which gives her a particular appreciation for miniature worlds. On the popular Instagram, she posts soothing ASMR “tours” of Polly Pocket interiors from her collection. Her manicured nails click

against the clamshells. The cases open to reveal tiny, interactive worlds inside: an 80s-kitsch surf shack, a pastel fairy cave, a water park with a winding pink slide, a hair salon with a tiny checkerboard floor. The account’s tagline is “I bet you had the same one!”

With a shout-out from Jezebel and 21,500 Instagram followers (and counting), Carusillo has tapped into an online world of 90s nostalgia, toy collectors, and design buffs. She talked to us about the appeal of miniatures, the toys’ influence on her own art, and which Polly Pock-

et clamshell she’d recommend for sheltering in place.

Megan Kirby: Where do you get your Polly Pockets?

Julia Carusillo: My biggest haul that I’ve ever gotten was a woman on Craigslist who was selling about 15 of the clamshells. That’s where I got the bulk of mine, right when I began collecting again [about five years ago]. I also get them on eBay. I’ve only found them in a thrift store a few times. Those are the golden moments, when you find them out in the wild. That’s only happened to me twice. I have notifications for this estate sale website, and sometimes people will be selling them. But somehow people know that they’re valuable, and so often when I get to the estate sale they’re already gone or they’re super overpriced.

How do you fit into the wider Polly Pocket social media world?

Well, I’m friends on Instagram with all of these accounts. I think my account is different because I don’t collect the dolls at all. I only collect the clamshells. I have probably a hundred dolls that have come with some of the kits. But I don’t seek out complete sets the way that other accounts do. I care a lot more about the architecture of the actual toy than I do about the dolls.

What draws you to the clamshell structures?

I’m a set and exhibit designer. The world of miniatures has always been super interesting to me. In school and in my professional life, I make tactile and digital models. So, I love the intricacy of the architecture of the sets. They’re so complex and detailed. It’s amazing that they can get that level of detail with the size of these things.

How do Polly Pockets fit into art history?

I love the *Venus of Willendorf* and all of the miniature statuettes throughout art history. They’re so cute. When you go to the Asian wing in the Art Institute and see all of the tiny little pieces there that are carved out of jade. I just love that.

It makes me think of the Thorne Miniature Rooms at the Art Institute, too.

That was always a major destination for me. I grew up in the suburbs, and we would go and visit those all the time. My mom loves miniatures too, and so does my sister. The Thorne Rooms are the best. I went a month ago—well, I guess it’s quarantine so it was more like three months ago. I went and visited them, and they’re just so beautiful.



Julia Carusillo and one of her clamshells © JULIA CARUSILLO

How do Polly Pockets influence your design work?

My dream job would honestly be to design Polly Pocket worlds. I do embroidery, and I've done really complex embroidery of different Polly Pockets. And I guess that seeing the level of detail you can get out of molded plastic has made it clear to me that I can get that level of detail from the things that I make.

How would you describe the Polly Pocket aesthetic?

Super 80s, early 90s. Polly iconically has a short perm, which I love. The molded plastic is just so iconic to me. Not only is there molded plastic, but there are stickers for the even-more-tiny details like what you'd see out of Polly's window. They have a ski chalet where you can see the mountains, things like that. They're their own little worlds, and I think that's what makes them so special, aesthetically.

What are your favorite specific details?

One of my favorite details that's in a couple different compacts are these little marble statues, but they're done in the style of what the Polly dolls look like. So it'll be a classical statue but it has the same facial features as one of the dolls.

I love that.

This one is probably the most popular Polly that I see for sale online, which is a really big pink star—it's bigger than most of the other compacts—and it's really special. The part that opens up that is perpendicular to your desk is the night sky. And it has hot air balloons and a Ferris wheel, and the stars behind them light up, and the little compartments for people move in a circle. When they have so many moving parts, it's just like, how on earth did you design this? They amaze me.

If you had to quarantine in one Polly Pocket set, which one would you choose?

I was thinking about this a lot. Definitely the ski chalet. There are a few ski chalets, and there's a Pollyville one that's like a little house. There are icicles dripping off of it. Little pine trees. Stuff like that. But there's also one I have that has a little ski slope built into it, and it comes with a sled. It's a gorgeous little world, so cozy and warm.

Then, my all-time favorite Polly Pocket is this little pink suitcase—it's called Polly in Paris. And it has a view of the Eiffel Tower, it has the little statue I was talking about. It has an elevator, a fainting couch, a little courtyard. It's like, this is the place to be, for sure. 📺

🐦 @megankirb

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Poet Caroline Watson brings the open mike *Grandma's House* to everyone's house. © RUDY SCHIEDER

LIT

Poetry at a distance

Poets come together to share the joy, pain, and hope from the pandemic in a new video project.

By **ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI**

Open mikes have gone dark amid the pandemic, but creativity has taken to a virtual stage. For local poet Caroline Watson, who runs the monthly poetry open mike *Grandma's House* at the Martin, sharing work from the poetry community feels essential to this moment.

Since late March, Watson has visited various Chicago neighborhoods to record poets reading new material from their porch for her new *Grandma's House* video series that debuted in April. With help from her boyfriend, Watson has recorded, edited, and produced six episodes so far, honoring the six-foot-distance rule by way of a large boom mike that separates them to catch the outside sound. “The idea of me with this giant boom mike, which visually shows the distance, was the best option,” Watson laughs. “It’s been fun to be my little one-man sound crew, and I’m learning I do not have the arm strength to be a boom-mike operator.”

Watson says her project provides a creative

space and serves the community in a time when artists are struggling and can’t perform in public. It’s transformed *Grandma's House* into each poet’s house, giving them the stage to share their work, much like the physical open mike would. In a time when creatives are taking to social media and Zoom calls to host virtual shows, she wanted to make sure her project didn’t add chaos to digital quarantine-related content but instead be in person as much as possible to maintain the spirit of her open mike.

The poets in the series have been featured at Watson’s shows in the past, but she says getting to see where they live has been a special experience. “Getting to go to their homes and seeing a little slice of their lives, in a way that I would otherwise not have done, has been a warm and joyful spot in all of this nonsense and madness,” she says.

Watson, who lives in Uptown, has traveled to the west, south, and north sides of the city to spotlight poets such as Billy Tuggle,

who lives in Park Manor in Greater Grand Crossing. Also a teaching and performance artist, Tuggle shared his untitled poem for his daughter Carmendy on the fourth episode of the video series. Carmendy, whom her father calls “a performance kid” and who is on a competitive dance team, is in the video, sitting at the window listening to the poem.

Tuggle’s poem, which he wrote the first day that Chicago Public Schools closed in March, is a response to the current moment and how it has affected him and his daughter. She is finishing first grade and coming to grips with not seeing her friends, not performing, and not going to the Disney store.

“To look at family, to look at community, and to look at the person first—because everything is happening to the person first—was the most appropriate piece to read,” says Tuggle, who has been in creation mode since the shutdown, writing 63 poems over 35 consecutive days.

He calls Watson’s project a great creative distraction that helps people stay balanced, as well as a display of pandemic thoughts percolating from all over the city that go beyond health and money. “This is a rare time in society, in my almost 50 years on this planet, where we are in this together, and here is the chance for people to acknowledge it,” he says.

Creating space for diversity and these feelings is why Kwyn Townsend Riley was privileged to be part of Watson’s project. Townsend Riley, who performs as Kwynology and lives in Roseland, was featured in

episode five and shared her poem about the heaviness the pandemic has brought to the west and south sides, highlighting longtime racial injustices. While she says she initially felt vulnerable reading on her porch and sharing her intimate space with the camera, Watson’s project reminded Townsend Riley that her neighborhood is just as important as more popular neighborhoods.

“I felt proud of where I come from,” the poet says. “Roseland is beautiful if you take the time to actually see it.”

Being part of this series has encouraged Townsend Riley to be creative without feeling guilty if she can’t produce as much. The poet, author, and speaker had a big lineup of events ready until the pandemic cut it down; now, she’s leaning into balancing creation with reflection. “Caroline gave me a visual to reflect on for years to come, and I am honored to have that,” she says.

Watson says the poets represent the resilience that lives in the community and their individual beauty. “I am just a piece of the puzzle in the Chicago poetry community, and I am grateful to be part of the puzzle,” she says.

Episodes are released on the *Grandma's House* Instagram, and Watson plans to publish at least six more between now and July. She asks for donations via Venmo to keep the videos going and to support the poets in the series. 📺

🐦 @ArielParrella



Free Street Theater's *Still/Here* COURTESY FREE STREET

STREAMING REVIEWS

A trifecta for times of terror

Three streaming productions to ponder for pandemic and protest

By **KERRY REID**

The world of quarantine is paradoxical, with our immediate environments smaller and more constrained even as the big existential issues grow ever more ominous. What does it mean to live, to love, to dream in such circumstances?

A trifecta of plays I watched online recently, all with Chicago roots and all recorded from the Time Before COVID-19, address those questions in dramaturgically divergent but compelling ways. Collectively, they've probably affected me more than any of the other streaming work I've seen so far in quarantine, even if they don't boast the slick recording quality of, say, the National Theatre.

Gentrification, William Blake, and Julia

Child might not seem to have much in common. But Free Street Theater's *Still/Here*, Catastrophic Theatre of Houston's *There Is a Happiness That Morning Is* (written by Chicago playwright and Theater Oobleck co-founder Mickle Maher), and TimeLine Theatre's *To Master the Art* all created an interesting conversation inside my head—which is where I, like too many of us, am spending entirely too much time lately.

Still/Here's subtitle—*Manifestos for Joy and Survival*—provides the roadmap for this 2019 show, filmed in August of last year and available for free through Vimeo. Created by the ensemble and directed by Free Street artistic director Coya Paz, the show is a series of vignettes raising evergreen questions

about how segregation and discrimination have shaped Chicago's history.

Just seeing a crowd of people gathering on a sunny day in West Town's Walsh Park is enough to trigger nostalgia in a time of pandemic. But the show also begins with the cast giving a rapid-fire rundown of “everything we remember that we love about Chicago.” The list includes outdoor water parks, Chinatown, roller skating on the south side, SummerDance at Michigan and Balbo, the smell of chocolate downtown, and music. Music everywhere.

The opening vignette's premise is that we're hearing “final logs” from a city on the brink of apocalypse. But for most of its hour-plus running time, *Still/Here*, as the name suggests, is about being in the present, even as the forces of gentrification push the ensemble around.

Literally. In one of the most engaging segments, the troupe enacts a game of musical chairs using a collection of milk crates representing public investment. As new “improvements” arrive—a school that is actually a cop academy, “affordable” housing that is anything but—the crates disappear one by

one, and the people remaining try to figure out how to all fit into the space that is left.

But somehow, this show from pre-COVID days and created long before the current wave of nationwide protests in the wake of the police slaying of George Floyd hit me as an even more vibrant and vital call to action now. Can this pandemic help us begin to address historic inequities in Chicago and beyond in health care, housing, education, and criminal justice? “Fear is what gentrification looks like. Death is what erasure looks like,” one ensemble member tells us. With both death rates from the coronavirus and arrests for violating social distancing restrictions hitting communities of color harder than primarily white neighborhoods, that observation straddles the line between epigram and epitaph, even as the show (based on interviews with 400 residents from all over the city) straddles the line between documentary theater and agitprop, with warmhearted doses of personal anecdote tossed in.

I saw Maher's play four separate times in three different productions with Theater Oobleck, beginning with its first production in 2011 at the now-gone Storefront Theater downtown. So it's safe to say it's one of my favorite pieces to emerge from Chicago in the last ten years. One of the upsides of being quarantined and watching streaming productions is that I can catch up with work from around the country and the world, and it was delightful to revisit Maher's piece, available free through Catastrophic's YouTube channel, in the hands of a company wholly unknown to me.

As has been the case with Maher's work now for several years, through such shows as *The Hunchback Variations* and *The Stranger*, *There Is a Happiness That Morning Is* uses a sterile institutional background environment (and one dedicated to carefully structured public discourse) as a way to explode that environment and expose the rotting beams holding it up.

Two academics and longtime lovers, Bernard and Ellen, are delivering intertwined lectures on William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* in the aftermath of having been caught in flagrante on the lawn of their small decaying liberal arts college. Their lectures are supposed to take the form of apology for having sex in public, on orders from the dean. But though Bernard, awash in

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continued from 17

midlife afterglow (“I happy am,” he burbles, quoting Blake’s “Infant Joy”) and fresh from a night in the woods, is more than willing to appease the powers that be to get things back to normal, Ellen is not.

We soon learn that she’s dying of an abdominal tumor, which makes her choice of poem for the day, “The Sick Rose,” even more achingly ironic. And of course, even more of a gut punch for us now, as we try to hide from virulence. “The invisible worm, That flies in the night,” indeed. And while their escapade on the quad has reinvigorated Bernard, Ellen thinks the ensuing public humiliation finally killed her love for him.

Catastrophic’s production, recorded in May of 2013 and directed by Jason Nodler, marks the first time I’ve seen any Oobleck show performed by a different troupe. I feel in many ways as if I’ve grown up alongside this company. The first Oobleck show I ever saw was in the winter of 1988—Jeffrey Dorchen’s *The Slow and Painful Death of Sam Shepard*, written long before any of us had an inkling that the American playwright would indeed have a slow death from ALS in 2017. I mourned with them last year as Oobleck founding member and my old friend Danny Thompson succumbed to a rare genetic disorder. If I have any yardstick for what truly original dramaturgy looks like, it began with Oobleck’s mash-up of the high- and lowbrow, the political and the personal, the epic and the ridiculous.

Happiness, written in rhyming couplets, arose out of what Maher described in a recent YouTube discussion with Catastrophic as “a real desire to write something with more humor and more sex in it.” And it is funny—at least, as funny as anything about death, love, and trying to find room for one last chance at honest self-revelation can be. In other words, it’s howlingly, horribly hilarious. And also bittersweet and wise. Amy Bruce and Troy Schulze as Ellen and Bernard bring out all the nuances of nostalgia, rage, and finally desperate need for connection driving the lovers, staring down the twin existential terrors of unemployment and death. That’s as relatable a set of circumstances as we’ll ever find these days.

“Hearts can’t say what’s in their now when dizzied by their future,” Ellen says late in the play. As we stay stuck in our now, dizzied and terrified by the future, the idea that perhaps salvation lies in choosing joy over fear, mo-

ment to moment and as best as we can, has never felt more noble.

TimeLine’s *To Master the Art*, now available on a ticketed paid basis for remote viewing through June 7, also celebrates the love of a couple of a certain age. Here, it’s Julia and Paul Child, as seen through the eyes of playwrights William Brown, who also directs, and Doug Frew, and endearingly embodied by Karen Janes Woditsch and Craig Spidle. Originally produced at TimeLine’s home space in Lakeview ten years ago, this recording is from the encore presentation in fall of 2013 at the Broadway Playhouse. I saw the first outing, but not this revival. But to my eyes, the proscenium staging loses little of the inaugural production’s intimacy in translation, and with the original cast all on board, it’s, well, a feast.

Woditsch’s Julia is initially an awkward fish-out-of-water in Paris, where Spidle’s Paul has been stationed, courtesy of the United States Information Agency, to bring the best of American culture to postwar Europe. If you’ve seen *Julie & Julia*, the story will be familiar, though Woditsch, like Meryl Streep, is far too gifted an actor to indulge in mere mimicry of Child’s famously flutey voice. But the play feels poignant now for different reasons, and not just because some of us (though not me, sadly) are using time at home to beef up our own culinary skills, or wondering how to reinvent ourselves in a strange new world.

Paul especially is hounded by the McCarthyites in the State Department who are bent on sniffing out the merest whiff of communism, and Spidle’s layered take as a man increasingly frustrated by the conflict between his high-minded aspirations and the dull-witted (if not outright malicious) limitations imposed by bureaucrats feels bang on the nose; it also paired nicely with Ellen and Bernard’s dean dilemma in *Happiness*. And like the Blake scholars, Julia and Paul also find salvation in their love for each other and other pleasures of the mind and palate.

“Here’s to mastering the art of living life to its fullest and enjoying every damn minute of it,” Spidle’s Paul proposes near the end of the enchanting TimeLine production. I didn’t cry the first time I heard that line onstage. But watching on my laptop at home, the tears sprang to my eyes. **R**

@kerryreid



The Rosina Project  VIN REED

FESTIVALS

Pivot in the pandemic

A multidisciplinary arts fest lives up to its name.

By **KERRY REID**

Pivot Arts has been an incubator for multidisciplinary performance for nearly a decade, and its annual festival, which usually takes over several venues in Edgewater and Uptown, is the public culmination of those development efforts. But with the COVID-19 shutdown, the company knew they had to, well, pivot. And so this year's festival, running June 5-30, is a virtual feast of dance, theater, music, and solo performance.

Though the recorded pieces in the festival will go "live" on the site at specific dates and times from June 5-11, the content will remain available through the end of the month.

For Pivot's founder and director Julieanne Ehre, moving online made sense. "We produce and present adventurous and contemporary performance. So we are not a traditional theater company or dance company. Our whole purpose is to reimagine what's

possible in performance." And though some of the festival's previously scheduled work "made no sense to be online," Ehre says that they will be rescheduled for next year. Meantime, the artists who are going forward with the current incarnation will be paid the same as they would have been for the live version.

One of the "silver linings" of the reimagined Pivot Festival for Ehre is the ability to bring in artists from outside Chicago, including New York-based Obie Award-winning solo performer David Cale, who has been performing at the Goodman for decades. He's appearing as part of the (*Un*)touched series of short video performances, debuting on June 8 and curated by Ehre and Tanya Palmer, the former director of play development at the Goodman who currently heads the MFA program in dramaturgy at Indiana University. Palmer and Ehre asked Cale and

several multigenre performers (including dancer and *Reader* contributor Irene Hsiao) to create short video performances reflecting on "both the absence and impossibility of touch and moments of connection during the quarantine."

One of the rescheduled artists is Alex Alpharaoh, a solo performer and writer from Los Angeles whose work reflects the experiences of undocumented Americans. But though he isn't presenting new work this year, the festival kicks off on Friday with a screening at 6 PM of Lidie Arevalo's documentary *Alpharaoh*, which captures the national tour of the artist's solo piece *WET: A DACamented Journey*. Alpharaoh will participate in a Zoom meet-and-greet as part of a fundraiser for Pivot. Tickets for that event are \$25, but all other festival offerings are free, though of course donations are welcome.

Friday also features a livestream dance party led by artists from *The Rosina Project*, a collaboration between Chicago Fringe Opera and BraveSoul Movement street dance troupe that premiered in last year's festival and that recasts Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* as "a story of female empowerment and interracial friendship." The livestream will include songs and dances from that piece and an invitation to audiences watching from home to join in.

For Vershawn Sanders-Ward, founding artistic director of Red Clay Dance Company, the festival going online provided an opportunity for her company to revisit a piece she originally created in 2017, *Art of Resilience*, which was further reimagined last year as a site-specific piece, *Art of Resilience 2.0*, for the DuSable Museum's Roundhouse venue. That version reflected on the strength and vibrancy of Black communities in Chicago, as well as the role of segregation and violence against them. In *Resilience Reimagined*, Red Clay dancers embody the work they did last year from their homes and other site-specific places.


Says Sanders-Ward, "The piece is about claiming space, particularly for Black and Brown bodies. So my first thought was about how we are relating to our home spaces, being kind of confined to spaces that are our own, that we created, but that we may or may not spend that much time in."

She adds, "I'm asking them to be vulnera-

ble and transparent. Letting people see your home space—that's a very sacred space." And yet, as Sanders-Ward points out, the police slaying of Breonna Taylor in her Louisville home shows how easily that sacred space can be violated for Black citizens. While the pieces the dancers perform in the festival may not explicitly reflect on Taylor's death, Sanders-Ward says, "It's just a part of our lived experience that I'm sure the dancers carry with them and it will appear as it makes sense in their ideas about resilience and space." The festival will also feature a recording of the DuSable performance, so viewers can see the new pieces (which debut on Saturday) in conversation with the earlier performance.

Director Seth Bockley and writer Drew Paryzer's *Superfluxus*, originally intended as an immersive installation and performance (inspired in part by escape rooms) taking place throughout the Edge Theater building on Broadway, transformed into a choose-your-own-adventure virtual experience, set in a "surreal and sinister lunar landscape in the year 2120."

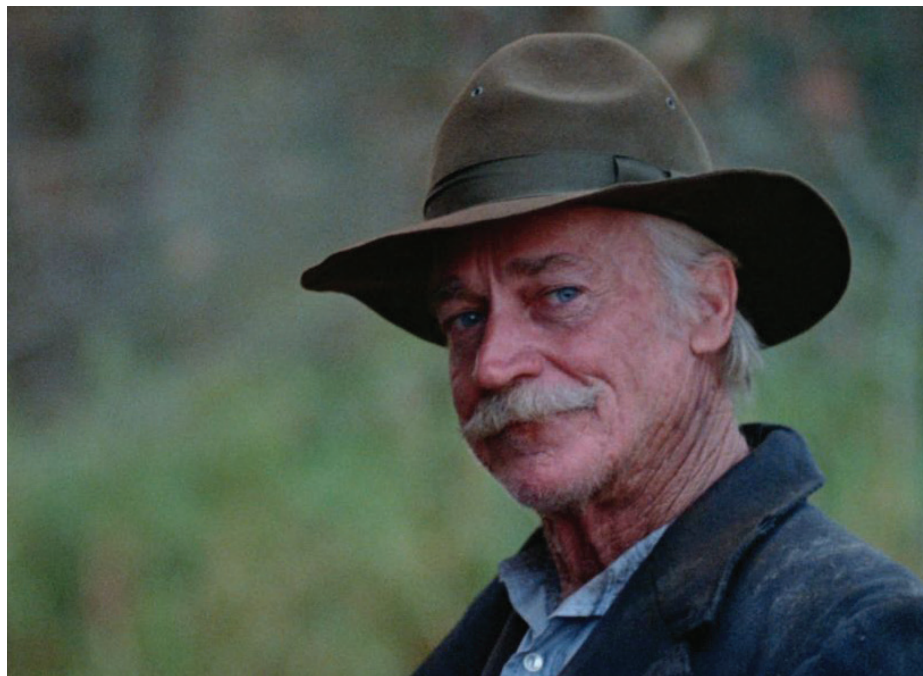
"This is not a work that is a commentary on the present pandemic or situation," says Bockley. "But it does inevitably reflect some of the preoccupations that we all have around isolation." With the help of a tech team that includes video designer Tony Churchill and games designer Melissa Schlesinger, who has also designed escape rooms, Bockley and Paryzer were able to translate their original concept in a way that Bockley hopes will "plant the seeds for that future live version."

For Ehre, the virtual festival can't fully fill the gap left by the shutdown of museums and theaters, which is why many of the artists scheduled online this year will be returning live when it's safe to do so. But she says, "The idea that access to the arts is no longer in existence is a complete tragedy for me. I want to make sure that people still have some access to art. And not just archival work, but to things that are being created right now." 

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NOW PLAYING

RR *Becky*

Lulu Wilson remains a force to be reckoned with. After an unforgettable performance in 2016's *Ouija: Origin of Evil*, Wilson has continued applying her powerhouse acting skills and a noted interest in genre work to dark projects, making *Becky* her perfect match for now. A gore-filled home invasion thriller, the movie follows Becky's weekend at a lake house with her father (Joel McHale), his new girlfriend (Amanda Brugel), and the girlfriend's son (Isaiah Rockcliffe). Things deteriorate when a group of convicts (led by Kevin James) arrives to wreak havoc. It's easy to expect one of the adults in the room will assume the hero role—most would put their money on Brugel over McHale—but it's Becky who channels her teen angst into

exceedingly clever and increasingly cruel ways to fight back. Watching Wilson doing so from the start and with a bit of a smirk is wholly compelling. —**BECCA JAMES** *R, 100 min.* In wide release on VOD and in drive-ins

RR *The Grey Fox*

Bill Miner—sometimes called the Gentleman Robber or the Grey Fox—was an American outlaw in the late 19th and early 20th centuries who became something of a folk hero due to how well he was said to behave while committing his crimes. Reflecting its benevolent protagonist, this 1982 revisionist western about Miner by Australian-born Canadian director Philip Borsos (working from a script by John Hunter) is considerably humane. The film follows Miner (played by Richard Farnsworth) after he finishes a 30-year prison sentence for holding

The Grey Fox

up stagecoaches; inspired by Edwin S. Porter's 1903 silent film *The Great Train Robbery*, he decides to start robbing trains. Miner settles in the small town of Kamloops, British Columbia, where he wins the hearts of the locals, including feminist photographer Kate Flynn (Jackie Burroughs)—eventually, however, the dreaded Pinkertons catch up with him. Between Miner's refined nature, a refreshing love story, and picturesque cinematography by Frank Tidy, this goes down pretty easy. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** *92 min.* Streaming on Music Box Virtual Cinema starting 6/5

RR *Tommaso*

If you made a film about your life, would you be kind to your past self? Abel Ferrara's answer to that question, *Tommaso*, is complicated. A previous collaborator with Ferrara in *Pasolini*, Willem Dafoe embodies a fictionalized version of the provocative filmmaker—he's six years sober, a recent transplant to Rome with a much younger wife and their daughter (played by Ferrara's actual wife and daughter), and is trying to forgive himself for his past so he can finally move on and be the family man he never could be. Dafoe is a dynamo in an otherwise muted and low-budget production, carrying the narrative with a cocktail of frantic and isolated neuroticism that feels like it will explode at any moment. The film's swirling camerawork, fantastical hallucinations, and largely improvised framework make watching *Tommaso* feel like you're watching a man unravel in real time. It would be easy for *Tommaso* to feel self-indulgent—but it never asks for your pity. Instead, *Tommaso* embodies the sometimes poetic, sometimes unforgiving parts of being human and the challenges of grappling with one's complicated legacy. —**CODY CORRALL** *6/5-6/11, Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa*

RR *You Don't Nomi*

Showgirls's legacy lives on in Jeffrey McHale's fascinating documentary *You Don't Nomi*. Much like the

1995 film itself, the documentary offers no clear-cut conclusions as it details *Showgirls*'s divisiveness. Instead, *You Don't Nomi* compiles a set of smart and impassioned contributors' wide-ranging thoughts on everything from the extensive use of mirrors to explore ideas of reflection and doubling to the shared through-line of Elizabeth Berkley's *Saved by the Bell* character Jessie Spano and her role as *Showgirls*'s protagonist Nomi Malone. And while many of the opinions are contrary to one another, each is as considered and engaging as the next, making for an enlightening and entertaining experience. An exercise in thoughtful fandom, *You Don't Nomi* stokes *Showgirls*'s fire in a way that will leave viewers craving even more discourse about a film that has captivated audiences for the past 15 years. —**BECCA JAMES** *92 min.* In wide release on VOD starting 6/9

RR *Yourself and Yours*

This 2016 feature by prolific South Korean auteur Hong Sang-soo (his 18th overall) revolves around a case of mistaken identity—or does it? A young man (Kim Ju-hyuk) learns from his friends that his girlfriend (the beguiling Lee Yoo-young) has been seen out drinking with other men. He confronts her and she denies it, kicking into effect a confusing, albeit lighthearted, quasi-farce centered on the perception of this woman—as well as her supposed twin, and maybe even another woman altogether—by her boyfriend and a couple other men (played by Hong regulars Kwon Hae-hyo and Yoo Jun-sang) she encounters throughout. Something of an upturned riff on Luis Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), in which two actresses famously played the same character, the film's formal trickery is both absorbing and inscrutable. Hong's films often give the impression of an intricate simplicity, his intentions laid bare but sometimes difficult to interpret. I recommend watching this more than once, but to what end, I'm still not sure. In Korean with subtitles. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** *86 min.* 6/5-6/11, Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Couch

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#CHIMUSIC35

Rhymefest's greatest moment in Chicago music history

The veteran rapper and activist remembers an all-star festival by and for the community.

By CHE "RHYMEFEST" SMITH AND AYANA CONTRERAS

Not only is 2020 the Year of Chicago Music, it's also the 35th year for the nonprofit Arts & Business Council of Chicago (A&BC), which provides business expertise and training to creatives and their organizations citywide. To celebrate, the A&BC has launched the #ChiMusic35 campaign at ChiMusic35.com, which includes a public poll to determine the consensus 35 greatest moments in Chicago music history as well as a raffle to benefit the A&BC's work supporting creative communities struggling with the impact of COVID-19 in the city's disinvested neighborhoods.

Another part of the campaign is this *Reader* collaboration: a series spotlighting important figures in Chicago music serving as #ChiMusic35 ambassadors. This week, we hear from Oscar- and Grammy-winning rapper and activist Che "Rhymefest" Smith, cofounder

and creative director of the nonprofit Art of Culture (formerly Donda's House). A fixture in the Chicago hip-hop scene for decades, he's currently working on a new album as well as his memoir: both are titled *Love Lessons*.

This interview was conducted by Ayana Contreras, who's a DJ, a host and producer at WBEZ radio, and a columnist for *DownBeat* magazine.

Ayana Contreras: What's one of your favorite Chicago music moments?

Rhymefest: One of the most powerful, understated moments in Chicago music history of the last five years—and Kanye and I were just speaking about this a day ago—was an event called Aahh! Fest. It was created [in 2014] by Common and Donda's House, which was a

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nonprofit organization that myself and my then wife ran. The first day was Community Day, where vendors got to come out and give information and resources to the community. The first day was free for all the young people in the city to attend. Diggy Simmons performed with myself and Common.

But the second day you had Jennifer Hudson performing. You had Common. You had Kanye West. You had Twista. You had Lupe Fiasco. You had Crucial Conflict. The city had never seen most of its greatest hip-hop artists on one stage in one night. When Kanye came out and performed, he ran through his whole catalog with simply a guy with a keyboard and a guitar. It was a beautiful Chicago evening.

What we were able to all come together and do just showed a kind of unity, and the fulfillment of that type of promise. When I look and see what the Roots do in Philadelphia—they have a Roots Picnic that they do every year. Chicago hasn't had anything like that before it or anything like it since. No one really knows who throws Riot Fest. No one really knows who does Lollapalooza. I'll be damned if any of them give back to the community or gave back to the community.

This was something that was done for the community, by the community, and people who came from it. Aahh! Fest was one of the greatest two-day festival concerts that Chicago has seen in recent years. The only thing that can compare to it would be the Silver Room Block Party.

You named a who's who of Chicago artists who've achieved worldwide stardom. What do you think it is about Chicago that creates these people, these artists, this thing that the world sees as being special?

Well, I'm going to say this, but this extends to other genres of music. The people that migrated to Chicago from the south and brought gospel, that evolved into the way we do blues, that turned into the way that we express ourselves, the Africana way that we do house music—[we're the home] of house music, the home of the blues, the evolution of gospel, and the consciousness of hip-hop. That's what we are, especially when you look at the ones who truly have made it in hip-hop from Chicago. It is the consciousness of the genre. 

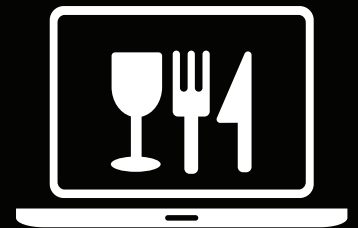
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PICK OF THE WEEK

Chicago rap star Polo G stands firm on his peak with *The Goat*

PHIL KNOTT

POLO G, *THE GOAT*Columbia
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CHICAGO RAPPER TAURUS BARTLETT, better known as Polo G, rose to national prominence so quickly that new listeners could be forgiven for assuming he's been a star for at least a few years. He broke out in January 2019 with "Pop Out," a collaboration with New York MC Lil Tjay, where Bartlett mixes irrepressible joy and gut-wrenching sorrow in prismatic pop. Bartlett maintained that single's narrative gravitas and melodic sweetness for the entirety of his debut album, June 2019's *Die a Legend*. In early May, he announced his follow-up, *The Goat* (Columbia), on which he displays more flexibility as a rapper. On "Go Stupid," producer Mike Will Made-It concocts an antagonistic vibe with metallic drums and austere keys, a mood that jibes better with the guests on the track, Stunna 4 Vegas and NLE Choppa, than it does with Bartlett himself. He sprays compact, burly lines tinged with a bit of his old melodic bliss, performing with the vigor of an artist already hungry for the next challenge. —**LEOR GALIL**

STEVE EARLE, *GHOSTS OF WEST VIRGINIA*Columbia
store.newwestrecords.com/products/steve-earle-the-dukes-ghosts-of-west-virginia-cd

On April 5, 2010, a coal-dust explosion at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County, West Virginia, killed 29 miners. Though subsequent investigations found that a pervasive pattern of negligence and safety violations had led to the entirely preventable tragedy, in 2015 Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship got off with a slap on the wrist: a single misdemeanor conviction for conspiring to violate mine safety and health standards and a one-year prison sentence. In 2018 he unsuccessfully ran for Senate as a Republican and—lest anyone think he's the least bit repentant for his role in such a massive loss of life—he's currently running for president with the far-right-wing Constitution Party. The Upper Big Branch Mine disaster briefly cast a national light on Appalachia, including the big-business exploitation of local workers and natural resources, the bitter class divides among its communities, and the love-hate relationship its residents have with a fading industry that's shaped so much of the region's economy and cultural life. These conversations coalesce on Steve Earle's 20th studio album, *Ghosts of West Virginia*. He wrote seven of the ten songs on *Ghosts for Coal Country*, a play by "documentary theater" playwrights Erik Jensen and Jessica Blank that premiered at New York's Public Theater in early March. Earle adapted gospel, country, bluegrass, and blues to a narrative-song style, and while he played the material solo onstage during the play's run, on the album he's backed by his band, the Dukes. While some of his compositions, including "Heaven Ain't Goin' Nowhere" and "If I Could See Your Face Again," sound ancient, he makes the traditional "John Henry" his own (John Henry is also the name of one of Earle's sons, so I bet he's wanted to put his spin on that tune for a long time). Earle, who is well-known for his leftist leanings, has said that he wants to engage with people who aren't on his side of the political spectrum; in West Virginia, left-right divisions also play out in a decades-long struggle between those devoted to coal as a traditional way of life and those who have turned toward environmental activism and a postcoal economy. "Union, God and Country" is Earle's stab at creating dialog by finding shared ground in West Virginia's history of fierce labor battles, which is a source of pride for many locals. "Devil Put the Coal in the Ground" is a country-blues stomper that puts a dead-on folkloric spin on the contradiction of loving coal and hating it. The album's heart is probably the brooding, furious "It's About Blood," which ends with a spoken-word vigil: a recitation of the names of all 29 men who perished in the mine explosion. But Earle prevents the record from wallowing in despair—and helps protect it from accusations that it's the sort of poverty porn rightly criticized in the region—by lightening the mood with "Fastest Man Alive," which celebrates one of West Virginia's favorite sons, ace pilot Chuck Yeager. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

INDIGO GIRLS, *LOOK LONG*Rounder
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Singer-songwriters Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have

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MUSIC



Gia Margaret @ COURTESY THE ARTIST

been playing folk-rock guitar and singing harmonies together since the early 80s, when they were high school students in Decatur, Georgia. In 1985, they began performing as the Indigo Girls, and their earnest lyrics and dual guitars earned them a loyal and dedicated fan base that grew exponentially after the 1988 release of their self-titled second album (which was also their major-label debut). An Indigo Girls concert can feel like a fun night at summer camp: nearly everyone sings along to their songs. Their new 15th studio album, *Look Long*, doesn't stray too far from the template that the duo has established, but why mess with a formula that's worked for so long? Most of the songs on *Look Long* highlight the perspectives of middle-aged people reviewing their pasts with wistful affection: "When We Were Writers," for instance, is a heavy-handed, nostalgic ode to being young, creative, and "pulling all-nighters." I'm especially taken with the bitter-sweet ballad "Country Radio," where Saliers draws on her experience growing up gay in 1970s Georgia. The protagonist (whose gender is carefully unspecified) says that every night after a shift at the food court of the local mall, they listen to country songs about idyllic boy-girl romances and get swept away in their stories—even though the songs are selling a heterosexual fantasy that isn't for them. "I want to know what it's like to fall in love / Like most of the rest of the world," Saliers sings. "I'm just a gay kid in a small town / Who loves country radio." *Look Long* is filled with the sort of didactic lyrics that folk rockers who wear their hearts on their sleeves can't resist (and for which they're often derided). But I'm grateful that the Indigo Girls are still laying it all out there—there's always a small-town kid who needs to hear it. —SALEM COLLO-JULIN

GIA MARGARET, MIA GARGARET Orindal

giamargaret.bandcamp.com/album/mia-gargaret

Chicago singer-songwriter Gia Margaret makes what she calls "sleep rock." Its mellow vibes make it well-suited for early-morning or late-night listening, while its catchy melodies and driving beats can get heads nodding—albeit gently. Margaret's 2018 debut full-length, *There's Always Glimmer*, creates inviting atmospheres with crisp production and varied instrumentation: Margaret's double-tracked vocals glow amid a calming mix of electronic drums, piano, and guitar. She builds upon that foundation on her new second album, *Mia Gargaret* (Orindal), though unlike its predecessor, it's largely an instrumental record—she sings only on the closing track, "Lesson," and occasionally samples voices, including a lecture by British philosopher Alan Watts. Margaret made it while recovering from an illness that robbed her of her singing voice for about half of 2019; rather than put music aside, she adapted in order to move forward. Opening track "Apathy," released as an early single, channels Mort Garson's *Plantasia*, with a hypnotic looped arpeggio of synth and piano that evokes stillness as well as growth. Near the end, Margaret introduces a sample from one of her vocal-therapy sessions, where she's dealing with the loss of her primary instrument but staying determined and optimistic. Elsewhere she translates her compositional voice to other instruments: on "Lakes," a field recording of waves ushers in acoustic and effected guitars. No matter the tools she uses, these songs convey patience and a thoughtful way of developing ideas. Margaret's choice to conclude the album with "Lesson" suggests that she'll eventually return to the singer-songwriter style of *There's Always Glimmer*, but I hope she also continues to explore the approaches here. Necessity is

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MUSIC



Mother Nature © NICCI BRIANN

continued from 23

the mother of invention, and *Mia Gargaret* makes it clear that it's necessary for her to make music any way she can. —IZZY YELLEN

MOTHER NATURE, *PORTALZ*

Closed Sessions

mothernaturebarz.bandcamp.com/album/portalz

Over the past few years, Chicago hip-hop duo Mother Nature have become so thoroughly embedded in several overlapping scenes that it could feel like they were always playing a show. And when the weather heated up, they sometimes got gigs bigger than any one scene: Subterranean booked them for Wicker Park Fest twice in a row, they won a spot on North Coast Music Festival's 2018 lineup, and last year they played an unofficial Pitchfork afterparty organized by multimedia outlet AMFM. This season, of course, nearly every musical gathering that helps flavor Chicago's summers has been postponed or canceled, but Mother Nature have nonetheless found a way to remind us that they're part of what makes bearing the city's tundra-like conditions for the other nine months so rewarding. On the new *Portalz* EP (their debut for Closed Sessions), rappers Klevah Knox and TRUTH navigate languid melodies in tracks built from sweltering synths, swaggering percussion, and nimble but understated bass lines. The record has an easygoing vibe, and Klevah and TRUTH frequently lean into it, unfurling half-sung vocals that stretch on like a summer day. They sound perfectly laid-back, but they rap with such precision that you can easily imagine them pivoting instantly into aggressive, fired-up verses. And even when they stick to a relaxed lilt, their voices can transform the

feel of a lackadaisical instrumental: they enliven the indolent melody of "Antidote" with a few blustery bars that burst like fireworks. —LEOR GALIL

NATION OF LANGUAGE, *INTRODUCTION, PRESENCE*

Self-released

nationoflanguage.bandcamp.com/album/introduction-presence

When the present is a slog at best and the future seems aimed off the edge of a cliff, a pair of rose-colored glasses turned toward the past can be irresistible—at any rate, that's how Brooklyn trio Nation of Language approached their debut album, *Introduction, Presence*. Powered by chockablock synths, hypnotic bass grooves, and the shadowy croon of bandleader Ian Devaney (imagine Frank Sinatra at golden-era Neo), the record exhumes all the 80s new-wave hallmarks worth reviving. The group cobbled the album together over two years, popping in and out of the studio with no clear agenda besides quelling their nostalgia; they tinkered with unfamiliar instruments until melodies emerged in revelatory flares. While Nation of Language's glossy synth patches and splintered drumbeats bow to postpunk progenitors, their lyrical subject matter is timeless: city streets peppered with emotional landmines ("On Division St."), the lifelong tug-of-war between self-improvement and self-sabotage ("Indignities"), and love so sweet it can melt your teeth away ("Rush & Fever"). In a March interview with Boston-based online magazine Vanyaland, Devaney said, "I hoped in making this album to create the space to openly ache for something." The space where Nation of Language have staked their claim

is like a world unto itself, one that sparkles like silver and where a night's mistakes can be washed away with a torrent of rain—and that's exactly the type of utopia any dance-floor disciple would ache for. —SHANNON NICO SHREIBAK

NO AGE, *GOONS BE GONE*

Drag City

noage.bandcamp.com/album/goons-be-gone

No Age have always been great at making very little sound like a whole lot. Since they began blending influences from hardcore punk and noise rock with indie-rock catchiness 15 years ago, the Los Angeles-based duo have been on the cutting edge of cool—they've always seemed a step ahead of their peers in the guitar-rock world. On the brand-new *Goons Be Gone*, No Age's second full-length for Drag City, guitarist and singer Randy Randall and drummer and singer Dean Spunt have created their most lush and thoughtful music yet, proving that their well of greatness isn't going to dry up anytime soon. This time around the band dive into psychedelic rock, layering dreamy guitars to create spacey textures and soundscapes; meanwhile their vocal melodies lean into mod textures, with equal parts attitude and smooth hooks. No Age have always fleshed out the two-member dynamic so well, and they've upped their game even further on *Goons Be Gone*—sometimes they break away from their minimalism, and they sound like a six-piece band cutting loose. When they pair their new sense of pop grandeur with the inventive guitar leads, pushy drums, and unstoppable energy of their signature sound, No Age are bigger and better than ever. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

OPTIONS, *WIND'S GONNA BLOW*

Self-released

optionsmusic.bandcamp.com/album/winds-gonna-blow

Chicago punk multi-instrumentalist Seth Engel can deliver a sweet, melancholy riff so gracefully that you'd think he lives inside the guitar chords from Jawbreaker's *Dear You*. Engel, who records solo material under the name Options, is a busy young man about town. He drums with mathy progressive trio Pyramid Scheme as well as heavy indie-rockers Great Deceivers, and he's a member of several groups that are on pause, including Lifted Bells and Anthony Fremont's Garden Solutions. He also gets called up to play auxiliary roles on album sessions by local emo and punk acts; his recent credits include Retirement Party and Nature's Neighbor. On the other side of the board, he's a studio wiz who engineers, mixes, and masters music for a laundry list of Chicago DIY artists at his Bridgeport headquarters, Pallet Sound. Since debuting Options with 2014's *What You Want*, Engel has been cranking out emo-laden rock songs whose clean power-pop hooks bind together joy and woe, and he pulls it off with surgical precision. Options' sixth album, *Wind's Gonna Blow*, continues this strange, intoxicating balance of blissful euphoria and vague gloom. On "Blue," Engel transforms mundane sadness into an existential wound, oozing with fuzzy riffs and sullen singing, and cauterizes it with sharp guitar stabs and drum bursts—the music makes it feel possible to heal even when everyday grief won't stop. —LEOR GALIL

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No Age  BETH HOUFEK

OUMOU SANGARÉ, ACOUSTIC
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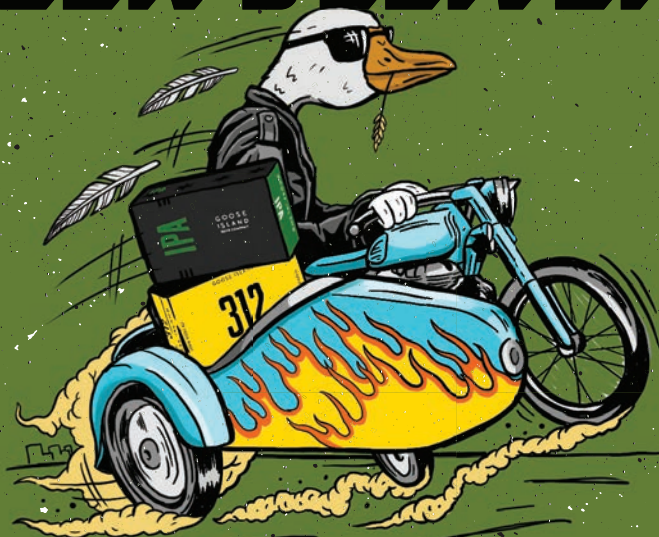
In 2017, celebrated Malian Wassalou singer and activist Oumou Sangaré released *Mogoya*, her first new album since 2009. During the intervening eight years, she'd largely stepped away from the spotlight to pursue a variety of business ventures, including establishing agricultural projects, opening a hotel, and launching a new car, the Oum Sang. For Sangaré each of them has offered the chance to support and empower the Malian people—proceeds from the Oum Sang, for example, benefit a scholarship fund. Wassalou music, which arose in a part of West Africa that includes southwestern Mali, is widely considered a precursor to American blues; it's traditionally sung by women, and since the late 80s Sangaré has approached its soulful sounds with a modern feminist spirit, tackling subjects such as female autonomy and the pitfalls of arranged and polygamous marriages. (Sangaré began working at age ten to help support her family after her father abandoned her mother, who was his second wife.) On *Mogoya* (which translates to "Human Relations"), she updated her sound by collaborating with producers in Sweden and France and incorporating elements of rock and funk; the album's sleek, eclectic tracks sparkle with robust energy, even when tackling complicated topics such as mental health, as she does on "Yera Faga" ("Suicide"), which features legendary Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen. In 2018, *Mogoya* got a club-ready makeover when its songs were remixed by Sampha and Aunti Flo. *Acoustic* takes the opposite approach: recorded live in two days with no second takes or overdubs, the album strips down songs from *Mogoya* to nothing but vocals, guitar, and a traditional Malian stringed instrument called the *kamele ngoni*, similar in appearance to the harp-like *kora* and usually tuned pentatonically. These don't feel like laid-back tunes to sing around a campfire, though—the bare-bones approach enhances the emotion of each song and the stunning skill of each

contributor. The intensity of the call-and-response vocals, hand claps, and soaring vocals on "Bena Bena" ("Ingratitude") gets ratcheted up even further on the following track, "Kounkoun" ("Bad Seeds"), with its grooving, dueling strings. While many Americans are enduring intense isolation, *Acoustic's* warm, rich textures and Sangaré's incomparable voice offer a sense of connection—and the feel of live music—from half a world away. —JAMIE LUDWIG

LUCINDA WILLIAMS, GOOD SOULS BETTER ANGELS
Highway 20
lucindawilliams.com

Lucinda Williams writes raw, visceral songs filled with beaten-down people liberating themselves from bullies. "I changed the name of this town / So you can't follow me down," she sings on "Changed the Locks," from her 1988 self-titled album. Her new record, *Good Souls Better Angels*, takes on similar demons, though its antagonists don't just pick on individuals but seek out victims on a global scale. Williams snarls truth to power on "Man Without a Soul," a protest song that recalls Phil Ochs: "All the money in the world will never fill that hole," she sings to an unidentified man (she recently told NPR that she thinks of her target as Donald Trump, but he could just as easily be Mitch McConnell or anyone else who uses their power to abuse others). On *Good Souls Better Angels*, Williams sounds like a cowpunk roadhouse version of a singer-songwriter—more than four decades into her career, she's more powerful than ever. Williams pushes her country-rock alto into the microphone on "Big Black Train" as she repeats "I don't want to get on board," as if to shut up anyone who wasn't convinced. And her longtime backing band, Buick 6, enhances her brilliant songwriting and forceful performances: on "Wakin' Up," which tells a startling story of escaping an abusive relationship with an addict, Stuart Mathis's jagged guitar riffs match the emotion in Williams's voice. —SALEM COLLO-JULIN 

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Michael Salvatori's long, strange trip

In 1982 he recorded a sought-after private-press folk LP, and 19 years later he cowrote the score for genre-defining video game *Halo*.

By **STEVE KRAKOW**

I discovered the music of Michael Salvatori through his 1980s private-press loner-folk LP—it's a sought-after item among fans of such obscurities—but most people who know his name have probably heard about him because he's a composer for hit video games. Salvatori's career has taken a few twists and turns I never would've anticipated, but *Secret History* finally has the story on this underappreciated music maker.

Salvatori was born in Elmhurst, Illinois, in

1954, and attended Visitation Catholic School till eighth grade. Inspired by *West Side Story* and the Beatles (and playing a guitar he'd gotten for Christmas), he joined his first band at age 12, covering pop favorites in the 13th Hour with longtime friend Gary Polkow on keyboards. At York High School in the early 70s, the two of them moved on to heavier sounds with Psychotron (who were inspired by the Doors and Iron Butterfly and opened for the Cryan' Shames) and Strapperjak (a

horn-rock band that did originals plus covers of Chicago and the Ides of March).

After graduation Salvatori married his high school sweetheart, Gail, and started a short-lived prog band with her on keyboards and his brother Tom on bass. They only played a couple gigs, mostly for friends and family, while Salvatori was working at a print shop to put Gail through college. Soon he and Gail had a mortgage and a family, and as that reality sank in, Salvatori restricted his musical activity to relatively manageable solo work. Luckily he was able to secure a bank loan to build a basement studio in his Wheaton home, where he recorded local musicians on evenings and weekends. When the studio wasn't booked, he picked away at his own music. It took him a few years to record his only solo album, but at age 28, Salvatori self-released the sublime 1982 LP *Waiting for Autumn*.

He pressed the album in a run of 500, and it's now very rare. Salvatori kept only a few. "I still had about half a dozen unopened cop-

ies, but lost them several years ago during a move," he says. "So I had to buy them back on eBay, and it took me a while, because they rarely came up for sale and sellers were asking ridiculous prices for them."

Salvatori never even got around to gigging as a solo artist, because another opportunity came knocking shortly after the release of *Waiting for Autumn*: his college friend Martin O'Donnell, who knew Salvatori had his own studio, proposed a film-soundtrack collaboration. The two of them soon started working on music for TV commercials, and struck gold with a 1985 campaign for Flintstones vitamins. If you're around my age, you probably remember it: "We are Flintstones kids / Ten million strong and growing" (Salvatori's two young daughters sang on the first version).

This success led to a full-time jingle-writing partnership, and O'Donnell and Salvatori moved out of his Wheaton basement and formed their own downtown Chicago agency. By the mid-90s, O'Donnell was starting to get tired of writing jingles and approached video-game developer Bungie, whose offices were located close to their studio, about writing music for its games. The first Bungie project for which the duo composed was the beloved 1997 fantasy-strategy game *Myth: The Fallen Lords*, and for a few years they continued splitting their time between games and jingles. But scoring the massive hit *Halo* in 2001 changed everything—Microsoft had just bought Bungie, and positioned *Halo* as the game that would launch its new Xbox console that year. It sold a million copies in its first five months, and is now considered a genre-defining classic.

Over the next nine years, O'Donnell and Salvatori worked on four more *Halo* games, including two that broke sales records (the last was 2010's *Halo: Reach*). In 2011 Salvatori took a staff job with Bungie, which had by then moved to Washington State (O'Donnell had been hired years earlier), in order to work on music for the 2014 game *Destiny*. O'Donnell eventually left Bungie, but Salvatori is still composing for the company today.

Salvatori's years at Bungie have taken him to some unexpected places. "In 2012 and '13 we got to collaborate with Paul McCartney, who cowrote some of the music on the first *Destiny* release," he remembers. "That was one of those 'full circle' moments for me—seeing him on TV in 1964 was what caused me to gravitate toward music as a career." Now that, my friends, is what they call a journey! **FI**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

CHICAGO DJ and producer Jordan Zawideh has house music in his blood. Since moving here from Detroit in 1998, he's introduced countless dance heads to top-shelf tracks—not just from behind the register at beloved record stores such as **Weekend Records & Soap** and **KStarke** but also from behind the decks at countless local nightspots, including **Danny's** and **Berlin**. He hasn't released many jams of his own, but on Friday, May 1, he dropped the double 12-inch **Ce Es Music** (via Dutch label **No "Label"**). A couple years back, Zawideh says, "I had a crate of some pretty rare sentimental records stolen." He created these tracks in the weeks after the theft, and like many of the lost classics in that crate, they're laced with the delightfully rude samples and oddly syncopated rhythms of old-school house. Gossip Wolf can't wait to hear the acid-dipped "Work Delay" and the dubbed-out, juddering "In a Dream" on a packed dance floor, instead of just on headphones!

Talented musicians from around the world have been buying scores from sheet-music emporium **Performers Music** since 1981, when it was opened by violist and violinist **Lee Newcomer**. Newcomer says sales have plunged due to COVID-19, putting the store's future in doubt. Performers (now located in the **Fine Arts Building** on Michigan) has set up a GoFundMe, and Gossip Wolf recommends donating—so much of the music ecosystem is now in crisis that it's easy to overlook this kind of niche institution!

Last year, Chicago bedroom folkie **Jess Shoman** released her first album as **Tenci**, *My Heart Is an Open Field*. Its tender songwriting and fragile, windswept melodies won over this wolf, and they've since earned her lots more fans—including the folks who run Austin label **Keeled Scales**, which will reissue *My Heart Is an Open Field* on Friday, June 5. Shoman will celebrate with a Hideout Online set at 8 PM the same day; there's a \$5 suggested tip.

—J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

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NEW

Boosie Badazz 6/12, 9:30 PM, the Forge, Joliet, 17+

Rodney Crowell 3/27/21, 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

Cryfesty: the Cure vs. the Smiths Dance Party 6/20, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Dawg Trio 4/4/21, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

FitzGerald's Drive-In Concert featuring Waco Brothers, School of Rock 7/3, 7 PM, on sale Fri 6/12; location to be announced before the show **AL**

Robbie Fulks 6/21, 8 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/hideoutchicago **FREE**

IDK 6/12, 7 PM, livestream at youtube.com/monsterenergy **FREE**

James Hunter Six 3/12/21, 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

Juneteenth: Liberatory Practices with Seed Lynn & DJ Sadie Woods 6/19, livestream at facebook.com/artspubliclife **FREE**

Lucy Kaplansky 11/20, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Zoë Keating 5/19/21, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

The Quarantine Concerts curated by Zebulon Cafe (Los Angeles) 6/12, livestream at twitch.tv/experimental_sound_studio **FREE**

The Quarantine Concerts presents Heavy Trip curated by **Michael Bardier** featuring **Jessica Moss, Jerusalem in my Heart, Charles-Andre Coderre, Devin Brajha Waldman, Ami Dang, Alex Zhang Hungtai** 6/11, 7:30 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/experimental_sound_studio **FREE**

The Quarantine Concerts presents Option series

featuring **Molly Jones** 6/15, 8 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/experimental_sound_studio **FREE**

The Quarantine Concerts presents Million Tongues curated by **Galatic Zoo & Singleman Affair** featuring **Chris Thompson, Peter Walker, Ruthann Friedman, Singleman Affair, Mark Fry, Alisha Sufti, Nick Garrie** 6/14, 2 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/experimental_sound_studio **FREE**

Peter Rowan's Free Mexican Airforce, Los Texmaniacs 9/18, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

San Fermin 6/4/21, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Smile Empty Soul, Talia 7/15, 7 PM, the Forge, Joliet **AL**

Split Single 1/2/21, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

Waxahatchee 6/15, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/waxahatchee

Zuccher 3/10/21, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+

UPDATED

NOTE: many concerts have been canceled, rescheduled, or postponed in light of ongoing concerns about COVID-19. We suggest that you contact the point of purchase if you need information about ticket exchanges or refunds.

Alice Bag, Bacchae 7/15, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, canceled

American Music Festival 7/2-7/5, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, canceled

Tab Benoit 6/6/21, 8 PM, City Winery, rescheduled **AL**

Black Keys, Gary Clark Jr., Marcus King Band 7/25, 7 PM,

Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Jimmy Buffett 7/18, 8 PM, United Center, canceled

Brent Cobb, Maddie Medley 11/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled **AL**

Alice Cooper, Tesla, Lita Ford 6/13, 7 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont, canceled

Decemberists 8/10, 7:30 PM, Auditorium Theatre, rescheduled **AL**

Foreigner, Kansas, Europe 7/31, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Lilly Hiatt, Harmaleighs 4/7/21, 8 PM, Schubas, rescheduled; previously purchased tickets will be honored, 18+

Hollies 7/18, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, canceled

Greg Howe, Bodhi 8/28/21, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, rescheduled, 17+

Sam Hunt, Kip Moore, Travis Denning, Ernest 6/20, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Kevin Krauter, Sports Boyfriend, Deals 11/6, 10 PM, Schubas, rescheduled; previously purchased tickets will be honored, 18+

Jonny Lang 7/10, 8 PM, House of Blues, canceled

Methodones, Direct Hit!, Dan Vapid & the Cheats, Capgun

Heroes 6/27, 8 PM, Chop Shop, canceled

Naked and Famous, Circa Waves, Luna Shadows

6/23, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, canceled

The Necks 8/4-8/5, 8:30 PM, Constellation, canceled

Carrie Newcomer 5/7/21, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled **AL**

NF 8/4, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, canceled

EARLY WARNINGS

101WKQX Pigniq featuring **Foster the People, Neon Trees, Phantogram, Love-Lytheband, Yelawolf, Meg Myers, Dreamers, Bones UK, Blue Stones, Kitten** 6/13, 1 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

OTR 6/26, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, canceled

Over the Rhine 6/26/21, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled **AL**

Reagan Youth 6/19, 8 PM, Reggies' Music Joint, canceled

Rod Tuffcurls & the Bench Press 7/4, 9 PM, House of Blues, canceled

Tina Schlieske 7/30, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, canceled

Chris Smither 4/1/21, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled **AL**

Stand Atlantic, Trash Boat, Super Whatevr, Jetty Bones

6/27, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, canceled

Tribute to Donald Byrd with **Kevin Toney, Azar Lawrence, Dominique Toney, Johnny Britt** 9/18, 7 and 9:30 PM, the Promontory, 9:30 PM show sold out **AL**

Whitney 6/11, 7 PM, rescheduled; livestream at noonchorus.com/whitney

Dar Williams 2/14/21, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled **AL**

Yam Haus 6/5/21, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, rescheduled, 17+

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Flesh Panthers, Bobby Lees, Furr 8/7, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Flor de Toloache 11/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Noah Gundersen 10/9-10/10, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Trevor Hall, Brett Dennen 9/4, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+

Halsey 6/26/21, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park **AL**

Hammerfall, Beast in Black, Edge of Paradise 10/7, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Jason Hawk Harris 6/25, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Hrvy 9/23, 6 PM, Chop Shop **AL**

Hunny 8/28, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Jenny Hval 9/10, 8 and 10:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

I Am Fest 8/15, 2:30 PM, House of Blues **AL**

Enrique Iglesias, Ricky Martin, Sebastián Yatra 10/1-10/2, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont **AL**

Inhaler, Junior Mesa 9/16, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall **AL**

i_o 8/15, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Janet Jackson 7/27, 8 PM, United Center **AL**

José James, Taali 9/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

Sleaford Mods 10/7, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Kenny White 6/19, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Widespread Panic 8/20-8/22, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre **AL**

Wilco, Sleater-Kinney, Nnamdi 8/29, 6 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park A

David Wilcox 10/24, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Wild Earp & the Free for Alls, Michelle Billingsley 8/21, 9 PM, GMan Tavern

Wild Rivers, Allman Brown 8/9, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Webb Wilder & the Beatnecks 6/20, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Hayley Williams, Arlo Parks 6/26, 8 PM, House of Blues **AL**

Wingtips, Panic Priest, None of Your Concern 10/9, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Winnetka Bowling League 10/3, 8 PM, Subterranean **AL**

Xoe Wise, Tim Fite 7/9, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Jody Wisternoff 6/27, 10 PM, Sound-Bar

Witch Mountain, Reivers, Psychic Nurse 6/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village **AL**

CREATIVES WHO CARE



Rowboat Creative, a Chicago-based custom branded merchandise manufacturer whom produces merch for some of the world's largest musicians, creatives, and designers such as Joe Freshgoods, McDonald's, Chance The Rapper, Live Nation, Nike, etc., has launched an initiative titled "**CREATIVE WHO CARE.**"

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OPINION



SAVAGE LOVE

Blindfold that boy

What to do when your sex life just isn't hot enough

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: Here goes: I'm a 32-year-old gay male and I have trouble staying out of my head during sex. I feel like there may be many issues. The one nonissue is everything works fine on my own. When I'm single or "available," I am OK. Let's be honest: I'm a slut and I enjoy it. But when I invest in someone, when I'm trying to have an actual relationship, the sex suffers. With a partner I care about I feel nervous. I feel small both mentally and physically. And I worry my dick is small. I've measured and photographed it, so I know better, but something in me is always asking... are you really enough?

I'm currently in an open relationship with a guy I've known for a decade. He's amazing. Often I'm hard AF just sitting there relaxing with him. But the closer we get to actually having sex, the more nervous I become. I even stop breathing consistently. It's almost like I feel ashamed to

want someone so much. Or something? It's frustrating because I would love nothing more than to fuck like rabbits until we were both exhausted. I love him and I want to be able to please him sexually! Our intimacy, our conversation, our connection—everything else is so strong. But I feel like my problem will kill any future I might have with him. He hasn't really expressed a concern but I worry. I have considered the idea of therapy but the idea of talking to some stranger about my sex life face-to-face is just daunting. So what do I do? My other thought is to just blindfold him and say bottoms up. —**DAZED IN LOVE**

A: So you don't wanna talk with a therapist about your issues—which touch on more than just sex—but you're willing to talk to me and all of my readers about them. I realize it's a little different, DIL, as you don't have to look me in the eye while we discuss your dick. But there

are therapists who specialize in helping people work through their issues around sex and they're usually pretty good at setting nervous new clients at ease. They have to be. So I would encourage you to have a few sessions with a sex-positive queer shrink. Talking about your dick with a stranger will be awkward at first, of course, but just like eating ass, DIL, the more you do it, the less awkward it gets—and after a few sessions, your therapist won't be a stranger anymore. (To find a sex-positive/poly-positive sex therapist, head over to the website of the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists: aasect.org.)

In the meantime, DIL, go ahead and blindfold your boyfriend—if he's game, of course, and I can't imagine he wouldn't be. You seem to have an irrational fear of being seen. If your boyfriend were to get a good look at you naked, DIL, especially if he got a good look at your dick, you're

OPINION

RYOJI IWATA / UNSPLASH

convinced he would suddenly conclude—even though he's known you for a decade and is obviously into you—that you're not "enough" for him. So don't let him get a good look. Blindfold that boy.

Don't lie to him about why you want to blindfold him—tell him you feel a little insecure—but bringing in a blindfold makes working through your insecurities into a sexy game. Being able to have sex with the boyfriend without having to worry about him sizing up your cock will free you to enjoy sex. And who knows, after a few hot sex sessions with your sensory-deprived boyfriend (or a few dozen hot sessions), your confidence may get the boost it needs and you won't feel so insecure about your cock or anything else.

And even if your dick was small—which it isn't, DIL, and you've got the measurements and photos to prove it—you could still have great sex with your boyfriend. Guys with dicks of all sizes, even guys without dicks, can have great sex. And if you're still nervous after blindfolding the boyfriend and worried you'll go soft, DIL, you can take the pressure off by enjoying sex acts and play that don't require you to be hard. You can bottom for him, you can blow him, you can use toys on his ass, you can sit on his face while he jacks off, etc. There's a lot you can do without your dick.

Zooming out, DIL, intimacy and hot sex are often negatively correlated—meaning, the more intimate a relationship becomes, the less hot the sex gets. Anyone who's watched more than one American sitcom has heard a million jokes about this sad fact. People in sexually exclusive relationships who still want hot sex to be a part of their lives have to work at solving this problem with their partners. But if you're in an open rela-

tionship and can get sex elsewhere, well, then you can have love and intimacy and pretty good sex with your partner and adventures and novelty and crazy hot sex with other people.

Ideally, of course, a person in an open relationship wants—and it is possible for a person in an open relationship to have—hot sex with their committed partner as well as their other partners. But some people can't make it work, DIL. However hard they try, some people can't have uninhibited or unselfconscious sex with a long-term partner. The more invested they are in someone, the higher the stakes are, the longer they're together, etc., the less arousing sex is for them. Most of the people with this problem—people who aren't capable of having great sex with a long-long-long-term partner—are in monogamous relationships and, judging from the jokes on sitcoms, they're utterly (but hilariously) miserable. You're *not* in a monogamous relationship, DIL, so if it turns out you're incapable of having great sex with a committed partner—if you can't manage to integrate those things—you don't have to go without great sex. You can have intimacy at home and great sex elsewhere.

But it's a double-edged sword, DIL, because if you can get hot sex elsewhere, you may not be motivated to do the work required—to talk to that shrink, to get that blindfold, to work through those issues—that would make it possible for you to have great sex with your partner and others.

Q: I've been with my boyfriend for three years. I'm a 27-year-old woman and this was my first "real" relationship. Before I met my boyfriend, I would have considered myself a steady dick-jumper. I went flitting from guy to guy. On paper, our relationship seemed great. He tries to make sure

I have what I need, whether it's a meal, a TV show, a record to play. He is stable and affectionate; most of all, he wanted to be with me. But he's boring. When I talk to him, I want to be somewhere, anywhere else. The more I tried to engage with him, the more obvious our lack of any deep connection seemed. He is stoic and unemotional whereas I cry during car commercials. I'm desperately seeking an emotional equal. Every day I go back and forth between loving where we are and wanting to run the fuck away. I have a tendency to do the latter—with guys, friends, jobs—so I don't know what I REALLY want. But I feel so incredibly unfulfilled. We have a lackluster sex life and I've felt more like his roommate the past year than his girlfriend. I want to be inspired by my partner. My question is . . . actually, I'm not really sure I have a question. —FIRST RELATIONSHIP FIZZLE

A: Since you didn't ask a question, FRF, I guess you don't require an answer. So I'll make an observation instead: you repeatedly refer to this relationship in the past tense. ("... this was my first 'real' relationship," "... our relationship seemed great," "... the more I tried.") So you obviously know what you need to do. Your soon-to-be-ex-boyfriend sounds like a good guy, FRF, and you don't want to hurt him, which makes dumping him harder. But if he's not the right guy for you, FRF, you're not the right woman for him. Go back to flitting—and who knows? Maybe one day you'll jump on a dick that's attached to a guy who inspires you. Or maybe you don't want one guy—forever or for long. Some people are happier flitting than settling. **FI**

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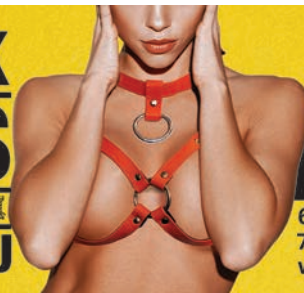


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This letter is to notify that on June 25, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. an auction will be held at Hyde Park Self Storage, Inc., located at 5155 S. Cottage Grove Ave, Chicago, IL 60615, to sell the following articles held within said storage units to enforce a lien existing under the laws of the state of Illinois.

482 Shelley H. Anderson
450 Shelley H. Anderson
524 Maavi Norman
010 Chisato Hotta
339 Daniela Comprindo
456 Shelley H. Anderson
534 Shelley H. Anderson
26 Narzell Richardson Jr.

This letter is to notify that on June 25, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. an auction will be held at 83rd & Halsted Self Storage, Inc., located at 8316 S. Birkhoff Ave, Chicago, IL 60620, to sell the following articles held within said storage units to enforce a lien existing under the laws of the state of Illinois.

303 Emma Brown

This letter is to notify that on June 25, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. an auction will be held at South Shore Self Storage, Inc., located at 7843 S. Exchange Ave, Chicago, IL 60649, to sell the following articles held within said storage units to enforce a lien existing under the laws of the state of Illinois.

452 Jalisa Dawson
328 Jess Gill
N022 Kenyatte Morgan
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