

READER

the Indoor Delights issue



FREE AND FREAKY SINCE 1971 | JANUARY 21, 2021

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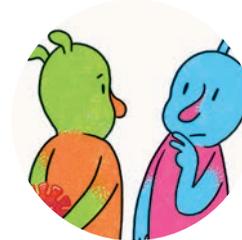
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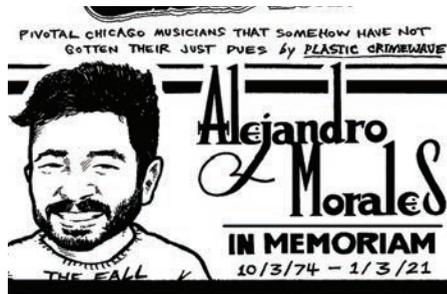
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READER (ISSN 1096-6919) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY CHICAGO READER L3C
 2930 S. MICHIGAN, SUITE 102 CHICAGO, IL 60616
 312-392-2934, CHICAGOREADER.COM

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Even more at risk

Violence against people experiencing homelessness has advocates worried.

Memorial

Alejandro Morales's death doesn't just leave a hole in Chicago's DIY music scene.

The 'big gap'

Domestic violence survivors battle to keep legally protected housing subsidies.

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INDOOR DELIGHTS

Giving myself a break: on oyatsu

How a snacking ritual makes the Chicago winter bearable

By **NINA LI COOMES**

The idea to return to oyatsu first came in September, when the weather was still gentle, fall just beginning to work itself into a fantasia of crimson, gold, and auburn. Because I've lived in Chicago for nearly 15 years now, I knew that winter, with its flat white sky and toothy chill, was not far off. Every year I suffered through it alongside everyone else, slipping on iced-over sidewalks and complaining bitterly that spring never arrived in a timely fashion. But this year, the pandemic and

the need for continued social distancing would curtail the indoor gatherings that I had always found a necessary reprieve from the dark and cold. Glow, long dinners held at a friend's table, peeling tangerines in my parents' living room, sitting in the half shell of a shrugged-off down coat in the dusk of a movie theater; these were the things that made Chicago winter bearable. And they were precisely the things that would likely be impossible. Panic and anxiety began to dance a two-step at the edge of my

✍️ RACHEL HAWLEY

mind. "Winter is coming," I found myself proclaiming wildly to my husband, unabashed that I sounded like an extra from *Game of Thrones*. "We have to strategize how we're going to survive this season!" I began to research snowshoeing. I bought wool socks. I vowed to haul myself out of the house every day to walk outside, no matter the weather.

Enter: oyatsu. I say oyatsu because it is the word that is most familiar to me. Oyatsu (sometimes called osanji) is an Edo-period word referring to what was then considered the eighth hour of the day, around 2-3 PM, when people would break to eat a light meal to tide them over till dinner. As a child in Japan, I was raised to follow this practice, eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner without snacks in between, only the designated 3 PM break for something sweet. Of course, the practice of taking a break midday for something hot to drink and delicious to nibble is hardly unique to Japan. There is fika and khavi and tea time and merienda. One winter my mother went to Finland and came back with stories of a deeply snowy country where people of all ages stopped what they were doing to drink dark, bitter coffee and eat sugary pastries. She explained that it was a way to ride out the frigid sunless winter, taking an intentional break to eat something sweet and connect with others. I was enchanted by this story as an eight-year-old, and, recalling it nearly 20 years later, I find that I remain enchanted by the Finnish pastry hour. But more importantly, I found myself inspired.

I never did take up snowshoeing. Instead, I've instated a ritual tea time. A few minutes before 3 PM, I close the lid on my laptop and pad into the kitchen. I fill my small copper kettle, bought in the home goods aisle of Joong Boo Market on Kimball Avenue, and put it on the stove to boil.

While the water burbles, I rummage in the cabinet for a blue ceramic teapot and two teacups with saucers. Once the water is done boiling, I pour a bit into the teapot, swish it around to warm the inside, then pour the plain water into the teacups to warm them too. I fish a tea bag out of a drawer, something herbal and without caffeine so I don't keep myself up worrying half the night, and plunk it into the teapot, covering it with steaming water. I pour the hot water from the teacups into the sink and use it to scrub a few spots of grime away.

The smell of peppermint and ginger winds its way out of the pot. I place it and the teacups onto a brightly patterned tray next to a plate with whatever cookie I decided looked interesting at Devon Market. Last week it was a sleeve of fudge-covered Oreos, on sale near the entrance of the store, wedged between gallons of vegetable oil and boxes of Medjool dates. This week, it's a sort of Jaffa cake-digestive hybrid, a crumbly, wheaty biscuit wearing a shiny cap of orange-flavored chocolate. The energetic, sky-blue box informs me the cookies are Lithuanian. I carry the tray into the living room and meet my husband, who has just turned off his own computer. We sit for 30 minutes and chat about nothing in particular, sipping tea and eating cookies. At 4 PM, the half hour is done and my husband takes the tray into the kitchen (he handles cleanup). I return to my desk and resume working.

The ritual is soothing, nostalgic. It reminds me to slow down, to be kind to myself, to untangle my being from the capitalist slurry of work-life-work-life that the pandemic has wrought. I give myself a break. I indulge in aimless conversation. I savor something sweet. I pour out the last of the tea, its soft steam warming my palms. 📺

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FOOD FEATURE

When the Mangalitsas meet the Red Wattles

For the first time in the midwest, a Wisconsin farmer brings rare (and delicious) heritage hog breeds to market.

By **MIKE SULA**

Big Red slumbers in a nest of wood chips, leaves, and straw. If he weren't pushing 550 pounds, he'd look like a fuzzy dirigible moored to the floor of his pen. Across the barn are the three Blonde sows that over the last four years helped him produce more than 60 pure-blooded Mangalitsa pigs, a friendly, woolly-haired, slow-growing Austro-Hungarian breed that had almost gone extinct in the early 90s.

If you step over the boards into the pen that houses the sows Fluffy, Big Sister, and Little Bossy, they'll lurch to their trotters and come at you, softly squealing, nuzzling your jeans and boots, and submitting to ear scratches and pets. Meanwhile, their stablemates, five rust-colored sows of the Red Wattle breed, are barely distracted, committed to their long afternoon nap.

"The Mangalitsas are like Labradors, like very friendly dogs," says Russell Lee, who is back in Big Red's pen, where he's coaxed the Swallow Belly Mangalitsa boar to an upright position so he can scratch his back. "The Red Wattle is a more docile pig, easygoing, laid back. It's not attention-seeking, though it does like to get pets or belly rubs. The Mangalitsa is kind of a needier pig."

Lee is a 35-year-old mechanical engineer and farmer who owns Russell Road Farm in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, just south of Kenosha. For the past five years he's been slowly growing a herd of heritage breed swine on about 60 acres of open pasture, where they forage on native plants, roots, and the occasional burrowing critter—and supplemented



by a good amount of oats and barley. "That goes to the fat quality," says Lee. "It makes for a really white, buttery fat." And that's precisely the quality the Mangalitsa was historically raised for.

Earlier this month, Lee walked me out on one of his pastures where his third-generation Mangalitsa and Red Wattles roamed, digging deep holes in the earth and scratching their itchy flanks on tree trunks. When they saw us coming, they trotted over in a slow wave, the Mangalitsas snouting around our pant legs and the Wattles tugging at our bootlaces.

I wrote about Mangalitsas back in 2009, when they were making a comeback among chefs and Slow Food partisans. A Washington state financial analyst had imported a herd of 25 from Austria at tremendous expense and was slowly propagating feeder pigs, while the food press salivated over their deep red pork, densely marbled with creamy fat. But since he controlled all the breeding stock, their genetic diversity in the United States was limited.

Since then, there have been four more imports of Blonde, Red, and Swallow Belly Man-

galitsas from Europe, to Alabama, California, and Georgia—but mostly to a couple of breeders in Michigan, one of whom sold Lee his first three sows in 2016. There's now an official U.S. Mangalitsa breeder's organization that's beginning to document lineages as the breed slowly disperses around the country.

Lee grew up raising horses on his family's farm in Morton Grove, the Freedom Woods equestrian stable. While attending the Milwaukee School of Engineering, he started building Russell Road Farm on the Pleasant Prairie property that his family purchased a few years before. He didn't expect to become a serious heritage hog farmer—he operates a soil and sustainable material recycling company—but he thought he could breed and raise a few high-value animals and sell their meat as a way to pay the bills on the farm. He raises lambs, goats, and chickens too—all of which help keep the pastures in good health. He initially considered himself a hobby farmer, but now that he's putting in 60 to 80 hours a week—not so much anymore.

A friend had her own Mangalitsa boar—

that's Big Red—and together with the sows, they produced about a dozen piglets.

"They take a really long time to raise," about 18 months to two years, Lee says, but they're given indoor-outdoor access 24 hours a day. Lee harvested his first Mangalitsas after 20 months, stored their meat in a chest freezer, and gradually started selling to neighbors, friends, and friends of friends. "Quite a few Latinx, Asian—mostly Filipino—and European customers come by the farm for meat," he says. "Popular items are pork skins for chicharrones, shoulder for carnitas, belly, and heads. Europeans typically come for the Mangalitsa fats, hocks, soup bones, organs."

About six months after he started with the Mangalitsas, he got into Red Wattles, named for the fatty appendages that dangle from their jowls, a more muscular breed that produces dark, beefy, but tender pork. He raised 50 pigs total in 2020, and as word got around, "I was selling to some different little groups of foodie type people from Chicago and Madison," he says. "People will travel for that stuff."

FOOD & DRINK



Left: Friendly, fuzzy Mangalitsas; above: Red Wattle piglets © MIKE SULA; NORBERT RUM

Looking ahead to this year he decided to go bigger, planning on 100-120 pigs, and introducing some more conventional Berkshire-Duroc crosses for customers leery of the higher fat heritage breeds. He was hoping to build a wholesale business selling pork to restaurants when the pandemic hit. That's when he connected with Matt Wechsler, who opened Evanston's Village Farmstand last fall to help small farmers operating with sustainable regenerative practices get their produce to a retail market. Sustainable practices include, among other things: no pesticides, no GMOs, and the use of methods that can reverse climate change by improving the soil. "I just noticed how incredibly difficult it is to get started as a small farm, and make ends meet, and create a business out of it in a world of agricultural consolidation," says Wechsler, a filmmaker who's made two documentaries on sustainable agriculture. Last August he teamed up with Marty Travis of downstate's Spence Farm and head of a network of small farmers looking for new markets after the pandemic shut down the restaurant industry. Between Village Farmstand's retail operation and CSA programs managed by organizations like the Urban Canopy and Star Farm, Travis's network saw a 39 percent increase in sales in 2020 over the previous year.

Meanwhile, Lee built a 150-square-foot

walk-in freezer on the farm to handle meat he'd hoped chefs would take off his hands when it was fresh from slaughter. He continued to sell directly to customers on the farm, and in mid-November, Village Farmstand became the first retail outlet in the midwest to sell Mangalitsa and Red Wattle pork. Currently that's ground pork, chops, steaks, and roasts, sold separately or in \$85 pork bundles. But Lee and Wechsler are developing a line of sausage and naturally cured hams and bacon that they hope will be ready for purchase starting in February.

Even at retail, Mangalitsa and Red Wattle pork sells at a premium (at Village Farmstand, two Red Wattle chops go for \$16.50, four Mangalitsa chops, \$18.50). The animals grow slow and are expensive to raise, but the pork has come a long way from its fetishized luxury status.

And this year, with the help of one of the Blonde sows and Thor, the gargantuan Red Wattle boar that resides a few pens away from Big Red, "we'll have our first Red Wattle-Mangalitsa hybrids," Lee says. "The meat is supposed to be really red, a little meatier, but still maintaining the quality of fat of the Mangalitsa. We will have some of that come March, so we shall see." 📷

🐷 @MikeSula

POETRY CORNER

Ain't it time?

By Saunté Harden-Tate

I was asked...	Time to grieve...	Time to be blunt...
What does revolution feel like to you...?	Time to stay...	Time for authenticity...
I stared at that question... waiting for a clear image...	Time to leave...	
And all I could see were these words	Time to focus...	Time for justice...
	Time to be loud...	Time for peace...
	Time to love ourselves	Time for hate...
	Time to be black, safe, and proud...	TO FINALLY CEASE!
AIN'T IT TIME?!	Time to be still...	Ain't it time...?
	Time to live...	Time to realize...
Ain't it time...	Time to right wrongs...	Time for strength...
Time that we realize...	Time to forgive...	Time for allies...
Time to heal...	Time to accept	Time to stand...
Time to recognize...	Time to let go...	Time to kneel...
Time to grow...	Time to be open...	Time for reform...
Time to see...	Time to grow...	Time for repeal...
Time to understand		Time for deep thought...
Time for humanity...	AIN'T IT Time...?	Time for reflection...
Time to acknowledge pain	Time to realize...	Time for safety...
Time to apologize...	Time to be quiet...	Time for protection...
Time to unite...	Time to strategize...	
Time to be wise!	Time to give...	Ain't it time...?
Time to breathe...	Time to receive...	Time to realize...
Time to hear...	Time to question...	THE REVOLUTION...is happening...
Time to stand...	Time to believe...	BUT NOT WHAT'S
Time to conquer fear.	Time for US...	TELEVISED!
Time to love...	Time for inclusivity,	

Saunté Harden-Tate (Sahn-tay) is a Black American Chicago Westside Native, creative writer, Advocate, Community Educator, proud mother of two, and wife. With a deep-rooted passion for healing, advocating, and educating the community on trauma, Saunté teaches the community about Sexual abuse, Sexual violence, body safety, and the rights of survivors as a Community Educator. Saunté has an affinity for uplifting and educating the community on the traumas and struggles that disproportionately affect the black community.

Poem curated by Nikki Patin: Featured in *The Guardian*, *Chicago Tribune*, HBO's *Def Poetry Jam* and on international television and radio, writer, producer, designer and survivor Nikki Patin has been advocating, performing and educating for 20 years. She has performed at the National Black Theater in Harlem, Brooklyn Museum, the Goodman Theater, EXPO Chicago and many other spaces throughout the US, New Zealand and Australia. Nikki Patin holds an MFA in Creative Non-Fiction from the University of Southern Maine. Patin is the Community Engagement Director for the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation and the founder and Executive Producer of *Surviving the Mic*, a survivor-led organization that crafts brave and affirming space for survivors of sexual trauma. Her work can be found at nikkipatin.com.

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“There was very little destruction of property.” Uh huh. Just ask Senator Bill Cassidy, who took this photo of the riot’s aftermath. [@BILL_CASSIDY](#)

POLITICS

Self-pity party

John Catanzara’s “apology” is classic MAGA—deflection, projection, and media bashing.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

It has been a bad month for apologies from MAGA, as no one is as bad at apologies as MAGA.

Generally, a MAGA apology consists of misdirection, deflection, projection, and self-pity—lots of self-pity.

No one wallows in self-pity as much as MAGA, just as no one has so little reason to feel so sorry for themselves.

Think about it: they never actually won more votes in any presidential election, and yet for the better part of the last four years, they’ve controlled the White House, the Senate, and the Supreme Court. Not to mention a television network, several newspapers, and too many conservative radio outlets to count.

Last week, I analyzed the so-called apology of Congresswoman Mary Miller, a newly elected Republican from the 15th district in

downstate Illinois. She got into hot water for uttering the three words that even a MAGA person should know enough not to say . . .

“Hitler was right.”

After several days of denunciations from people throughout the civilized world, Miller grudgingly stitched together a typically self-pitying statement where she more or less apologized for saying “Hitler was right” even as she made it clear that she still sorta subscribed to that general notion.

Now I feel compelled to consider the apology of John Catanzara, president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 7, one of the most prominent Trump supporters in Chicago.

Catanzara loves Trump so much that he went so far as to post on social media a picture of himself in police uniform holding a sign that said: “I stand for the anthem. I love the Amer-

ican flag. I support my president. And the 2nd Amendment.”

As a lefty with Libertarian impulses, I support Catanzara’s right to hold that sign. Even as I condemn him for vowing to oust from the union any member who takes a knee in sympathy with Black Lives Matter protesters.

Liberty for me but not for thee being the MAGA philosophy regarding free expression.

Back to Catanzara’s apology . . .

As you know, on January 6 hundreds of Trump supporters—fired up by a speech from Trump—marched to the Capitol, broke through police lines, ransacked congressional offices, smashed windows, hit one cop over the head with a hockey stick, apparently beat another cop to death with a fire extinguisher, and threatened to kidnap and/or murder Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pence.

In the aftermath, Catanzara minimized the siege as something like a harmless romp by aggrieved citizens, rightfully upset at the injustice they have suffered.

Let’s quote Mr. Catanzara himself from an interview he gave with Chip Mitchell from WBEZ on the evening of the riot.

“There was no looting, there was very little destruction of property. . . . It was a bunch of pissed-off people that feel an election was stolen, somehow, some way.”

And . . .

“I don’t have any doubt that something shady happened in this election,” he said. “You’re not going to convince me that that many people voted for Joe Biden. Never for the rest of my life will you ever convince me of that. But, again, it still comes down to proof.”

And . . .

“Evidence matters . . . until that appears, shame on them for what they did, but it was out of frustration. There’s no fights. There’s no, obviously, violence in this crowd. They pushed past security and made their way to the Senate chamber. Did they destroy anything when they were there? No.”

And . . .

“They’re individuals,” he said. “They get to do what they want. Again, they were voicing frustration. They’re entitled to voice their frustration. They clearly have been ignored and they’re still being ignored as if they’re lunatics and treasonous now, which is beyond stupid.”

And finally, the obligatory shot at MAGA’s

favorite target: the media.

“It’s a whole side of the argument and, primarily, your profession is at the root of it . . . basically championing Joe Biden the whole time.”

OK, where to start . . .

Number one, there was looting, and destruction, and violence.

Number two, I realize Catanzara’s not a detective, but he has a curious attitude toward evidence. There’s not a shred of evidence to even remotely suggest, as he put it, that “an election was stolen” or that MAGA’s been “ignored.”

And their clearly fabricated accusations—championed by Trump—have been investigated by lawyers, judges, and election bureaucrats all over the country.

Catanzara seems to believe that if someone says something, it must be true, even if there is no evidence to support it. Otherwise, why would they say it?

Good thing he wasn’t in charge of the Jussie Smollett investigation. He’d still be out there looking for the guys who attacked Smollett.

Now here’s a question: What’s more delusional—MAGA’s insistence that the election was stolen, or Jussie’s story about the mugger in the MAGA hat?

Once Mitchell released his story on WBEZ, the shit hit the fan, leaving Catanzara with the same challenge Congresswoman Miller faced: how to get out of a bad situation without actually saying he did anything bad.

His response was his own version of the dog-ate-my-homework explanation. Bad timing.

He claimed he didn’t know the full extent of the damage at the Capitol when Mitchell called. Had Mitchell called only a few hours later, he’d have a different response. In other words, *It’s Chip Mitchell’s fault!*

Catanzara also said: “I was in no way condoning the violence in D.C. I certainly would never justify any attacks on citizens, democracy, or law enforcement.”

Well, actually, he was doing just that.

In that original interview with Mitchell, Catanzara sounded less like a law-and-order policeman and more like a bleeding-heart conservative, justifying the lawlessness of rioters on the grounds that they felt overlooked and maligned.

Too bad Catanzara can’t find such empathy for people in low-income areas of Chicago’s west and south sides. [📍](#)

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HOUSING

‘Utter idiocy’

Cook County let online eviction court go unrecorded for six months.

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

It was close to 11 AM on Tuesday, January 5, when Cook County circuit court Judge Martin Moltz said in open court that he thought Governor J.B. Pritzker’s eviction moratorium is “utter idiocy.” According to an attorney representing a property owner, the eviction case before Moltz, which had been filed in October, was a “post-foreclosure matter.” The former owners who had lost their house had allegedly illegally reentered it. The new owners, Kirkland Group—a Tennessee-based real estate investment firm—were trying to get an eviction order from the judge, but since this was a residential case, Moltz was bound by the moratorium.

“I understand they’re squatters and they’re owed no duty of any kind,” Moltz told Kirkland’s attorney Aaron Nevel in a kind and sympathetic tone. He apologized that he couldn’t order the eviction. “In a case with squatters we should be able to get them out right away.” Nevel was perplexed that the people couldn’t be put out simply for the crime of breaking and entering. However, he had no evidence that they were engaged in any illegal or dangerous activity on the premises—something he’d need to prove for an emergency exception to the moratorium.

To a tenant or anyone advocating for tenants in eviction court, these kinds of statements by a judge may sound biased. Especially if a tenant is *accused* of being a squatter. Moltz hadn’t asked Nevel to provide any proof that his claims were true. In addition to offering his sympathies, Moltz also warmly told Nevel to pass on a greeting to his father, another local attorney. If a litigant wanted their case transferred to a different judge because she felt she couldn’t get a fair hearing from Moltz, or if she wanted to appeal his decision in her case, it would be nearly impossible to do so because none of what happened in the courtroom that day had been recorded.

As the *Reader* has reported in the past, eviction court outcomes usually favor landlords: more often than not when a case is filed it ends with a judge’s order for the tenants to clear out. Tenants’ odds of getting cases

dismissed are further undermined by the fact that 80 percent of them never have a lawyer (compared to 80 percent of landlords who do). Though litigants can file appeals, without a transcript of what happened their only option to substantiate their arguments would be with a “bystander affidavit,” a statement given by someone who happened to be in court that day and overheard the proceedings. Such affidavits are difficult to obtain, and unlike actual transcripts their accuracy can be challenged.

The fight to put eviction court on the record stretches back to more than five years ago, when a coalition of legal aid organizations, tenant advocacy groups, and court watchdogs led by the Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts mounted a campaign to get the state supreme court to fund installation of recording equipment in these courtrooms. The funding was secured in 2019 and, after another four months to get the recorders up and running, eviction court was finally on the record for the first time since 2003. Five months later the pandemic hit. Though residential evictions have ground to a near-halt, landlords are still filing cases and claiming emergencies to get exceptions to the moratorium. Commercial evictions, which aren’t covered by the moratorium, resumed in July. With court held on Zoom, proceedings are easier than ever to record, but they haven’t been.

“We are not only no closer to our initial goal of ensuring that all eviction proceedings are recorded, we have lost what little progress we made last year,” the Coalition to Ensure a Court Record—a group of seven legal aid organizations and the Appleseed Center—wrote in a letter to Cook County chief judge Timothy Evans last week. They asked Evans to “ensure that all parties to current and future eviction court proceedings in Cook County have a court record available to them.”

The Illinois Supreme Court issued guidance in March that specifically states Zoom proceedings can be recorded by judges and clerks. But they are “unlikely to do the

recordings they’re allowed to do without explicit guidance from the chief judge,” says Malcolm Rich, director of the Appleseed Fund and the Chicago Council of Lawyers. Indeed, legal aid attorneys told the *Reader* that when they’ve asked judges to record proceedings in recent months—either with Zoom’s built-in recording feature, or using the courtroom equipment if the judge or clerk was logging in from the courtroom—they’ve been told that it’s not possible.

“We ended up hiring court reporters,” says Michelle Gilbert, legal director at the Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing, recalling a contentious case last fall. Her clients ultimately settled with the landlord but “there were legal issues raised that we would have appealed for sure if we hadn’t settled,” she says. “We were denied a jury, we were denied discovery—these were really important issues we would have appealed.” The expense of private court reporters is out of reach for the typical eviction court litigant—whether a low-income tenant or a mom-and-pop landlord.

Every day in eviction court a few judges also handle more than one courtroom’s worth of calls. The day he slammed the eviction moratorium as “idiocy,” Moltz oversaw cases assigned to two courtrooms; a few days before that he had handled five courtrooms. In a statement, the chief judge’s office cited vacancies, COVID-19, and overlapping vacations and sick days as reasons for the short staffing. “When a single judge handles two Zoom courtrooms, the Zoom process is extremely adaptable and can accommodate the extra cases,” a spokeswoman wrote. But judges clearly struggle with the technical challenges of online court, too. Some keep litigants in the Zoom waiting room until ready for their case—something that isn’t explained ahead of time, making open court functionally closed and leaving people unsure if they’re in the right place. At least one judge, David Skryd, habitually has his camera off.

On January 5, Judge Sondra Denmark kept litigants who were supposed to be in another Zoom room waiting for more than 30 minutes before she finally helped figure out where the case was supposed to be and gave them the right numbers to dial. This was despite the fact that she had instructed them at a previous court date to get her attention and ask for the correct Zoom coordinates at the beginning of her call that day. The landlord’s lawyer attempted to do this several times, but Denmark reprimanded her for interrupting.

After finally getting the right information, the landlord’s lawyer was able to transition to the other Zoom call; the tenant—who faced eviction for allegedly not letting the landlord into his unit to make repairs—wasn’t. He had asked Denmark if he could get the hearing rescheduled because 45 minutes after he got on the call his work break had run out, but she refused. Even though he’d shown up to court on time and ready to present his side of the story, the case was decided without him and in the landlord’s favor.

In recent years public awareness about elected Cook County judges has been stimulated by the judicial election guides compiled by Injustice Watch and civic groups. Historically, retention has been a breeze for judges, most of whom work in obscurity and can easily count on 60 percent of voters choosing to keep them on the bench at every election. Though that’s still true for most of the county’s 238 elected “circuit” judges, criminal justice reform advocates have succeeded in a few recent campaigns to unseat judges with unsavory histories of prejudiced statements, inappropriate behavior, and appellate court reversals. Though the county’s 141 “associate” judges are elected by the circuit judges (and can’t preside over felony cases), records about their courtroom actions are still important.

“We want court reporting or court recording in order to provide for accountability in every Cook County courtroom,” says Rich. It would be difficult to scrutinize the qualifications and behavior of judges whose words and actions in open court are never on the record and whose decisions aren’t regularly subject to appellate court review.

This week, after receiving the Coalition’s letter and questions from the *Reader*, Chief Judge Evans’s office confirmed that all eviction court proceedings are to be recorded via Zoom. In addition, court reporters were assigned to some of the Chicago eviction courtrooms. “At the onset of the pandemic, the court’s digital recording system was not available because it was not possible for the personnel who handled digital recording to operate it from home,” a spokeswoman for Evans wrote in a statement explaining the six-month absence of recording. “When it came to the court’s attention that recording of eviction proceedings had not resumed, the court decided that recording should resume.” 

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BEST OF CHICAGO 2020



Katiana Edwards (left) with Maya Wallace at the Mason Park basketball court in Evanston

ALISON SALDANHA

NEWS

A case of disappearing hoops in gentrifying neighborhoods

In the last decade the Chicago Park District has removed 12 of 16 basketball courts from neighborhoods that have doubled and tripled in value, further marginalizing communities facing displacement.

By ALISON SALDANHA

On a hot sunny Saturday in August, 15-year-old Katiana Edwards, dressed in a gray sports bra, matching shorts, and white shoes, readied herself for a game of basketball. With no access to a court within a mile radius of her home in West Rogers Park, Katiana had to hop into her father Ralph's gray Jeep Cherokee, driving past Chicago's northern boundary to Mason Park in Evanston, for nearly four miles to get here. The point guard joined her friends Dafina Ukaj and Maya Wallace and others, and waited for a few more to arrive from the Evanston Township High School basketball team. The girls huddled around to pick some music on a phone. Katiana fiddled with an old, black loudspeaker plugged into a power outlet at a fieldhouse on the east

end of the court, trying hard to minimize the distortion it spat out instead of tunes.

That peak summer noon, the sun bore down on the asphalt painted green and red with white lines to mark the three-point arc, the foul line, the half-court line, and the boundaries. Lush green maple trees threw little shadows along the edges. Four tall lamp posts dotted the midline of the playing field. Beyond the manicured hedgerow on the north end near Church Street, large three-story houses with red brick walls and gray roof tiles peeked overhead, their window sills and frames freshly painted white. On the southeast end, a few feet away from the din of the sound system, little children ran around a playlot, swinging, sliding, and crawling

around colorful play structures. A handful of adult caregivers minded them, occasionally glancing in the direction of the noise.

Fitted with nine rims, the sprawling Mason Park basketball court is an oasis. Not many parks have enough hoops for girls to play without having to ask boys to share, Katiana said. The challenge of finding a place to play was a problem even before the COVID-19 pandemic closed many facilities.

The girls picked a hoop closer to the shade of the maple trees near the soccer field. They circled around and divided themselves into teams. Once the final player arrived with a new battery-powered black portable speaker, Katiana set it on the ground behind the pole anchoring the rim. As the clear beats and synth of rapper Moneybagg Yo's summer hit "Said Sum" drifted over the court, a sense of relief took hold and the girls started to play with a little bounce in their step. Passersby, mostly young boys and men, stopped to watch.

When the city started to reopen in June, Katiana managed to find a few basketball courts closer to home, in other neighborhoods on the city's north side. But at these parks she doesn't feel welcome. For example, she often finds residents walking their dogs by the park, simply staring at her. "Especially if I'm by myself. It's kind of weird because I'm Black," she said. "And I'm playing basketball in a predominantly white area."

Sometimes when Katiana and her friends go to play basketball in these predominantly white neighborhoods, they find the hoops removed the next day, she said. "See, we used to have basketball runs, so like a lot of people would show up to the parks and we would play games like a tournament. And I think the police or somebody in the area reported that and the next day the hoops were gone. So everybody had to either stop playing basketball or find another place to go to play," she said.

Other times, the police just show up, casually driving up and down the street as the kids try to play a game. "Like when we first show up, they're not there. And then after a couple, like 20 minutes, they'll show up and they'll just be sitting in the area and hanging out," she told me. "I wouldn't say we were necessarily confronted, but like, we were scared off. Just from the police just riding around like constantly back and forth, back and forth—it scares us. 'Cause knowing what the police are

doing to Black people, it does scare us." She continued. "Just the looks that they give us just constantly riding around. They're purposely trying to like, get us out of the area."

This is a common experience for Black people on the north side, where Chicago Park District data shows there are fewer basketball rims than the south and west sides of the city.

Others I interviewed similarly described feeling unwelcome when they traveled to gentrified, white neighborhoods to play basketball. Their feelings of exclusion are not unfounded. An analysis of Chicago Park District data obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests shows that the great majority of basketball courts removed over the last decade were located in the north and near west sides of the city, in areas that have rapidly gentrified.

Overseeing 8,800 acres of park space, the Chicago Park District is the largest municipal park manager in the United States. Between 2010 and 2020, the park district decommissioned 260 sports amenities across city parks, according to data received through a FOIA request. Basketball courts, along with tennis courts, made up the largest numbers of decommissions, and the neighborhoods from which both were removed seem to have significance in a city where virtually every aspect of public policy and daily life is infused with a legacy of segregation and inequality.

Basketball courts and backboards were removed primarily in gentrifying neighborhoods where in many cases the white population is increasing and Black population is decreasing. That means it's often hard for people on the north side, like Katiana, to find a place to play basketball. Meanwhile people on the south and west sides have less access to tennis. (There are also basketball courts and tennis courts at schools and on private property, but these are often inaccessible to neighborhood residents. The park district data doesn't include these facilities, though sources I spoke to say the same trends follow here too.)

In the last decade, 16 basketball courts and 42 backboards have been removed from Chicago parks. Twelve of the 16 courts were removed in Rogers Park, Albany Park, the Near West Side, East Garfield Park, Bronzeville, and West Town. Prices of single family homes in these neighborhoods have doubled and tripled since 2000, the steepest rises among all neighborhoods in Cook County, according to an analysis of DePaul University's House Price

Index for the region. Another court was removed from Washington Park, adjacent to the high-profile Hyde Park neighborhood, one-time home to the Obamas and former Mayor Harold Washington among others. Housing prices here grew over 75 percent, the index showed. With gentrification often comes tensions around class and race, and the influx of higher-income residents in these parts has not led to general, communal prosperity.

A median 44 percent of renters in these seven neighborhoods live below the poverty line, often in unaffordable units as rents rise, according to an analysis of data from the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University. In fact, the share of renters below the poverty line now living in unaffordable housing in these neighborhoods has grown 6.3 percentage points between 2012-2014 and 2015-2017.

Residents and experts say it seems clear that basketball courts are being removed because some residents—perhaps newer, predominantly white ones—feel threatened when they see Black people hanging out. The official response on why these courts are deactivated, however, is harder to find. I checked the minutes and agendas of the park district’s board meetings, available online for the last seven years, to see if there had been any discussion on the closure of basketball courts at these parks, but could find none.

Based on data I received through an earlier FOIA request, I trained my search on four courts that the park district provided details on the year of closure: Willye B. White basketball court in Rogers Park, Jane Addams court in the Near West Side, and the court at Gately Park in the less gentrified Pullman neighborhood on the south side along with Edgebrook court in Forest Glen. I perused meeting agendas for the year preceding their closure, ran keyword searches, and supplemented this research with FOIA requests to the Chicago Park District to see if there were any records available.

I requested all documents, complaints, letters from constituents, and e-mails from park managers and councils for a year preceding their shutdown. The park district said there are no such documents or files related to the basketball courts at Pullman, Forest Glen, and the Near West Side.

For the basketball court in Rogers Park, deactivated in 2018, the district has asked for more time. Separately, I filed a FOIA with the Chicago Police Department to see if any 911 calls were recorded in the year preceding its

closure. The police have shared information on two 911 calls reported at Willye B. White park in 2017: one was a complaint about males gambling at the recreational center, and another call about a 24-year-old male playing basketball with a broken ankle.

Meanwhile, between 2010 and 2020 the park district removed 64 tennis courts across the city, mostly from Black and Brown neighborhoods on the south and west sides. Inevitably, these decisions, however innocuous they may truly be, reinforce the stereotypes associated with tennis as a predominantly white, exclusive sport. When contrasted with the data on deactivated basketball courts, their racial underpinnings become starker.

A month before the COVID-19 shutdown, during the harshest weeks of winter, Chicago, largely considered the “Mecca” of the sport, hosted the NBA All-Star game. The city’s legacy begins with one of the country’s first all-Black basketball teams, the Harlem Globetrotters, and extends to producing some of the finest NBA players, from Isiah Thomas and Tim Hardaway of the old guard, to Dwyane Wade and Anthony Davis of the last decade. The annual multimillion dollar exhibition event took place at the United Center, where Michael Jordan led the Chicago Bulls to six NBA championships in the 90s. About two miles away, at Roberto Clemente Park in the gentrifying West Town neighborhood, the basketball court has been removed.

Alderman Daniel La Spata of the First Ward, where the park is located, said public safety is often used as a reason for deactivating basketball courts. La Spata previously worked as a planning and policy associate for Friends of the Parks, a 46-year-old nonprofit watchdog dedicated to protecting equitable park access across the city. He said that while the Clemente hoops were removed before his time in office, he guessed that racial tension was an underlying reason.

“There were young Latinx boys and men who were using the court and who were perceived as creating a public safety threat and I would believe that was why they were taken down,” La Spata said. “That’s a horrible reason to take down a basketball court, but that is something that frequently happens in the city. The fallout is that’s really a collective punishment on the neighborhoods when usually 90-95 percent of folks are doing nothing wrong but still lose access to recreational amenities.”

Almost a decade ago, in June 2011, Alder-

man James Cappleman, then freshly elected to lead the 46th Ward that covers Uptown, removed the basketball hoops at Broncho Billy Park for similar reasons. “The police recommended this change to help alleviate accelerated gang activity in the area,” Cappleman wrote in a ward newsletter then. He added he was working with youth programs to place the removed hoops at two other neighborhood parks—Clarendon and Chase—or a local alternative high school and Boys & Girls club. The news led to a heated discussion in the comments section of hyperlocal news site Uptown Update.

“We aren’t talking about bored youths—we are talking about people dealing drugs and shooting and killing people. Do I want this behavior off my block at the cost of some hoops? YES! Do I care if teenagers have to find another basketball hoop? No. I don’t want people get killed [*sic*] in front of my home anymore. This is my home and I feel like I have much more a right to not worry about getting shot than the youth do to play basketball. Call me self-serving but until you live here with kids you don’t know how you would feel,” read one comment from 2011.

Cappleman restored the Broncho hoops a few months later as it continued to garner criticism from his constituents. An investigation by the *Reader’s* Mick Dumke found no connection between basketball and reported crime in the area around Broncho Billy. “The bottom line: if there’s a connection between the basketball hoops and neighborhood crime, the numbers don’t show it,” wrote Dumke, after analyzing crime reports from the area before and after the hoops were removed.

In 2016, Carol Quinlan, a trustee of Oak Lawn village, a predominantly white southwestern suburb, appeared before the local park district board to demand that all basketball hoops be removed from the village’s parks, local news network Patch reported, after a group of teens clashed over racial slurs in the area a month before. She complained children could no longer use the parks because young adults and teens from Chicago were coming to the area to play basketball. “People aren’t feeling safe. I believe that by taking down the hoops . . . it would remove some of that outside element,” Quinlan said.

To date there is no conclusive evidence to show removing basketball courts from neighborhoods will make them safer. A 2011 study on Philadelphia’s neighborhood parks found that with or without basketball hoops, crime

rates are likely to be higher than the city’s overall crime rate; this is also true of other public spaces that attract crowds, like shopping malls. On August 18, the park district agreed to respond to a set of questions I sent a week before on removing facilities. I have yet to receive their responses.

In April, a resident of Rogers Park posted a picture of five Black minors on the neighborhood social networking app Nextdoor. The picture showed the children spaced from each other around a basketball backboard rim on private property near Touhy Park. The post complained the children were not practicing social distancing. “Unless you all live together THIS is not social distancing,” it read.

Some residents reacted to the post angrily, recommending the user call the police next time; some others pointed out the picture doesn’t seem to present any danger. A few suggested she could have politely asked them to disperse. A couple called the children in the picture “assholes” and “morons.” Similar exchanges marked Nextdoor conversations around complaints about loud music, transitional housing, or long lines outside Jewel-Osco filled with the “food-stamp crowd.”

Bonita Nwachukwu, 33, a new resident of south Evanston and former Rogers Park neighbor, asked the chat forum why the police should be called on minors standing around a backboard rim on private property. When white people move to the area, the neighborhood has to change to accommodate the way they would like the place to be, she observed. “I guarantee you that the bad things that have been going on in those neighborhoods, law-abiding, long-time residents have wanted those things to change for years,” she said. “But complaining about basketball? About someone being constructive with their time? That doesn’t make sense.”

In 1982 the federal government filed a lawsuit against the Chicago Park District following investigations into racial discrimination over the district’s capital improvements, staffing, and programming. This resulted in the 1983 consent decree that set strict standards for construction and improvements of park amenities, especially in disinvested minority neighborhoods.

The decree ran through 1989 and was lifted when the park district convinced the federal government that it had created a five-year plan that would meet the underlying goals of the consent decree.

Two years ago, however, the Friends of the

continued from 13

Parks alleged that the park district continues to discriminate in the way it invests across the city. The group's 2018 State of the Parks report found that parks on the south side have significantly smaller budgets compared to the north side, where programming is likely to be more robust than in other parts of the city. Most importantly, the report found that Chicago's Latinx community has the least amount of park access, and that capital improvement requests in Black communities are approved at half the rate as those in white communities. For its part, the park district vehemently denied the report's findings, calling it "incendiary and divisive" and claiming it "distorts" the data.

In the listening tours and community surveys that helped shape the report, Friends of the Parks found a dissonance between the perception of danger in parks and the reality. In 2017, nearly half of all parks (46.7 percent) reported zero crimes, the report noted. In 91.8 percent of the parks where crimes were reported, there were fewer than ten incidents over the course of 12 months.

"There are real concerns about the numbers of crimes that occur on park property creating risks to personal safety," the report said, noting that citizens who participated in the listening tours cited gun violence and gang-affiliated activities as some of the reasons that their parks feel unsafe. "There are also real concerns stemming from the extensive perpetuation of racism and other discrimination that cause park users to continue to feel excluded from using certain parks."

Julia Epplin-Zapf, a former policy associate at Friends of the Parks, who worked on the report's chapter on public safety, said park restrooms and basketball courts were the two most commonly shut down amenities for security reasons. "And then there's kind of an abstract timeline of after [the crime] happened, when would it be allowed to be a public amenity again," she said.

Parks have a tremendous capacity to be a space for people to have freedom, she said. Especially for people who might be excluded from a lot of other areas, who might be policed or experiencing surveillance in so many other areas of life.

"That's some racist-ass shit right there," Ralph Edwards, Katiana's father and a program manager at community organization Metropolitan Family Services,

said of the removal of hoops on the north side. "That's just bullshit—hell no—what do hoops have to do with crime? That's stereotyping and labelling kids who just want to play the sport." A reformed gang member himself, Edwards works with high-risk youth to end gun violence on the north side.

Steven Foy, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, whose research has focused on race, social psychology, and mental health, said the way crime gets racialized in sports facilities or public amenities is often due to "bad statistics."

"Take, for example, drug use: there are pretty decent surveys that suggest that white people are doing drugs as much as Black folks are, but they are getting arrested at much lower rates," Foy explained. "Part of it has to do with wealth and income and part of it is also that some people are actually getting targeted directly as a result of race. Even with the stop and frisk policy, we now know for certain Black and Latinx people are more likely to be stopped by the police."

Elvia Ochoa, director of neighborhood parks at Friends of the Parks, said she has also witnessed an "anti-youth" and racist attitude around basketball in her conversations with stakeholders in the city's neighborhood parks. She found this was especially the case for outdoor courts.

"It was never very overt, but it was always around that language of 'those people' kind of stuff. 'We don't want those people coming into our park,' or, you know, 'Those people that are playing basketball are the ones that are bringing the problems,'" she said. She said she heard similar conversations two decades ago in Pilsen, when the southwest side community was on the cusp of its gentrification boom.

Foy suspects the exclusion of Black basketball players and basketball courts in white neighborhoods may also be an indirect response to the sport's increasing identification as a "Black" rather than "white" sport. At the collegiate level, in Division I schools 53 percent of male players are Black, while at the NBA level, 74 percent are. In the summer of 2020, as the nation roiled over demonstrations against police brutality, NBA players protested in solidarity and moved the multibillion dollar association to embrace the Black Lives Matter movement. "It does make me wonder whether when people are opposed to basketball courts being in their neighbor-

hood, if that's a way of whites kind of under the table saying, 'We don't want Black people in our parks, taking over this sport.'"

Edwards said that in Rogers Park, it's even harder to find basketball courts in gentrifying areas where Black and white people live uneasily together, than in predominantly white parts of the neighborhood where courts are anyway few and far between.

"If you go far into the white neighborhoods, you can see their rims are still up so it's plainly obvious they don't want us playing and they clearly say it too," he said. "They don't want to spell out they don't want Blacks, but they do say, 'We don't want no congregating' you know what I'm saying, so y'all know that Blacks are the only ones basically congregating at these courts."

He likened it to modern-day segregation. "Just the fact that kids are getting up and planning their day, and they want to go play basketball but they end up saying, 'Oh, well, we can't go here, we can't go there, we can't go here' . . . A lot of this stuff going on out here, it creates feelings among us people," Edwards said. "And then society says, 'They're in gangs,' they make it sound like we're stupid or the scum of the earth. They snatch our resources and then they wonder why is there an uptick in violence—it's all a setup man, it's just a setup. Put the goddamn basketball ramp back up. Simple."

One balmy summer evening in July, Ken Mason, 26, and his girlfriend Danielle Woods, 26, headed up to Clarendon Park in Uptown so Mason could play basketball for the first time since the shutdown. Light breezes from Lake Michigan blew over the court and the sun stayed out late. A heavily pregnant Woods, dressed in a light blue tank top and jean shorts, rested on a pillar by the perimeter as she watched Mason, dressed in a red James Harden Houston Rockets jersey, play.

During the shutdown Mason, who grew up in Austin on the west side, noticed the basketball rims were gone, but the tennis and volleyball nets remained. "We couldn't move around in the west and south sides, but they weren't policing people up here," he said. "We found all the white people were just walking their dogs, and going for runs like there was no pandemic."

Despite the paucity of courts here, Mason still prefers playing on the north side. "If you go on the west side or the south side, they don't have a lot of opportunities or resources

there," he said, "Where they do, you don't want to go there because there are gunshots, there are crack addicts, and just a lot of violence. No one wants to go play in the park like that."

Woods, a mental health worker with Heartland Alliance, an anti-poverty organization based in Chicago, lived in Uptown before moving to Logan Square. She said the racial tensions over basketball courts in gentrified neighborhoods often boils down to a lack of empathy and understanding of the realities for Chicago's Black children.

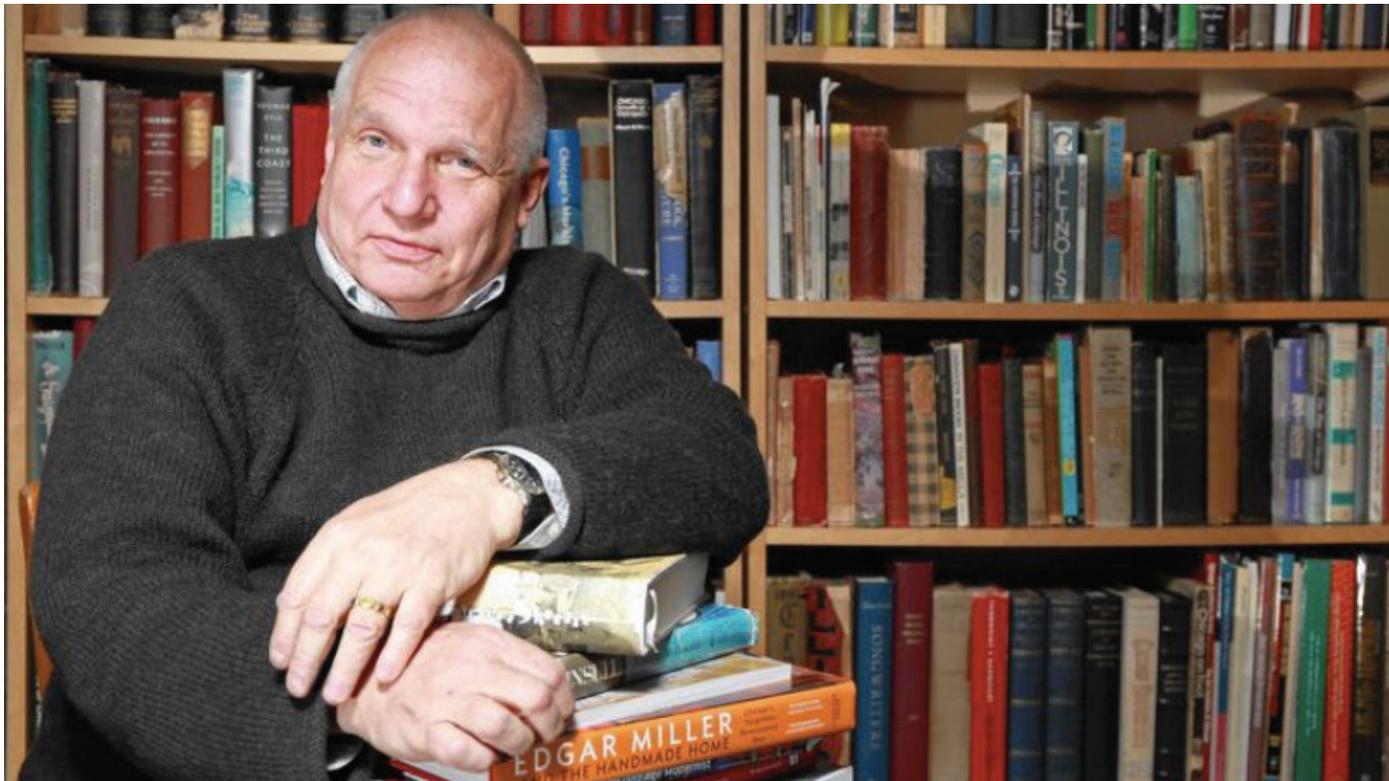
"These kids grow up in neighborhoods where there is a lot of violence, and with that comes a lot of trauma they still don't know how to process," she said. "And white people, they don't know anything about the type of life these kids are living; they are going to look at them different. They're going to look and say these kids are uneducated, they're not the same, they don't deserve much, and this is our land."

Katiana and her friends said that without access to courts in public parks it's harder for girls to find safe places to play and practice basketball. It reduces their opportunity to excel and create space in the world of sports where female athletes routinely find themselves undervalued. In the summer, the girls' school cut their basketball program over COVID-19 concerns though the boys program continued without disruption. The girls said they get why people would want to remove the rims for safety reasons during the pandemic but they look forward to the day they come back everywhere.

"I like playing basketball because there's always new things you could be learning, things you can improve too," Katiana's friend Maya Wallace said. "Like I get really bored if I'm doing the same, like repetitions, but with basketball, you're always learning new things. There's always something else you could do and like."

For Katiana, the sport is therapeutic and offers a support system that is uniquely able to meet the challenges of a growing teen. "It takes my mind off of things, when I feel down I can just come and play basketball. When you play basketball you're not involved in anything else that comes to mind," she said. "You just have your teammates, your sisters, your family, and I love that. I love being with my family on the court." ■

Twitter @alisonsald



Tim Samuelson ■ COURTESY OF CITY OF CHICAGO DCASE

CULTURE

Tim Samuelson, Chicago's first and only cultural historian

He's not history yet.

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

Last week the city announced an upcoming event honoring the retirement of Tim Samuelson, its first and—since there's no plan to hire a replacement—only, cultural historian.

After 19 years on this job, and a total of 33 years as a city employee, Samuelson will be feted with a free public (but virtual) send-off next week. It'll be hosted by WTTW's Geoffrey Baer, with local luminaries including Mayor Lori Lightfoot on hand to pay tribute to this legendary scavenger, official packrat, and, in Lightfoot's words, "walking encyclopedia of Chicago history."

The next day, Samuelson, who'll turn 70 in June, will be back at work, as the city's first cultural historian emeritus.

That means he'll still be in his artifact-packed fifth-floor office in the Cultural Center, planning exhibits and serving as a public resource on the city's history. Only now, it'll be as a volunteer. And the major project he'll be working on is a new, long-term Cultural Center exhibit of his own vast collection of historic Chicago stuff.

Never mind that the city council last month passed a resolution congratulating him "on the occasion of his retirement from city service": he says there's no way he'll be giving up the job that's been "a dream gig for a classic obsessive history nerd like me."

Samuelson has a passion for bringing the flotsam and jetsam of history to life by telling the stories that give those objects meaning. He says it's an obsession that dates back to his

Rogers Park childhood, when he somehow "just gravitated to older things." He was the nerdy kid at Armstrong grade school who put up a fuss over a plan to tear original metal cornices off the building. At Sullivan High, he "kept them from painting over WPA murals when the art teacher thought they were ugly." And on his college application, he told Roosevelt University that he aspired to matriculate there, not to get an excellent education, but because "I want to go to school in Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Building."

By the time he enrolled at Roosevelt, he already had a significant mentor: photographer and Sullivan scholar Richard Nickel. It was a connection facilitated by an astute librarian at the Art Institute's Burnham Library. "I met [Nickel] when I was 16 years old; he would take me along to Sullivan buildings on the south side that were being demolished," Samuelson says. "I would help him salvage pieces and document the buildings." On April 13, 1972, the day that Nickel was killed in a demolition collapse at the Stock Exchange building, "I was supposed to be with him," Samuelson says: "He got there earlier than I did."

After college Samuelson worked for architect John Vinci (who recreated the Stock Exchange Room at the Art Institute), and in the early 1980s, he took a job with the city Commis-

sion on Chicago Landmarks. In 1997, he moved to the Chicago Historical Society as curator of architecture.

While he was still at the Landmarks Commission, however, he met artist Barbara Koenen. She was a new hire at the Cultural Center, and her boss, public art program head Mike Lash, had sent her to Samuelson to learn enough about leaded glass windows to supervise a project involving them. Samuelson was immediately smitten: "She came into my office, and, I swear to God, it was love at first sight," he says. They married in 2000.

Two years later, Koenen summoned him to a Department of Cultural Affairs Christmas party at Maxim's where Commissioner Lois Weisberg took him aside. "We're gathering a team in different cultural disciplines," Weisberg told him. "I want to do history, and you're the person I want to do it." She gave him a two-word job description: "help everybody."

Samuelson estimates his personal collection at 20,000 to 25,000 objects. Some of it is stashed at Mana Contemporary, where he has a studio, and some is in the basement of the Trader Joe's at Wabash and Roosevelt. If you're looking at the salmon display there, it's directly under your feet.

Lately he's been thinking he should get these objects documented and digitized, because "if I drop dead, nobody will know what they are." He's created a nonprofit to help fund that, and says he decided on the nominal retirement in order to have the freedom to do it.

The plan at the Cultural Center is for a rotating display in a space to be designed by Chris Ware. It'll be housed in its own room just off the Washington Street entrance, and will spill down the west corridor, which Samuelson considers prime exhibit space because, in this gloriously free venue, it leads to the restrooms. "I love it that everyone goes through that corridor, even if you're coming in off the street to use the bathroom," he says. "It's the most traveled, most seen area in the building."

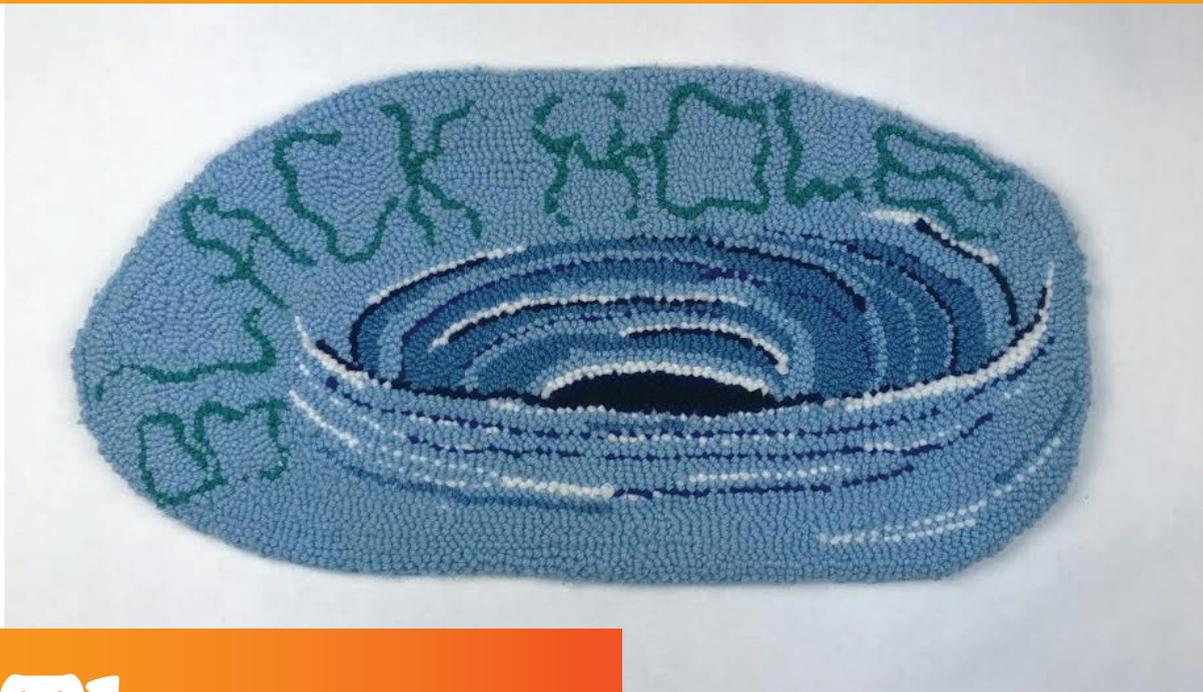
COVID permitting, the exhibition could open by fall. **■**

Celebrating a Living Landmark—a Tribute to Tim Samuelson is scheduled for 4 PM, Thursday, January 28. Register by January 26 at eventbrite.com/e/celebrating-a-living-landmark-a-tribute-to-tim-samuelson-tickets-136364807811

■ @Deannaisaacs

For artist Nora Chin, humor is just as important as nostalgia when it comes to rugs.

© COURTESY NORA CHIN



The rug revival

Tufting their way through the pandemic

By S. NICOLE LANE

Nora Chin thinks about rugs all of the time. “I fall asleep at night thinking about rugs [that] I want to make and new things I want to try,” she says. The lifelong Chicagoan was raised by artists. Spending her childhood figure skating and some of her early 20s skating professionally for Disney On Ice, she’s dipped her hands in various mediums after attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Working in photography, drawing, painting, and ceramics, she says that “humor is important to me in my work and I try to use it to tap into ideas of nostalgia and as a way to access more difficult or serious themes like the pain of growing up and millennial anxieties.” Ultimately, she landed on rug-making during the pandemic.

Chin isn’t alone in this newfangled desire to create something from which she derives comfort. The draw of some pandemic hobbies—like puzzles, rollerblading, or sewing—takes us back to simpler times. Folks have been feverishly searching for distractions, excuses to log off and escape their blue screens. People are reading again. People are making things. DIY has stolen the show. Whether it’s sewing your own face mask, taking up weaving, embroidering small objects, domestic art—particularly fiber arts—

are exploding into the quarantine art scene.

In my personal social media bubble, I started to notice an influx of rug-making during the beginning of quarantine. I even got into the hobby myself. While sitting in my living room, staring at all of my objects, spending more time with them than ever before, I started picking apart what I wanted to change. I also longed to create something physical, something I could hang on my wall. Redecorating became an obsession of mine. After hours of scrolling through 1970s-themed rugs for my living room that cost hundreds of dollars, I realized I have all of the time in the world. I purchased a latch-hook kit from eBay for \$30 and made my first rug. Doing something with my hands felt good and it conveniently distracted me from the pains of what was going on in the world.

Rug designs were originally rooted in a person’s tribe, village, or town. The design signified their identity, their city of origin, and their home. In 1848, the power loom was invented for carpets, and in the 1940s, manufacturing switched to tufted carpets, which still dominate the carpet industry today. A rug is still considered to be an interior statement piece. It can tie a room together or it can pull it apart.

In the past few years, the 1970s aesthetic

has made its comeback in fashion, typography, home decor, and music. Burnt oranges and mustard yellows are infiltrating our lives. With this comes the shag rug, a popular rug that gets its name from the deep pile of yarn and that gained prominence in the 70s. Originally inspired by Flokati rugs from ancient Greece, the shag rug isn’t just something that lies on the floor. Wall hangings—which are really just large rugs—also started to become popular in the 70s. Symbols like mushrooms, owls, flowers, and warm colors can be found on DIY vintage shag wall hangings. Shag wall carpeting even made its way to interior design when folks decided they wanted their walls to be a bit shaggy, too.

The resurgence of interior design has influenced how people are redecorating or what they are looking for in a future home. Industrial design like concrete, steel, and cement are out of fashion. The outdoors—including warm colors, plants, outside patios—are hot on the market for folks looking at new spaces to rent and live. *Fast Company* wrote in a recent article that the 70s are coming back because so much of the design is rooted in nature. Being trapped inside, we crave the natural world. Why not decorate our insides like the outside?

Now that so many people are working remotely, their space at home is incredibly important. I used to come home to eat dinner, watch Netflix, and sleep. Now, I don’t leave my apartment for a week straight. Staring at my walls, my plants, my furniture, and my floors dominates my mind. I want my home to be comfortable, to be warm, to be the best place I want to be. It’s no surprise then that this type of design is coming back to inspire folks in their everyday lives, but also their creative lives, too.

Most everyday folks weave, hang knot, or

buy a machine to make their rugs. Tim Eads, a Philadelphia-based artist and founder of Tuft the World, is quite literally selling out of his equipment and materials for rug-making. In 2018, Eads founded an online community for tufters and then began selling yarns and guns for interested rug-makers. Most folks find their equipment through his website, and since COVID-19 sprung into our lives, his business has bubbled over with orders. The tufting gun—invented in the 1930s—has been brought to the everyday consumer by Eads and he has found his gun orders skyrocketing since March. They are currently on preorder only.

Not only are we seeing sold-out rug supplies, we also see the incredible growth in popular TikTok videos in the #rugtiktok community where you can find time-lapse videos with millions of views. While perusing the app, it’s interesting to see the wide range of folks making rugs. Their styles all differ and their followers seem entranced. Between this and the Instagram surge, it seems that while everyone’s separated and quarantined, this new tufting circle has united folks from all over the world to unplug and create.

I first discovered Joanie Faletto’s work in 2020 when I learned about her rug-making collective with her partner, Myles Emmons, called Zoi Zoi. Although Faletto has been making rugs since before the pandemic, she used the time to really dive into the practice. In 2019, she made a doormat-sized rug with a punch needle which took her more than two weeks to finish. She decided she needed to invest in a rug tufting gun, which is basically a handheld sewing machine. The machines are quite an investment—the price ranges between \$300 to \$800—but they made her two-week rug projects something she could create in an afternoon. Faletto, a painter, says that some people call rug tufting just painting with yarn. However, she tends to disagree. “My process for each is completely different, and so is the end result. Just like painting, rug tufting with yarn is its own medium.” After a month of trial and error with her new machine, she learned how to create large-scale designs.

Faletto quarantined with her mom in Lemont where she set up a makeshift rug-tufting studio in her basement. During the pandemic, Faletto says that her new hobby was a big distraction from the news cycle and a way to spend her alone time. “It was kind of freeing to work in this way; living in quarantine there are no deadlines, and that took the stress out of needing to finish a project and finish it perfectly. There is virtually no pressure when you’re looking at an unending timeline,” she says.

Faletto begins with a colored pencil sketch of a design. After the design is made, she gathers

the yarn she needs, stretches backing fabric onto a wooden frame, and then she draws the image onto the fabric with soft vine charcoal. She then fills in the design with her tufting gun, line by line.

Since the pandemic, Faletto's rug work has changed. She explains that her COVID work takes a "detour into a joyful escape from reality." She sees her rugs as a "ticket out of the pandemic for even a minute." Her designs are colorful and loud. Zoi Zoi launched during the pandemic with their collection of work called "Clubhouse," which focuses on nightlife and how it's forever changed due to the pandemic.

"I think the idea to pay homage to nightlife subconsciously transpired," she says. "Dancing and dance music is really important to both of us personally, and is one of the main things that brought us together in the first place. The collection is both celebratory and mournful, but has a thread of hope that dancing until the early hours of the day aren't gone for good. Fingers crossed."

For artists like Faletto and Chin,

rug-making is a way to cope. Learning a new process like tufting has been beneficial for Chin, who lost her job and "a lot of control" in her life during the pandemic. Engaging with rug-making has been a distraction and a way to gain back the confidence that everything will be okay.

"It's also given me a small source of income that makes a huge difference. Financially the pandemic has put me in a somewhat precarious spot, so every time I sell a rug I feel so grateful. Thank you to everyone who has bought a rug from me and to anyone who is supporting independent artists during this time," she says.

Chin's works are currently smaller as she's working from home. She finds the beauty of working on a smaller scale as it helps her decide what works and what doesn't—she's still experimenting with the process. "I like the intimacy of them, being able to hold them in my hand and really explore them up close. Larger rugs are like another body in the room with you which [is] kind of the opposite. Now the rug is holding you! I want to experiment with all sizes.

Since I'm still relatively new to tufting I'm still kind of finding myself in the work so I'm definitely doing lots of experimentation," she says.

Like any creative practice, rug-making is meditative. For these two artists, creating a physical object is absolutely essential during the massive changes happening in the world. For some TikTok followers, just watching the making of a rug is entrancing. Whether it's by hand or with a gun, creating a drawing with yarn has taken storm during the pandemic. Whether it's our yearning for domesticity, looking to make extra cash, or just being an artist, there's no doubt that this new medium is here to stay. 

To purchase Joanie Faletto's rugs, contact her through her Instagram or Zoi Zoi's Instagram. You can also e-mail her at joaniefalettoart@gmail.com. To purchase rugs from Nora Chin on her Instagram, or e-mail her at businesscasserole@gmail.com.

 @snicolelane

RUG-MAKING TECHNIQUES

Hand tufting

This method uses a tufting gun creating a much faster and easier production of a rug. Makers stretch a foundation cloth on a frame and then use the gun to shoot loops of yarn from the back to the front.

Hand hooking

This method is when a maker pulls yarn from the back to the front of a foundation cloth using a rug hook tool.

Flat weaving

This type of rug-making process requires no foundation cloth as the maker makes the foundation and pattern at the same time with a loom machine. They are typically smoother in texture.

Hand knotting

Persian, Tibetan, and Indian rugs typically use this labor-intensive technique. The method requires a loom and weaving weft where they warp strands and tie small knots one at a time. This is a much slower process for high-quality rugs.

Machine making

In the modern era, machines are able to loom, weave, hook, and tuft. These automated loom machines are used in factory settings and can create intricate patterns with technology supplied by a computer.

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DMITRY SAMAROV

Finding happiness in letting go

Empty bookshelves aren't a bad thing.

By DMITRY SAMAROV

No one has ever used the words *joy* or *spark* to describe me and I haven't read Marie Kondo's book or seen her TV show. Yet, in the past year I've shed more than half my belongings and drastically changed my relationship to what remains. I moved last May and have been forced to stay inside with my possessions as sole company like most people, but there's more to it than that. Reconsidering and reorganizing the objects I'm surrounded by turned out to be

a valuable exercise for both my physical and mental health.

My plan to move was in place in late 2019, so as 2020 began, the process of culling books, records, and clothes was already underway. My criteria for keeping or discarding wasn't as philosophical as Ms. Kondo's; I was more concerned with how much I wanted to schlep to the new pad. If the process brought happiness, so much the better. Then the lockdown came.

In mid-March 2020, my place was beginning to fill up with moving boxes, but now there was much more time to pack since leaving the house was all but forbidden. I didn't pick up every single object and peer into its soul and its relationship to me, but I did log considerable hours digging through the flotsam of my life. I make art and books so accumulating both is an occupational hazard. But, thankfully, I'm not a true collector. I don't covet the rare or valuable. The things I love have personal meaning but often little commercial worth. So, forced to dig through piles of what I've amassed, return on investment wasn't much of a consideration.

I carted many books to the Open Books warehouse in Pilsen. Their store was of course closed in late March and early April, but there was a drop-slot in the side of the building. A friend who works in another bookstore recently told me that many, many Chicagoans had the same idea. With most other charitable operations effectively shut down over the past year, Open Books was practically the only game in town. It's amazing how much lighter I felt after I deposited every successive rolling suitcase full of books.

Moving into my new place in May sparked another reassessment. As I unpacked each box I once again pondered whether I really needed to keep this record or that book. I made two new piles: one to sell, the other to give away. eBay, Etsy, Discogs, and a million and one other sites make it easy to sell just about anything. I got rid of headphones, LPs, CDs, and a digital camera. But the other pile was far more rewarding. Unable to see friends and family in person I mailed them books, records, and art that I thought they might appreciate. It was a simple way to let them know they were on my mind and eased the task of setting up my new living arrangements—a true win-win.

The new habits I've learned out of necessity have become part of my everyday routine. Now when I finish a book, instead of putting it on the shelf, I immediately send it to the person it made me think of. In this way, even though we are apart, in a small way I can feel present in their lives. And who doesn't like receiving a package out of the blue? I don't know if doing this "sparks joy," but it definitely makes me feel like a little more than just another consumer. Perhaps my place will be completely empty someday—that sounds like happiness to me. 

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According to Dr. Devon Price, Laziness Does Not Exist

The Loyola psychology professor dismantles the “Laziness Lie.”

By TAYLOR MOORE

Dr. Devon Price had always been an overachiever. They sacrificed social events to get top grades (aiming to fulfill a teenage dream of getting a PhD in psychology), mechanically ran through tasks

on their to-do list, and still made time for activist work, live lit performances, and rewatching *Mad Men*. Daily life was exhausting but somewhat manageable.

Then they got sick. Two weeks before their

Devon Price  COLIN QUINN RICE

dissertation defense in spring 2014, Price developed a nasty flu and had to present their research while fevered. The flu persisted into the summer, along with a newly diagnosed heart murmur and anemia. To fully heal from what had become a year-long illness, Price forwent all work and social obligations for two months. With this rest came a new realization. “No matter how much I set out to achieve . . . it was never going to be enough,” Price tells me.

This pressure to be constantly productive led Price, now a psychology professor with Loyola University of Chicago’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies, to write a viral op-ed for the online publication *Human Parts* in 2018 entitled, “Laziness Does Not Exist.” In it they argued that what seemed like laziness was often a sign of overwork, trauma, or mental health struggles, and that educators needed to offer more empathy and accommodations in the classroom.

For the next year, Price would receive e-mails, comments, and messages every day from people who shared emotional stories of cruel parents, abusive bosses, and teachers who gave up on them. “If this many people were going through this problem, it’s because everybody’s being asked to do way too much and the way we define a person’s worth is totally distorted,” they say.

That article, originally written to blow off steam, became Price’s first book. *Laziness Does Not Exist* (Atria Books) is a science-based self-help manual for those run roughshod by capitalism. It’s an accessible read, blending the latest in psychological research with real-life stories from artists, activists, students, gig workers, white-collar employees, disabled people, and others buckling under the strain of impossible expectations. The chapters are arranged as affirmations: “Your Achievements Are Not Your Worth,” “You Deserve to Work Less,” “You Don’t Have to Be an Expert in Everything.”

Feelings of productivity-related guilt, shame, and exhaustion originate from what Price calls “The Laziness Lie”—the idea that “people who do more are worth more,” they write. Price traces the origin of this destructive worldview to Puritans settling in the U.S. in the 1600s, who believed hard workers were predestined for salvation, and anyone deemed lazy was damned. The conflation of hard work and moral worth was later used as justification for slavery and exploitative labor practices in the Industrial Revolution, says Price. Now the Laziness Lie manifests itself as burnout (“a public health issue”),

information overload, and “achievement hunting.”

But this idea doesn’t just have consequences for the overworked white-collar employee. Price says the Laziness Lie has contributed to working-class infighting and a stigma against marginalized people who receive public assistance, like food stamps and disability benefits. “It has really created a cultural outlook where we don’t trust other people,” Price says. “We think other people are gaming the system, instead of realizing all of us are overextended.”

To help combat the Laziness Lie, each chapter offers actionable advice, from prioritizing meaningful tasks over busywork (e.g., maintaining inbox zero) to “consciously [finding] time to experience awe” in nature and new experiences. However, unlike other releases in the productivity and self-care genres, Price wanted to balance tips with structural analysis of why we would feel overworked (i.e., stagnant wages, discrimination, mental illness, workplace surveillance). “Me taking more bubble baths isn’t going to fix [huge social problems].”

Price also wants to clarify the goal isn’t to relax so you can get more work completed. Overconsuming news, for example, is a common pitfall disguised as a moral imperative. “It may feel productive, because it keeps our minds busy and engaged, but it actually saps us of the energy to put up a genuine fight,” writes Price, who organizes around trans rights, decarceration, and destigmatizing autism.

Instead, change comes about from making small life changes (being “gentler with yourself and others”) and pushing for structural change for those who can’t quit their jobs, take more breaks, or live off the grid. What inspired Price the most while writing their book wasn’t the success stories of people rebuilding their lives. It was the people who carved a path for themselves despite having to stay in a terrible job for the money or manage all-consuming disabilities.

“There’s a lot of work we need to do to stand up for people who are in those situations and get them what they need materially so they actually can set boundaries in their life,” Price says. “It just politically calls me to action over and over again.” 

 @taylormooreesays



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Attain nirvana by turning off your ceiling light

Moving away from harsh lighting reduces anxiety and improves coziness.

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

Few things make the indoors less delightful than harsh, overhead light. The cold months combined with the raging pandemic spell more time than ever in our homes and making them cozier and more relaxing can be as easy as flipping a switch. If you're in a room with multiple types of light right now, try it: turn on the overhead light and take a look around. Then turn it off and light a wall sconce, table lamp, floor lamp, or some candles. Compare how your kitchen feels when lit only by overhead light with the vibe of using under-counter lighting, if you have it. The mood of the space will change in an instant.

Overhead light that points straight down—especially in the form of exposed “bright white” or “daylight” bulbs—lights the floor, rather than

the walls, faces, and other vertical surfaces we tend to look at while indoors, explains Nancy Clanton, founder and CEO of Clanton & Associates, a Colorado-based lighting design firm. Overhead lighting creates shadows, glare, and can provoke anxiety because it irritates the eyes. “Get rid of the overhead light, it's so unnatural,” she advises. “You should not use your ceiling for lighting.”

To experience comfortable lighting, our eyes should never be exposed directly to the source. Track lighting on the ceiling can be soothing when the individual fixtures are pointed toward the walls or the ceiling instead of down. Make sure your lamp is positioned at a height that allows its shade to hide the bulb. If using an open-top lantern on the floor, hide it behind a

piece of furniture so only the beam is visible. Fixtures that fully enclose the bulb cast the kind of diffuse light that instantly mellows a space. Once you've opted for your non-ceiling light sources, pick the right bulbs.

“Warm white” or “soft white” bulbs are the pro-coziness choice. Clanton recommends paying attention to the Kelvin color temperature (or KCT) of the light bulb. The warmest light sources, candles, have a KCT of 2,000. Incandescent lights are typically around 2,700 and many LED light bulbs are designed to match that. The higher the KCT, the more blue wavelengths in the light—blue light is antithetical to a restful atmosphere for the eyes.

“We have a circadian rhythm regulation where at night we should minimize our exposure to blue light,” Clanton explains. As blue light naturally disappears toward nightfall, our brains begin to produce melatonin, which is critical for quality, restful sleep. Night mode on our electronics is designed to eliminate the cold, blue light that keeps the brain awake and alert. But this digital help is useless if the lightbulbs in our home are emitting the light that will keep us awake. Clanton adds that if we have outdoor lighting we should extend the same care to the natural world as we do to ourselves—never have lighting pointing to the open sky and turn it off when not in use to give animals and plants the darkness they too need to thrive.

Another indicator you might see on light bulb boxes is the color rendering index, or CRI. When that number is closer to 100, the light will render the colors in our homes more faithfully—something to keep in mind if you'd like to properly light an artwork, for example. But lower CRI numbers indicate a more yellow light, which is the sort of mood lighting that'll help the brain prepare for a good night's sleep.

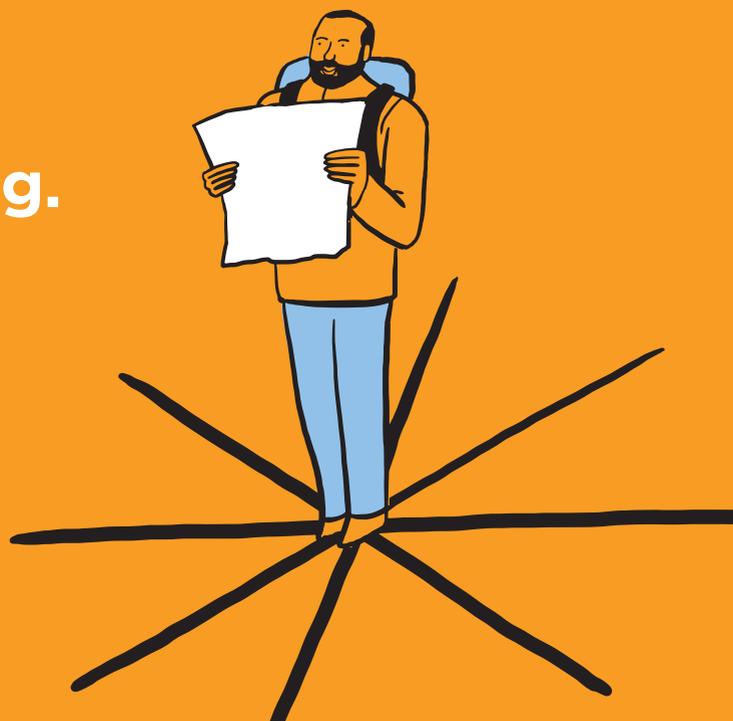
Changing how you light your home doesn't have to be a big expensive project, and in fact it can be one of the simplest and cheapest ways to renovate. Clanton tells all her clients to install dimmers wherever possible. “Because people are going to LED lighting, the dimmers need to be designed for electronic loads,” she cautions. “You can't use the old-fashioned dimmers for incandescents because the lights will start flickering.”

When you do need your space brightly lit and daylight from windows is scarce, opt for tall floor lamps that point their bulbs at the ceiling. With a bright bulb they'll accomplish the same effect as the ceiling light without any added harshness. To help set the mood for work rather than relaxation, Clanton recommends tabletop task lighting. It can be brighter and cooler without interfering with the overall comfort of the space. 

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Thrifting from home

Support local secondhand shoppers without stepping foot outside.

By **TARYN ALLEN**

Whether you're decorating your lockdown living space, buying unique clothes only your COVID bubble will see, or trying to replicate that long-gone thrift shopping high of snagging a one-of-a-kind piece before anyone else, Instagram startups are a surprisingly simple and engaging way to shop secondhand from home. The accounts are highly curated, and many sell out quickly, meaning there's an addicting rush that comes from sending a DM and a Venmo payment and suddenly owning whatever just appeared on your feed.

Most accounts offer shipping to anywhere, but choosing a local option means you can directly support your neighbors during the pandemic (Instagram as a platform doesn't steal a share) while also treating yourself, maybe even snagging free local delivery along the way. Meet a few Chicagoans whose shops are very worth checking out:

Nido Mori

Former full-time dog walker and self-described "unsuccessful painter/illustrator" Darcy Martinez started her Instagram vintage shop in the summer of 2020, after COVID cut back most of her clients. Martinez, 23, is a first-generation American of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent and newly out as gay, and thrifting offers her both supplemental income and a creative outlet. Her shop Nido Mori (@nidomori)—"forest nest"—has acquired more than 1,700 followers in just a few months.

Martinez sources most of her items from online or from thrift stores near her North Center home. A glance at her account shows a range of bright eclectic items, from Otogiri frog trivets and ceramic pig trinkets, to ornate ashtrays and stunning mirrors.

Whether she's searching for a requested item or stumbling upon a hidden gem she'd rather keep for herself, Martinez is all about the hunt,

The vintage shop Nido Mori is all about bright eclectic items. COURTESY NIDO MORI

giving discarded items new homes. She notes the importance of resale platforms sourcing items that are more rare or kitschy, rather than basic necessities like winter coats or pots and pans.

"If you do decide to sell these [basics], you can give back by donating to a nonprofit that serves the community you source from." Instead of common objects, she says, "I always lean towards items that make my friends go, 'Who on earth would buy this?' and that's a promise."

SheaButterQueen

Originally launched on Depop in August of 2019, SheaButterQueen (@shopsheabutterqueen) is an online thrift store for sustainable and unique fashion. The Instagram account shows countless photos of SheaButterQueen herself, the 23-year-old Black woman who runs the shop, modeling colorful clothing from a range of decades: a classic Chicago Bulls jacket, gold silk pieces, pastel 90s looks, leather jackets, and more.

SheaButterQueen works at Round Two, a popular Wicker Park thrift shop, but she still enjoys working for herself and being an entrepreneur online. A typical day of thrifting for her own shop means hunting for items from 9 AM to 7 PM: "I'm there that long not to grab everything I see, leaving no options for others, but to find what I know my audience is looking for."

More than anything, SheaButterQueen just loves to shop, and she always enjoys styling her finds and discovering unique pieces for her more than 1,000 followers. Her local thrift store is her go-to for stocking the SheaButterQueen shop, and in an upcoming Ebook she's writing, SheaButterQueen will share exactly where that is, as well as other tips on how to thrift like her.

Quarantini Vintage: Anna's "Stay Home" Goods

After COVID-19 hit, Anna De Ocampo Kain watched thrift shop after thrift shop appear on Instagram, but it wasn't until October that she, as a lifelong secondhand shopper, decided to start her own. The 27-year-old Portage Park reseller and realtor also freelances in the music world, but her Instagram store, Quarantini Vintage: Anna's "Stay Home" Goods (@quarantini.vintage.chi), has taken off in just a few months, with more than 300 sales and more than 1,500 followers. Kain sells all sorts of home goods that lean mid-century modern and vintage, thoughtfully sourced from Goodwills and other local places.

Kain is Filipina American, queer, and disabled, and all of her work as a reseller revolves around giving back to these communities and to the planet. Every month, 10 percent of her

profits go to a local nonprofit; she offers free delivery to Chicagoans who supply used packaging materials, so that everything she sells is 100 percent recycled; essential workers and teachers get 10 percent discounts; the list goes on. Since October, Kain and her customers have donated more than \$500 to Brave Space Alliance, CPS, and a range of other causes. She also stands firmly against the gentrification of thrift shops, combats the reselling of cultural pieces with her Thrifted Affirmation Project (#thriftedaffirmationproject), and constantly works to support her Filipinx community and BIPOC resellers.

Ziba Finds

Elhom Karbassi, the 28-year-old owner of Ziba Finds, started her business in early 2018. Originally called "elleOelle collection," it began when Karbassi moved from her hometown of Savannah, Georgia, to Chicago. She ended up leaving her 9-to-5 job just weeks before the COVID-19 shutdown, hoping to run her shop full time. She rebranded to Ziba Finds—ziba is Farsi for "beautiful"—at the same time rebranding her own identity from Elle, as she had been called most of her life, to Elhom, in an effort to "live my most authentic self" as an Iranian American.

Today, Karbassi runs Ziba Finds (@zibafinds), a vintage and thrifted clothing shop and personal shopping account on Instagram with nearly 600 followers. Thrifting for others is therapeutic and utterly joyful for Karbassi, and it comes naturally after the upbringing she had: a struggling artist/environmentalist mom and "very Persian" dad concerned with appearance despite income gave her the skills to find hidden treasures and to understand taste.

Karbassi stocks Ziba Finds at yard sales, estate sales, and her favorite: the Goodwill outlet in Gary, Indiana. Part of her goal is obviously to turn a profit, but Karbassi is always open to negotiation, especially for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks: "I get it, capitalism has created a system where we all gotta make some money, but I truly think fashion and clothes that make people feel good, confirmed, and beautiful should be accessible to everyone."

@tarynallen

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BEST OF CHICAGO
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Bechdel Fest 8: Realign playwrights

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PLAYS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Bechdel at 36

At Broken Nose, the test has been tweaked.

By **CATEY SULLIVAN**

Alison Bechdel's iconic eponymous Bechdel Test isn't the same exam it was when the award-winning graphic writer (*Fun Home*, *Dykes to Watch Out For*) created it back in ye olden 1985. A quick refresher if you've been under a rock since then or are still entrenched in the patriarchy: In order to pass the Bechdel Test, stories—be they on stage, page, or screen—have to include at least two female characters. And those two women have to talk at least once about something

Chicago's Broken Nose Theatre has been an outlier, since 2013 scoring season after season of straight As on the Bechdels, even as everything from Broadway (Harper Lee told *To Kill a Mockingbird* from Scout's POV, not her father's, but Aaron Sorkin's 2018 stage version ignored that) to books (hello, Jonathan Franzen) kept failing.

This year's *Bechdel Fest 8: Realign* sallies forth this month, pandemic be damned, with a virtual lineup of eight new 10- to 15-minute plays dealing with the theme of realignment. They'll stream free every Friday from January 29 through March 26, on the theater's YouTube channel. (Currently, the plan is for each new play to replace the previous week's offering.)

But the test itself has evolved since *Bechdel Fest* debuted in the heart of the Obama administration, says director JD Caudill, who marks their fourth Fest this year. *Bechdel 8*, they point out, includes pieces centered on transwomen, nonbinary, and queer characters. Caudill is directing Lane Anthony Flores's *going green* (March 12), a futuristic tale of dysmorphic beauty standards and body mod-

ification so extreme nobody's even tried it yet IRL. The synopsis sounds akin to *Black Mirror* meets *Nip/Tuck* meets *Desperate Landscapes*.

"I think decentering men is at the core of what the Bechdel Test is about," Caudill says. "For the Fest, we've been and we are expanding 'women' to include anyone who doesn't identify as a cis man. From an institutional standpoint at Broken Nose, it has always been about expanding the canon of American theater. We have plenty of *Glass Menageries* and *Hairsprays*. Broken Nose is about creating empathy for communities that haven't been amplified by that canon. And that's not just 'women' as they were defined years ago, it's nonbinary and queer and trans people."

Iris Sowlat is in her rookie year with *Bechdel Fest*. While she's primarily known as a director, she penned *The Ladies Next Door* (February 26) during the pandemic after her two directing gigs (*Romeo and Juliet* for Accidental Shakespeare and *The Black Knight* for Lifeboat Productions) were indefinitely postponed due to COVID. "To me, the definition of a woman is basically everybody who doesn't experience male privilege," Sowlat says. "The original test was all about saying 'let's not make men the default,' and that hasn't changed."

Sowlat's 15-minute playlet toggles between the 1970s to the present as a young queer woman navigates a breakup in the very same apartment where her lesbian aunt once had her own heart broken.

Sowlat wrote *The Ladies Next Door* over the summer, but the idea for the piece came over a year ago, when she found herself openly sobbing in the middle of the Art Institute's Andy Warhol exhibit. Heartache (Sowlat demurs from specifics) propelled her to the member lounge, where she started a Google doc on her phone. She reopened it post-lockdown, eventually coming up with a four-character drama that explores both family and romantic relationships.

"I wanted to write a kind of queer romantic comedy—I don't think we see a lot of those," Sowlat says. "I also loved the idea of working history into it, and the concept of these intergenerational relationships."

Asha McAllister is also writing for her inaugural *Bechdel Fest*. Her work, *How Strong is Your Tree Pose?* (February 12), takes place at a virtual yoga class, where the teacher and student attempt to navigate the definitions

of trans and nonbinary, and the assumptions that can follow both words. McAllister is not new to writing. At six, she was reviewing both the books she read and the movies that she watched with her family. (*Billy Jack* got high marks.)

McAllister's theater training also started early: Her mother directed student plays at North Chicago and Proviso East high schools, so McAllister and her siblings were often pressed into duty. They made costumes, folded programs, stuffed envelopes, and sometimes took to the stage itself.

"I played Travis in *A Raisin in the Sun* at North Chicago High School when I was in sixth grade because they couldn't get enough boys to audition. It was always like, 'Mom needs help with this, so let's go,'" McAllister recalls. "When I was a senior, we did *Crowns* and *Fences*, and I got to play Rose in *Fences*."

"But being on stage was never my main thing," she continues. "I wanted to write. The summer before my freshman year, our [Girl Scout] troop leader took us to this health and wellness expo, and one of the events was this group called Reality Theater run by Omni Youth Services. They did an original play and I was like—hey? What? I can write a play? That's a thing people do? I asked them to let me join without acting, but they said no, I had to do everything. So I did."

After that, she and her mother began scouting for plays by Black authors and featuring Black characters that they could bring to the schools. "We'd really hunt," McAllister says. "We'd write our own things, do monologue nights we called 'Different Perspectives.' I mean, I just love stories. That's how we communicate. That's how we connect. Telling stories."

The stories of *Bechdel 8* face challenges like no other.

"As a director, it's my job to make the room an energized, positive place," says Caudill. "That's a whole lot harder to do on Zoom. You can't rely on your body language. You're basically seeing people from the waist up. And everybody is under incredible stress. We've all been depressed. We've all been miserable. It's all difficult."

"But I'm excited to do this play because it shows trans and nonbinary people being messy. I think there's a tendency to show us as perfect people or as the villains. No room in the middle, no room to be messy like everybody else." **✍**

other than men. Extra credit: The women have names.

When the test started exploding all over pop culture in 1985, mainstream entertainment overwhelmingly flunked. Today, we're doing better: If 1985 was a straight F, we're now at a solid D-. (You can Google those receipts yourself. As a femme of some 58 years, I have grown weary of explaining it.)

@CateySullivan



NOW PLAYING

RR *Promising Young Woman*

Promising Young Woman is a candy-coated killer of a film. Following Cassandra (Carey Mulligan), who, like the movie itself, is sweet on the outside and a little scary on the inside, viewers are treated to a timely thriller that takes on society's history of favoring men's futures over women's lives. After Cassandra's best friend Nina suffers a campus sexual assault, which goes unaddressed by peers and professors, she takes matters into her own hands, avenging Nina by torturing all involved. Her tactics are wicked and are sure to raise some questions about justice, thanks to writer-director Emerald Fennell's creative and cutting work. This debut feature suffers, however, from an at-home viewing. From its captivating visuals, which offer an array of stylized girliness, to its fantastical plot, to a banger scene soundtracked by Paris Hilton's "Stars Are Blind," it's a shame this one isn't safe to see on the big screen. —**BECCA JAMES** 113 min. [In wide release on VOD](#)

RR *The Salt of Tears*

The three screenwriters of this film were all born before 1950, yet it aptly probes the experiences of several modern-day young people as they navigate their precarious romantic affairs. Veteran French director Philippe Garrel cowrote this with fellow luminaries Jean-Claude Carrière and Arlette Langmann, with whom he's written his last couple features (*Lover for a Day*,

In the Shadow of Women); it makes sense, then, that these films are of a piece in how they explore scenarios centered on younger people while still conveying hard-learned profundities about life. This in particular evokes a sublime futility that makes one question not just love, but existence itself. Luc (Logann Antuofermo), an assistant joiner who aspires to attend the École Boule in Paris so that he may become a cabinet maker—the dream of his wizened and warmhearted father (André Wilms)—starts seeing Djemila (Oulaya Amamra). Soon after he takes up with Geneviève (Louise Chevillotte), and then Betsy (Souheila Yacoub). Luc is a cad, albeit a gentle one, who regularly mistreats the women in his life under the pretense of being skeptical about love; the tables are turned when he finally does fall in love with Betsy, only for her to require that her other lover join them in their small apartment. The pitfalls of unripe romance are balanced here by a distinct timelessness: cellphones are around but not omnipresent, and the characters haunt quaint cafes and inconspicuous back-alley discos. Renato Berta's melancholy black-and-white cinematography and the tranquil soundtrack by Jean-Louis Aubert heighten the film's elegiac sentiment. A choreographed dance scene at the aforementioned club feels somewhat out of place but injects the somber narrative with a feeling of life waiting to be lived; sporadic narration seems to warn, however, that this is a tale of the past, that the characters' fates are already written. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** 100 min. [Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa](#)

The White Tiger

RR *Some Kind of Heaven*

Some Kind of Heaven offers an unfiltered look at life's final act. Following a small group of people living in Central Florida in The Villages, America's largest retirement community, the documentary calls to mind early Errol Morris. Contrasting The Villages' often refuted but persistent reputation as the "Disney World for old people," the film focuses on the residents who are unable to find happiness within its walls. Most interesting, perhaps, is Dennis, a lifelong partier who lives in his van but visits The Villages daily in hopes of finding a rich woman to take him in. Both necessity and delusion fuel his desire, which comes to a head when he remarks that one can have comfort or freedom, but never both. Whether about the local grifter or a recent widow, each story is beautifully shot and allowed to unfold organically, enabling an authentic rumination on life and the relationships that sustain it. —**BECCA JAMES** 81 min. [Facets Virtual Cinema, Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa, Music Box at Home](#)

RR *Spoor*

Spoor is the latest film from one of Poland's most prolific and influential filmmakers to hit the United States. Adapted from the novel *Drive Your Plough Over the Bones of the Dead*, Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor* follows Duszejko (Agnieszka Mandat), a retired civil engineer who loves astrology and taking care of animals in a remote mountain village on the Czech-Polish border. But when her precious dogs suddenly go missing—and gruesome, unexplained murders start to occur during different hunting seasons—Duszejko is determined to find out what exactly is going on, even if nobody takes her unusual theories seriously. Holland colors the town with a dynamic cast of characters, but it's Duszejko's unreliability and paranoia that command this film. *Spoor* can feel a bit bloated and sprawling at times, but Holland keeps its audience engaged with every confusing and conflicting step of the mystery. —**CODY CORRALL** 128 min. [In wide release on VOD](#)

RR *Stallone, Frank That Is*

"If you have to have a friend, have a friend like Frank Stallone." The newest documentary from Branded Studios, *Stallone, Frank That Is*, takes an in-depth look at the lesser-known of the Stallone brothers—Frank. From his Italian upbringings in the northeast to a tumultuous career, the documentary follows the highs and lows of one of Hollywood's most versatile performers. The doc will charm those unfamiliar with Stallone's career from boxing to acting. It's refreshing to take a look at an artist whose journey is mostly punctuated by several misses and almosts. The film also has incredible access with interviews from Frank's loved ones as well as Hollywood giants like Frankie Avalon, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Billy Dee Williams. What sets the movie apart from other similar where-are-they-now documentaries is that *Stallone* explores the challenges of carving your own path when you're living in the shadow of an uber-famous celebrity. What's it like to be the brother of Michael Jackson or the sister of Beyoncé? You'll have to watch *Stallone* to find out. —**NOËLLE D. LILLEY** 73 min. [Wide release on VOD](#)

RR *The White Tiger*

This tightly wound drama offers a salty take on the classic rags-to-riches story, here set in India. Balram (Adarsh Gourav) is a driver for the wealthy Ashok (Rajkumar Rao) and Pinky (Priyanka Chopra Jonas). One night, an accident sets off a chain of events that cause the cruelty of contemporary capitalism to come into sharp focus, leaving both Balram and the audience in the wake of a series of dizzying moral dilemmas. Gourav's performance as Balram is particularly winning, displaying a talent that exhibits equal parts baroque flexibility and emotional subtlety. Readers of the Booker Prize-winning novel by Aravind Adiga upon which the film is based may find the adaptation lacking in the dark sense of humor that so effortlessly carried the novel's social critiques. Still, director Ramin Bahrani makes up for the occasional dourness with a relentless pace that delivers a harrowing, anxious, all-too-familiar story. In English and Hindi with subtitles. —**NINA LI COOMES** 126 min. [Netflix](#)

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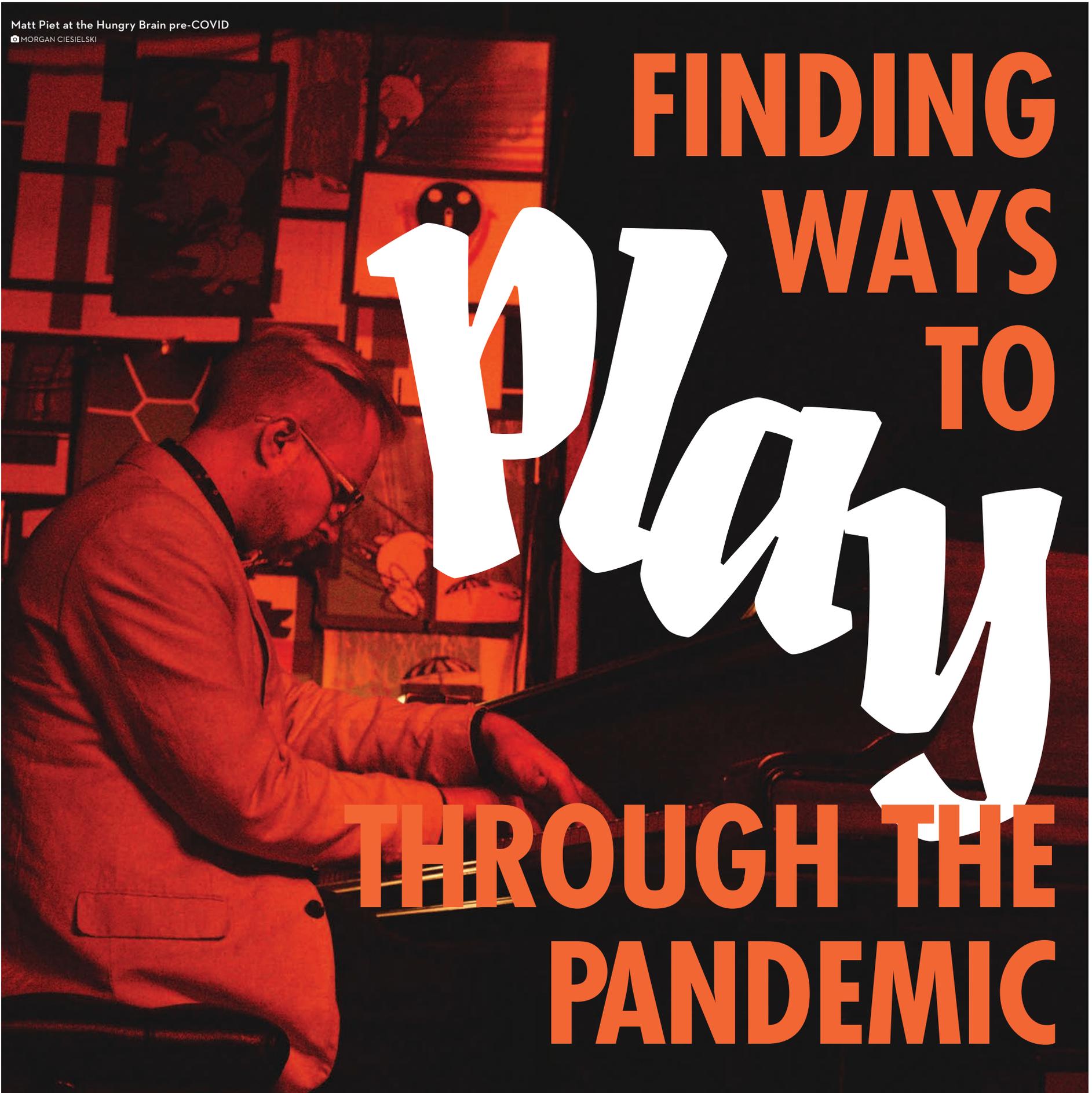


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Matt Piet at the Hungry Brain pre-COVID

by MORGAN CIESIELSKI



FINDING
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THROUGH THE
PANDEMIC

Chicago improvisers **Tim Daisy** and **Matt Piet** have responded to the challenges of COVID by learning new ways to record alone.

By **BILL MEYER**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put tens of millions of Americans out of work, but even considering that bleak landscape, musicians have been hit especially hard—most of their jobs only barely exist now, and the infrastructure that might allow them to return someday is in danger of collapsing. Festivals have been canceled, larger concert halls closed, and smaller clubs either shuttered or restricted to fractions of their usual audiences. At least in the States, no one is touring. In Chicago, many of the venues that stage jazz and improvised music have either been streaming pay-what-you-will concerts or sitting dark since March. The disappearance of in-person performance opportunities hurts worse in this context, since the music thrives upon—and in fact usually requires—real-time interaction between players.

Percussionist Tim Daisy, 44, and pianist Matt Piet, 34, have lost all or nearly all their gigs, like most performers. But in other ways these Chicago musicians have been fortunate—because neither depends on performance income to survive, the worst of the pandemic's effects have passed them by. Piet, who lives in La Grange, has held a day job in sales since before COVID, and it allows him to work from his apartment. Daisy is married and lives in Evanston with his wife, Emma, who works as a family physician and geriatrician, and for most of the past four years he's been a stay-at-home dad who also teaches private drum lessons.

That's not to say that either Daisy or Piet had anything like the 2020 he'd expected. At the beginning of the year, both men were ready to spend the year developing new projects and renewing others—Daisy wanted to reinvest in ensemble playing after concentrating for years on cultivating a solo practice, and Piet was ready to return to making music in general, having recovered from an incapacitating personal crisis. The pandemic derailed their plans, but they adapted by drawing on the improvisational spirit that informs their music. Each ended up trying an unprecedented experiment and making an album that might never have existed if COVID hadn't happened.

Born and raised near Waukegan, Daisy moved to Chicago in 1997 expressly to play jazz and improvised music. He first fell in with a group of players, among them Dave Rempis, Jason Adasiewicz, and Frank Rosaly, who were near his age and shared his DIY mindset. In 2002,

he joined Ken Vandermark's flagship band, the Vandermark 5, and his loose, propulsive sense of swing and knack for enhancing his collaborators' strengths in totally unscripted situations kept him in demand as a sideman.

Daisy didn't wait to launch his own projects, though, and in 2003 he made *Relay Signals*, his first album as a bandleader. In 2011, determined to have an outlet that would let him put out records promptly—as opposed to the European labels he'd been depending on, which often took more than a year—he founded his own label, Relay Recordings.

Up through 2014, Daisy toured the U.S. and Europe frequently, often in bands led by Rempis or Vandermark. Then in 2015, he reorganized his priorities. "I absolutely love being on the road. I love everything about it, even the stuff that sucks," he says. "But when my wife and I made a decision to raise a family, I did not want to be an artist who wasn't around very often."

So Daisy cut back on touring, restricting himself to one or two weeks per year in Europe and all but giving up on the stateside circuit (a decision most of his peers had made years earlier, deeming it a losing proposition). He redirected his energy to local activities and the occasional weekend trip within the midwest. He ramped up Relay's release schedule and took an active role in curating and presenting the Option Series, a hybrid concert and salon hosted by Experimental Sound Studio.

With his extra time at home, Daisy also focused on a solo practice he'd recently begun evolving. He'd already added marimba and vibes to his instrumentation, and he began experimenting with disassembling his drum kit and spreading out its components on the floor, alongside a collection of transistor radios and Califone turntables. A series of Relay releases documents the deeply psychedelic effect of Daisy's real-time mash-ups of unpredictable audio from the radios, vinyl surface noise, and struck metal and wood.

Daisy released the last of those records, *Sereno*, in January 2020, and considers that line of musical inquiry closed (at least for now). He was looking forward to rededicating himself to ensemble ventures: In July, he planned to reconvene his chamber ensemble, Vox 4, for a concert and recording. In September, he was going to revive Trio Red Space, with saxophonist Mars Williams and trombonist Jeb Bishop. And in October, he intended to record a series of duets with locals (including Piet) and out-of-towners. "I did have one tour on the books that I was really looking forward to, with the great Austrian pianist Elisabeth Harnik," Daisy says. "She put a band together with myself, Fred Lonberg-Holm, and Dave Rempis, and we had planned to do a tour of Europe for her 50th birthday celebration in May. Of course, that didn't happen."

Instead, Daisy busied himself mostly with parenting. "I have a son who's four and a daughter who's one," he says. "These kids are both so wonderful! Also, they are quite a handful, especially with limited childcare during the pandemic. They have afforded me an ability to connect on a deep level with them, because I'm with them so much—I'm not traveling, and my wife is working. It has given me something really positive to focus on during what has not been an entirely positive year. I'm really thankful that I have them to take care of, because if they weren't here and it was just me, I feel like I would be sitting in front of my computer not doing anything or thinking a little too much about what's going on and going into depression. If you want a cure for depression, man, have a couple kids, because you don't have time to be depressed."

Daisy also returned to his drum set, this time playing it put together. "After the process of going through all of these different solo recordings with turntables and radios and different materials, I went back to the four-piece drum set with two cymbals," he says. What he found, and what he demonstrates on the September 2020 digital release *Room to Breathe*, was that several years of managing an array of sound sources by himself had sharpened his ability to work with the rudiments of rhythm and silence on the kit.

Over the summer, Daisy played a live-streamed concert and three outdoor duos with Rempis. But as 2020 drew to a close, he set out to do something that acknowledged the limits the year had imposed on his music. "I thought of doing a record with somebody processing my solo sound, to kind of take advantage of the remoteness of 2020 and the COVID pandemic."

He reached out to New York-based electronic musician Ikue Mori, who'd played a 2017 trio concert at the Hungry Brain with him and fellow drummer Phil Sudderberg. Mori, who drummed for no-wave trio DNA four decades ago, has become a master improviser on the laptop, using it to marshal sounds into dreamlike sequences of color and event. Daisy is no stranger to working with electronic musicians who sample and tweak his acoustic output, but he'd always done so in real-time exchanges. This time, he submitted to virtual collaboration. "It's a selection of solo material on drum set, turntables, radios, marimba—everything that I've been using up to this point," Daisy says. "I sent her a total of 12 or 13 files, and I said, 'You reimagine the material.'"

In an e-mail, Mori explains the process from her end. "Tim's *Light and Shade* was all about remixing and reconstructing. He asked me to do whatever I liked with his percussion tracks. I was very excited, not only adding my sounds, but using all the beautiful materials to make new composition. I have done a few remixing projects, but not a whole album before."

As Mori sent back finished tracks, Daisy heard his sounds doing things he never does. "My solo marimba playing is linear and one note at a time. But her process of reimagining it included adding echoes of what I had done, and all of this other material, which added this depth that I think can be lacking when you only hear the solo marimba," he says. "She really filled it out. And for some of the other material on the record, she would take two files, so one would be, for example, just the rims of the snare drum, like a very Morse-code approach, very pointillistic, and then something with mallets and a floor tom. By using her sounds and her processing, she sculpted them into this completely new piece."

On *Light and Shade*, which comes out February 1 through Relay Recordings, Mori not only creates new music by disassembling and reassembling Daisy's tracks; she also draws out and enhances the movement in his playing by adding ephemeral events that scatter and swirl around his drumbeats. The effect creates the mercurial excitement of live performance even though the two artists were never in the same room.

Daisy is still pondering where this project might point him next. "Usually, after I finish a project, I put it down and I'm thinking about my next move," he says. "I can't think of anything yet. I know it's going to come to me, but right now, I have to sit for a while before I decide what's next."

Unlike Daisy, Piet embarked on some lengthy detours on his way to playing free jazz in Chicago. He grew up in Palos Park, where he took up piano at age ten. He showed early promise, and before he reached his teens he was playing cocktail piano and classical music at parties, charity events, and recitals. He also accompanied a local children's choir outside of school, an experience that taught him how to engage with an ensemble. "That was really instrumental in developing my ear beyond just what you do at the piano," he recalls.

Piet first heard jazz at age 17, when he attended a summer camp at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, and he went on to study it there. After graduating from Berklee in 2008, he briefly enrolled in Indiana University's graduate program and then went to work on cruise ships for several years as a solo pianist and bandleader. "I would sometimes return to Chicago, and one of those times that I returned was in 2013, when Constellation opened," he says. Feeling stifled by his cruise-ship work and inspired by the musicians he'd heard back home, Piet resettled here in 2014.

Alongside the gigs he took to make money, playing cocktail piano and accompanying choirs, Piet began seeking out people with whom he could improvise freely. He frequently attended

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Sound of the City, a Wednesday-night workshop at Constellation that combined a set by an established ensemble with a jam session. “That’s where I met a lot of younger people, or contemporaries of mine who were going on a regular basis to jam,” he says.

During this period, Piet attended to more than his musical development—he also decided to call in reinforcements in his fight against alcoholism and mental illness, which had been brewing since his early 20s. “Right as I was moving to Chicago and I quit ships, I was finally taking some steps to address my issues with addiction and with mental health,” he says. “In hindsight, I was probably improperly medicated for several years, because it’s tough to get the right thing going. I was immediately diagnosed with bipolar disorder and thrown into the world of heavy antipsychotics, which felt like a chemical lobotomy for a while. I think that what kept me stable from the time that I came to Chicago was actually much more sobriety and the access to music than it was the psychiatric medication.”

By 2016, Piet was clicking not only with his peers (including saxophonist Jake Wark and drummer Bill Harris, who play with him in Four Letter Words) but also with improvisers ten years his senior. The night after the 2016 presidential election, he played a concert with two of those older musicians, Dave Rempis and Daisy. “We all sort of came in and aired our grievances about what we had just found out, and then after that we just played,” Piet says. “It was very good.”

Between May and July 2017, Piet recorded *Rummage Out* (Clean Feed) with Daisy, Josh Berman, and Nick Mazzarella; *Throw Tomatoes* (Astral Spirits) with Daisy and Rempis; and *City in a Garden* (Ears & Eyes), a collection of small-group encounters with a variety of other local players who were all finding their footing at around the same time. In every setting, Piet is an assertive and flexible improviser, equally adept at managing his own dense flows of sound, using darting figures to set up his partners’ forays, and putting his hands into the piano’s interior to wrench out rainbows of resonance.

By all appearances, Piet should’ve had a good year in 2018, but things went seriously awry. He lost his insurance and went off his meds (without insurance, they cost him more than \$2,000 per month), and the death of pianist Cecil Taylor in April hit him hard. Taylor had been a personal hero of Piet’s, and as he reflected on Taylor’s life, his increasingly intrusive thoughts cast a pall over his ability to take satisfaction in his own accomplishments. He felt fraudulent because he’d benefited from Taylor’s creativity and struggle for acceptance but hadn’t needed to put in as much effort himself.

“I thought, how am I supposed to think of what I did a year ago as anything special, when this person did this for years and years and really put so much work into it?” Piet says. “I woke up to what a long game being an improviser or even being a musician really is. And so I had to reconcile what I had stolen from him, if I had, for the ways that he had inspired me, but also the ways that he had paved the way for someone like me to just get up and play a lot of notes on the piano and have an audience say, well, we’ve heard Cecil Taylor, so we accept that.”

Taylor hadn’t just expanded the universe of musical possibility, thus giving Piet space to do what he wanted; he’d also provided an example of how to survive and thrive as a queer man in jazz. Piet was keenly aware that he hadn’t faced the same challenges as Taylor. “I’ve never had any issue within the community with being

Piet had stopped booking creative-music gigs after the June 2018 release party for *City in a Garden*, and in October of that year he started his current day job. This allowed him to get back on medication—this time a new treatment that included antidepressants to alleviate his anhedonia. He rented his La Grange apartment in January 2019, and by the end of the year, he’d stabilized and felt ready to return to music. “I was hoping to get back out there more regularly, maybe try to switch up what sort of groups I was leading,” he says. “But moreover, I was just on the precipice of saying, OK, I know who I am as a musician, I know how to let that music out.” Instead, he spent the spring locked down at his parents’ home in the south suburbs.

Piet turned the circumstances to his advantage by honing his piano skills. “By June, I had been in quarantine with my folks for three



Tim Daisy © MAREK LAZARSKI

bisexual; it has never been a source of shame or really any trouble for me, except for how you have to come out to people,” he says. “In my case, as someone who is largely involved in romantic relationships with women, it’s this other thing that, if it doesn’t come up, it doesn’t come up. But at the same time, it is part of my identity. If anything, I’m just all the more aware of anyone like Cecil, who never had the generational luxury to really be out. That added to the guilt, to say OK, this guy struggled in so many other ways, but I shouldn’t.”

The negativity that consumed Piet came as his recording career took several leaps forward in quick succession. “At the time that I had two and then a third big release coming, I couldn’t handle it mentally, and that crept into my playing, where I was not able to play or to enjoy music of any kind,” he says. “If I went to a show, I was restless, and I really didn’t purchase much music most of 2019 or listen to anything.”

months. That’s where my piano resides, and that’s where I started to really get my chops in line on multiple fronts,” he says. “Each day I would sit down, and maybe I was juggling a few different plates of concepts—you know, general technique, classical music, tunes, improvisational music—and I would just sit down and feel out what I wanted to do at that time. If I wanted to play Chopin for an hour, I played Chopin for an hour. If I wanted to play bebop, I’d do that.”

Soon Piet started itching to do something more creative. He considered making a conventional solo album, but he didn’t want to record without an audience. He needed a different approach. “The idea went from ‘OK, I gotta do something and I gotta do it in the studio because there is no other way,’ to maybe 15 minutes later saying, ‘I don’t know, I hate the idea of overdubbing things, but I think I have to do it that way. I have to challenge myself to construct, in the same process every time, something that is

interactive and improvisatory.”

At the end of June, Piet spent a single day in the studio. Inspired by the overdubbed experiments of Lennie Tristano and Bill Evans, the multipiano compositions of Morton Feldman and John Adams, and the composition *Toneburst* (*Piece for Three Trombones Simultaneously*) by trombonist George Lewis, he set himself the task of recording three layers of his own piano. First he’d improvise from a set of cues, and then he’d play two accompanying tracks in quick succession, listening to what he’d already played through headphones and improvising responses to it.

“I think it’s funny that in order to get myself outside of what I thought would be really self-indulgent, which would be a solo piano record, I had to make *more* of myself,” Piet says. “It helped rein me in to a degree, because I knew that if I just shot out all of these notes on the first take, I would be muddying the waters somewhat. I was really concerned about using these three passes to bring out things that were specific to the timbre of the piano itself.”

The 15 tracks on (*Pentimento*), released last week by Bill Harris’s Chicago-based Amalgam label, are sparser and more lyrical than the mercurial music that Piet has played in his regular trios. “I didn’t want to ask too much of the audience’s ear,” he says. “That’s why it’s only 30 minutes, and that’s why each track is two to three minutes at most. They’re all part of a set of vignettes that are exploring what the piano is capable of doing if there were three people playing.”

“It’s something that I only would have done under these circumstances,” Piet continues. “It’s both a document of a time and an experiment that maybe I would have done at some point in my life, but I probably won’t ever do it again. So it’s nice to finally get a creative work finished in a solid way and be able to ask myself, ‘What comes next?’ Because I don’t know. It won’t be another one of these records, and it won’t be anything I’ve ever done before, but it will be a continuation of these things.”

Given the impossibility of reproducing (*Pentimento*) live, Piet’s first step was to celebrate its release by playing a livestreamed concert last week at Constellation with Four Letter Words, his trio with Wark and Harris. Daisy hasn’t scheduled any sort of record-release event, but between the virtual collaboration on *Light and Shade* and the all-acoustic solo drum-kit explorations on *Room to Breathe*, he’s opened a range of creative options for himself. It’s futile to guess what form each artist’s next recording will take, but even if the music business returns to something like normal in the foreseeable future, they’ll still need the flexibility and creativity they had to learn during the pandemic in order to stay in the game.

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MUSIC

PICK OF THE WEEK

Chicago emo trio Hospital Bracelet burst out of the gate with *South Loop Summer*

MATT PETRYGAL

HOSPITAL BRACELET, SOUTH LOOP SUMMERCounter Intuitive
hospitalbracelet.bandcamp.com

IN 2018 CHICAGOAN ERIC CHRISTOPHER launched Hospital Bracelet as a solo act: they began by releasing a couple of loose singles, whose disarming mix of overcaffeinated, looping acoustic guitars and tender, showstopping vocals bore fruit with 2019's *Neutrality Acoustic* EP. They've since recruited bassist Arya Woody and drummer Manae Hammond (of synth-pop duo Oux) to turn Hospital Bracelet into a full band. The trio's new debut full-length, *South Loop Summer* (Counter Intuitive), draws even more deeply on the supercharged energy Chris-

topher brought to their solo acoustic material, most obviously on new versions of two songs from *Neutrality Acoustic*. On *South Loop Summer*, Hospital Bracelet strap a rocket to "Sour OG RPG," intensifying the song's frenzied spirit while maintaining their own firm composure. The tight, muscular feel that Hammond and Woody bring to the music helps make Hospital Bracelet one of the brightest emerging bands in town. "Sheetz vs Wawa," which balances airy guitar against a tidal wave of a chorus, is already on my list of 2021's best emo songs. —LEOR GALIL

PATRICIA BRENNAN, MAQUISHTIValley of Search
patriciabrennan.bandcamp.com/album/maquishti

When used in the improvisatory style pioneered by performers such as Lionel Hampton, the vibraphone is traditionally a clanging, percussive, hard-charging instrument. The marimba is arguably best known for providing the hip-shaking backbone for many traditional Latin musics. New York composer Patricia Brennan takes both instruments in more delicate and less sweaty directions. Her debut album, *Maquishti* (Valley of Search), is a solo tour de force in which she uses unusual techniques to create gossamer flutters and cascades of crystal tones. Less percussive charge than ambient meditation, the music invites you to lean back and float into its shimmer, and it works nicely as a pleasant background for work and/or a nap. Thankfully the album also rewards closer listening, as songs coalesce out of the improvised bliss. The first single, "Sonnet," is almost six minutes of brief bursts of sound that wander around spacious pauses, alternating stochastic touches with elegant scales. "Solar" makes an explicit connection between Brennan's approach and electronica: she adds effects to make each mallet-fall bend and doppler, creating smears of sound and pitch from the vibraphone's usually distinct notes. "Magic Square" works up a bit more speed, with figures that resolve into patterns of repeated rhythms that suggest a more laid-back version of the minimalist Midori Takada masterpiece *Through the Looking Glass*. Part of the joy of *Maquishti* is its oddity; in the computer age, almost no sounds feel strange in and of themselves, but there's something wonderful about hearing instruments you thought you knew turned to such counterintuitive but lovely purposes. —NOAH BERLATSKY

CRAZY DOBERMAN, TWO TALES OF LOST WITNESS MARKSAguirre
aguirrerecords.bandcamp.com/album/two-tales-of-lost-witness-marks

Crazy Doberman are an Indiana free-improvisation and jazz collective created in 2016 as an offshoot of the group Doberman, started three years before. Core members, including Tim Gick and Doberman cofounder Drew Davis, appear on many recordings, but Crazy Doberman's lineup is loose—it varies on each of the band's 40-plus albums and has featured dozens of musicians, among them Wolf Eyes' John Olson and percussionist Tyler Damon. While different albums have different flavors—*This Land God Has Abandoned* is all brooding mystique, while --- / *Haunted, Non / Haunted* features some of their most acerbic electronics—there's a tightness and sustained energy on every recording. Their latest LP, *Two Tales of Lost Witness Marks* (Aguirre), employs eight performers on two long-form tracks that unfurl at a steady, enveloping pace. "Tale One in Five Parts" begins plainly enough, with chimes and droning, and then revs into something more ominous by bringing in synths, a steady bass line, and weeping strings. It's equal parts murky and mischievous, and when its first section eventually comes to a sudden halt, it segues into a cavernous



Patricia Brennan © NOEL BRENNAN

soundscape defined by filigrees of piano, voice, and more strings. The piece goes on to mutate into two other distinct passages, but the thoughtful pacing and arrangements consistently maintain a disorienting mood that leaves listeners ready for whatever sonic reverie the band provide next. The B side, “Tale Two in Four Parts,” by contrast opens with numerous sharp edits that disrupt any smooth flow. This heady passage acts as an intoxicating entryway to a loose, spiraling psychedelic jam that eventually climaxes with noisy haze. The track’s second half grows even more immersive, and by its final section it sounds like a live improv set in the middle of a tornado. But even through a storm, Crazy Doberman stay cohesive. Play *Two Tales* loud and feel its power take hold of you. —JOSHUA MINSOO KIM

엔도 ENDO, *GEMINI*

Self-released
endo96.bandcamp.com/album/gemini

Chicago rapper 엔도 Endo began releasing his dance-indebted tracks in 2018, and he’s since gravitated toward a loose collective of experimental pop, hip-hop, and dance musicians supported by production company Reset Presents. It booked Endo for his first live set in February 2019, on a show that also featured rising locals such as R&B artist Hxy and rapper Mohawk Johnson. (In March of that year, Johnson appeared on the volcanic Endo single “Burn It Up.”) Endo recruited Reset founder Camden Stacey to coproduce his new self-released album, *Gemini*, a taut blend of ostentatious dance, effervescent pop, and exacting hip-hop. Endo raps in English and Korean, switching between the two languages as casually as he might flip a light switch. He sharpens every single syllable of his staccato

raps, but he’s also keen on complementing gentle instrumentals by dialing back his vocals to a simmer. On “Everything,” Endo plays off the rubbery bounce of the chattering instrumental with a carefree joy that could propel the track onto a pop-centric Spotify playlist. —LEOR GALIL

JON MUELLER, *FAMILY SECRET*

American Dreams
rhythmplex.bandcamp.com/album/family-secret

When COVID-19 shut down live music last March, Jon Mueller was among the many musicians who found himself with an empty schedule. The Wisconsin-based percussionist found some time during lockdown to clean out his closet, where he found a box of unmarked CD-Rs that bore recorded evidence of music he’d made in the past and long forgotten. After listening to these artifacts, he started editing their best parts into new tracks, which he donated to a couple of compilation albums, including *Pandemic Response Division* (on local label Spectral Electric) and *We Hovered With Short Wings* (on UK label Gizah). Over the past decade, Mueller’s albums have documented his performance concepts, so it was a freeing paradigm shift for him to construct music with no thought as to whether he could play it live when he was done. He’s carried that practice into the new album *Family Secret*, created using recordings of gongs and singing bowls he made in 2020 at his Door County home; its four pieces of music are simultaneously dense and ethereal. Sometimes the ringing of struck metal brings to mind the centering sounds of Harry Berntoia’s metal sculptures, and elsewhere the album’s long, layered passages of sustained reverberations seem less like music than a translation of refract-



엔도 Endo © COURTESY THE ARTIST

ed light rays into sound. The album’s name evokes another aspect of cleaning out your closet—that of being lost in uneasy reverie after being confronted anew with parts of your life that you’ve tucked away. While *Family Secret* doesn’t sound like anything else that Mueller’s done, it shares similarities with his previous work in its uncanny ability to use sounds to stir nameless emotions. —BILL MEYER

REALITY ANONYMOUS, *THE GHOST HOST VOL. 1*

Night World
nightworldrecords.bandcamp.com/album/reality-anonymous-the-ghost-host-vol-1

Chicago’s music scene is rich, colorful, and full of variety—even during the pandemic—but in recent years I haven’t noticed much of what I call “weird pop,” exemplified in decades past by strangely hooky local acts such as the Children’s Hour, the Aluminum Group, and Bobby Conn. I guess we just needed some fresh blood—for example, Lyn Vaus, a seasoned musician who moved to Chicago in 2016. Vaus grew up in Los Angeles, Iran, and Boston, where he had a noisy postpunk band called Carnal Garage. After “State of Shock,” a song from the group’s lone cassette album, landed on the soundtrack for the 1992 movie *The Lawnmower Man*, Vaus started working in the film industry. But he retained his Boston music connections and split his time between there and LA while recording his 2010 project, *The Floating Celebration*. In a 2011 interview with *It’s Psychedelic Baby*, Vaus described his vision as “a late night coming down or Sunday morning record, with a somewhat jazzy-psychedelic-chamber-folk-vibe,” and name-checked influences from psychedelia and tropicalia such as Love, the

West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band, and Os Mutantes.

These heady influences also appear on *The Ghost Host Vol. 1*, the new album from Vaus’s trio Reality Anonymous, formed in 2018. They recorded the album at Chicago studio Mystery Street, which bills itself as the city’s only solar-powered recording facility. The lead single, “I Love Her Everywhere,” recalls innocent minor-key 60s garage bands such as the Rising Storm and Lazy Smoke, alongside 80s San Francisco Paisley Underground bands the Three O’Clock and the Rain Parade (the latter of which Vaus has called a personal favorite). Reality Anonymous adorn the mournful opening track, “Penny,” with some great fuzz- and vibrato-soaked guitars, and on the epic organ dirge “New Fire,” I hear a heavy Jim Morrison influence (or maybe a bit of Phantom’s Divine Comedy, an early-70s band that folks who suspected Morrison had faked his death thought might actually be the Doors). Vaus’s postpunk roots show on the subliminally catchy “Fry Guy” and “Out of Nowhere,” which recall the second Television album, literate Aussie new-pop geniuses the Go-Betweens, and arty UK janglers such as Felt and the Chameleons. The 16-track album concludes with the darkly dreamy “The Rest in Peace,” whose loner private-press vibe reminds me of rarities such as Damon’s late-60s psych-folk masterpiece *Song of a Gypsy*. Together, these deep songs look to the past and future, and ought to help Chicago become a weird-pop haven once again. —STEVE KRAKOW

SHAME, *DRUNK TANK PINK*

Dead Oceans
shamebanduk.bandcamp.com/album/drunk-tank-pink



Jon Mueller ©STEPHAN ANDERSON

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In the face of uncertainty and fear, some people would rather climb back into the proverbial womb. For Shame vocalist Charlie Steen, “the womb” was a nickname for a tiny laundry space that had been converted into a bedroom in the apartment he shared with guitarist Sean Coyle-Smith. It proved itself the perfect place for him to draft lyrics for the UK postpunk band’s second album, *Drunk Tank Pink*, named for the supposedly calming shade of paint on the room’s walls. The five-piece group, formed in 2014 when its members were still in high school, rose to international fame with their breakout 2018 debut, *Songs of Praise*. During a break from heavy touring in 2019, the bandmates realized that diving into the unconventional lifestyle of working musicians at such young ages had taken a toll on them mentally, emotionally, and socially. “We were like tourists in our own adolescence,” Steen told *The Independent* in a recent interview,

explaining that when the constant stream of shows stopped, Shame suddenly found themselves struggling with questions of adulthood—especially how to form personal identities outside the band. Those themes coalesce on *Drunk Tank Pink*, where Shame move beyond the electrifying albeit somewhat pro forma postpunk of their debut to explore new sounds and rhythms. The single “Nigel Hitter” feels like a tribute to the propulsive rhythms of ESG, cited by Coyle-Smith as a major influence, while the disjointed textures of “Harsh Degrees” beg to be unraveled like a puzzle. No matter your age or background, if you’ve spent nearly a year in some sort of pandemic-related isolation, Steen’s soul-searching lyrics ought to feel relatable—they sometimes come across more like an inner monologue than a journal entry. Plenty of punk attitude remains, notably on “Great Dog” and opener “Alphabet,” but Shame’s relatively mature swagger and experimental turns prove that the



Lyn Vaus of Reality Anonymous ©COURTESY THE ARTIST

band made the right call when they decided not to sweep their private problems under the rug—instead they battled them head-on and opened a hard-earned new chapter. —JAMIE LUDWIG

THE THIRD, DIRECTOR’S CUT
Self-released
solo.to/thethirdraps

The past decade of Chicago hip-hop would be entirely different without Young Chicago Authors and the Harold Washington Library’s YouMedia lab. Both have served as creative hubs for local teens, and their storied weekly open mikes—YouMedia’s Lyricist Loft and YCA’s WordPlay—have given many beloved Chicago rappers their starts. In the 2020s, a new generation of emerging MCs has already begun building atop the hip-hop ecosystem nurtured and reinforced by the likes of

Saba, Noname, Mick Jenkins, and Chance the Rapper. Among them is Aurelius “Trey” Raines III, an educator and rapper who records as the Third. On his 2019 debut, *Cursive*, he gives his listeners the lay of the land with “Soundcloud Rapper”: in a firm flow that makes him sound like he’s floating on air, he names several of Chicago’s finest young MCs, whose visions have inspired him. When Trey name-checks, say, Femdot and Matt Muse, his intimate familiarity suggests that his interactions with them go deeper than fandom. He’s definitely learned from many young local greats firsthand; he’s a YouMedia open-mike veteran and a 2019 recipient of a John Walt Foundation young artist scholarship (the foundation also connected him with members of Pivot Gang). Trey’s got his sights set on a spot among his hometown heroes, and on his new self-released EP, *The Director’s Cut*, he makes a great case for himself. He sounds as assured as any of the seasoned rappers in his sphere, and

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Shame © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Wardruna © COURTESY THE ARTIST

that confidence gives his smooth delivery a strong backbone. Trey brings sun-dappled joy to the light, slippery funk of “Be Water (H2O Flow),” and his caring self-encouragement is contagious—it’s helped me fight the grayness I’ve felt all around me for the past ten months. As long as people like Trey keep contributing to our world, bad times will be temporary. —LEOR GALL

WARDRUNA, KVITRAVN

By Norse
wardruna.com

Wardruna’s fifth full-length was due last June, but due to the pandemic, the Norwegian neo-prog-folk band bumped the release date of *Kvitavn* to this January. Though Wardruna were born out of Norway’s black-metal scene—two of the band’s three founders, Einar Selvik and Gaahl, are veterans of

the influential Gorgoroth—they’re also inspired by Norse folk traditions, so their sound isn’t expressly metal. I wouldn’t say it’s not metal at all, though: the emotional scope of the music makes it feel like metal, but because it’s played on traditional Norse instruments, it also has an organic vibe that feels steeped in ancient history. That combination has resonated far beyond the underground metal scene: in 2014 the band worked with composer Trevor Morris on the score for the History Channel’s *Vikings* series (and Selvik also made on-screen appearances). The success of that project helped propel the band’s third album, 2016’s *Runaljod-Ragnarok* (the third chapter of a trilogy inspired by the 24 runes of pre-Germanic alphabet the Elder Futhark), to the number one spot on the *Billboard* world albums chart. Norse imagery, and Norse runes in particular, have been appropriated by fascists and white supremacists, but Norse mythology and culture don’t inherently carry any

of those values. Of course, the Nazis borrowed lots of Norse symbolism when they aligned themselves with the delusional occult ideal of a master race, and since then it’s been abused by adherents of other far-right and extremist ideologies. “QAnon Shaman” Jacob Chansley (also known as Jake Angeli), for instance, whose face paint and horned headdress made him a poster boy of the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, is covered in runic tattoos. This sort of appropriation is a huge problem in the Norse-based pagan community as well as in the metal scene, where the taint of fascism is still so strong that it’s become important for artists to stand up and make their positions clear. Selvik, who also gives lectures about pagan history and spirituality, has emphatically used his music to reclaim Nordic folk from the far right.

Kvitavn is an elaborate production that involves more than a dozen traditional instruments, a Norse vocal choir, and shamanic invocations to sacred ani-

mal spirits. (“Kvitavn” means “white raven,” a familiar spirit Selvik has often invoked.) The band plays with the energy of metal, and even the album’s gentlest moments, such as “Munin” (“Memory,” and also the name of one of Odin’s ravens), have a stiff-spined, elegiac quality. “Kvit Hjort” (“White Deer”) opens with a reverent, tender sound like a hunter’s horn over soft drums (as close as Wardruna get to jazz), then turns into a soul-stirring chant. *Kvitavn* culminates in the nearly 11-minute “Andvearljod” (“Song of the Spirit Weavers”), which unites the record’s themes—forest-based pagan spirituality, animism, and rising above and resisting political dominance, cultural theft, and religious imperialism—into the satisfying climax of what’s essentially been a ritual performance. This intense, unrestrained album has been held back for far too long, but now it can finally give listeners a spectacular, well-earned, primal release. —MONICA KENDRICK



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Better read this if you are 62 or older and still making mortgage payments.

More than 1 million seniors have taken advantage of this “retirement secret.”

It's a well-known fact that for many older Americans, the home is their single biggest asset, often accounting for more than 45% of their total net worth. *And with interest rates near all-time lows while home values are still high, this combination creates the perfect dynamic for getting the most out of your built-up equity.*

But, many aren't taking advantage of this unprecedented period. According to new statistics from the mortgage industry, senior homeowners in the U.S. are now sitting on more than 7.19 trillion dollars* of unused home equity.

Not only are people living longer than ever before, but there is also greater uncertainty in the economy. With home prices back up again, ignoring this “hidden wealth” may prove to be short sighted when looking for the best long-term outcome.

All things considered, it's not surprising that more than a million homeowners have already used a government-insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) loan to turn their home equity into extra cash for retirement.

It's a fact: no monthly mortgage payments are required with a government-insured HECM loan; however the borrowers are still responsible for paying for the maintenance of their home, property taxes, homeowner's insurance and, if required, their HOA fees.

Today, HECM loans are simply an effective way for homeowners 62 and older to get the

extra cash they need to enjoy retirement.

Although today's HECM loans have been improved to provide even greater financial protection for homeowners, there are still many misconceptions.

For example, a lot of people mistakenly believe the home must be paid off in full in order to qualify for a HECM loan, which is not the case. In fact, one key advantage of a HECM is that the proceeds will first be used to pay

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off any existing liens on the property, which frees up cash flow, a huge blessing for seniors living on a fixed income. Unfortunately, many senior homeowners who might be better off with a HECM loan don't even bother to get more information because of rumors they've heard.

In fact, a recent survey by American Advisors Group (AAG), the nation's number one HECM lender, found that over 98% of their clients are satisfied with their loans. While these special loans are not for everyone, they can be a real lifesaver for senior homeowners - especially in times like these.

The cash from a HECM loan can be used for almost any purpose. Other common uses include making home improvements, paying off

medical bills or helping other family members. Some people simply need the extra cash for everyday expenses while others are now using it as a safety net for financial emergencies.

If you're a homeowner age 62 or older, you owe it to yourself to learn more so that you can make the best decision - for your financial future.

It's time to reverse your thinking

We're here and ready to help. Homeowners who are interested in learning more can request a FREE Reverse Mortgage Information

Kit and DVD by calling toll-free at 800-831-1481



Our new Reverse Mortgage information guides & DVD are now available featuring award-winning actor and paid AAG spokesman, **Tom Selleck**.



U.S.A.'s #1 Reverse Mortgage Company

As Featured on: ABC, CBS, CNN & Fox News

*Source: <https://reversmortgagedaily.com/2019/12/17/senior-housing-wealth-reaches-record-high-of-7-19-trillion>

Reverse mortgage loan terms include occupying the home as your primary residence, maintaining the home, paying property taxes and homeowners insurance. Although these costs may be substantial, AAG does not establish an escrow account for these payments. However, a set-aside account can be set up for taxes and insurance, and in some cases may be required. Not all interest on a reverse mortgage is tax-deductible and to the extent that it is, such deduction is not available until the loan is partially or fully repaid.

AAG charges an origination fee, mortgage insurance premium (where required by HUD), closing costs and servicing fees, rolled into the balance of the loan. AAG charges interest on the balance, which grows over time. When the last borrower or eligible non-borrowing spouse dies, sells the home, permanently moves out, or fails to comply with the loan terms, the loan becomes due and payable (and the property may become subject to foreclosure). When this happens, some or all of the equity in the property no longer belongs to the borrowers, who may need to sell the home or otherwise repay the loan balance. V2020.10.07

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Steve Walters in his studio in 2016, holding an artwork he screen printed for a client. © GREG AYER

CHICAGOANS OF NOTE

Steve Walters, artist and screen printer at Screwball Press

“I named my business Screwball Press with no thought that I’d still be working at this 30 years later. . . . I didn’t want the name to suggest that I knew what I was doing.”

As told to SALEM COLLO-JULIN

Steve Walters, 57, is a Chicago artist and screen printer. In 1991 he founded Screwball Press, which he still runs today; it’s come to be recognized as a pioneering and influential local institution in the business of screen-printed rock posters. He creates original art for bands and venues and does production printing for other artists’ projects. This past fall he opened Burgoo, a shop and gallery space in Rogers Park.

Idrove down to Atlanta this week to pick up my daughter, and then I’ll bring her back next Tuesday. She’s going to college there.

I think all of her classes this semester were online. I think she’s been tested for COVID like four or five times over the semester.

I grew up in the suburbs, Hinsdale, and then went to college in Iowa City. I hung out in Iowa for a year after I graduated and I worked, because I still had a lot of friends there and didn’t have any solid plans. It was the George Bush Sr. years, and there weren’t really a lot of jobs out there, especially for someone who studied sociology.

I played bass a little bit in some bands, but I wasn’t very good. I got a set of drums at an auction in Iowa City, and I was a drummer

for a little while. And then I was a DJ at the college radio station. Music has always been a big part of my life, but I’m not a great musician.

I didn’t study art at school. I always kind of messed around with it—I mean, it’s in the family. My grandfather was an artist. He painted his own stuff, and his job was doing illustrations for magazines and catalogs and stuff like that.

I moved to Chicago after Iowa in 1986. At one point, I was working at a grocery store down by the Wiener’s Circle and I got laid off. I got unemployment, so I spent some time messing around with art supplies. I made some of my first art for bands then—I had some friends in bands that were coming through town. At that time, you’d see all xeroxed black-and-white flyers, so I wanted to make flyers in color, to make my flyers more noticeable. I would do the xerox stuff and then I’d go back and paint on them.

Eventually I started doing some linoleum block prints, and my friend Scott Rutherford wanted me to do 2,000 covers for his magazine *Speed Kills*. Halfway through that I realized it was going to take me, like, 12 years. So I went and bought a screen-printing kit at the art store, learned how to do it to finish the covers, and then just kind of stuck with screen printing.

I hadn’t known a lot about screen printing before that, but then I got a part-time job at a T-shirt place. I did some album sleeves during this time for Ajax Records using the T-shirt screen-printing presses at my job after hours, as artists do.

When I was starting out, computer programs for this kind of design were pretty primitive and prohibitively expensive. And at this point I still don’t really know what I’m doing with the computer. I still work a lot by hand, and I’ve gotten better and faster. But I do use a computer for typesetting and a few other things.

There were a lot of good shows going on then. Red Red Meat was a big band for me. I don’t know what I’d be doing now without the encouragement of the people at the Lounge Ax back then. I loved most of the bands that they booked there. I met the Coctails and got to see their practice loft, and they were doing letterpress stuff there and making all their own merch—so that was really inspirational

for me.

I named my business Screwball Press with no thought that I’d still be working at this 30 years later. The name was based on a few things, like screwball comedies from the 1930s and Warner Brothers cartoons. I didn’t want the name to suggest that I knew what I was doing. It’s that whole Generation X thing where everyone was mocking the establishment. Other people I knew had their own record labels, and the sense was, “See? I can do this, anyone can do this!”

I started teaching screen printing to other people as part of the business when I started having kids, and the business was in our living space so I could stay at home and watch the kids. I had friends who were designers and wanted to hire me to print posters, and I didn’t always have time between the kids and other gigs. So I offered to let them come down to the basement, and I could show them how to do it themselves.

After some time, I moved the business out of our house to a bigger space and started teaching small groups. I advertised the classes at one point—I made posters, of course. Most of my students have just come to me via word of mouth. Word of mouth has been very kind to me over the last 30 years.

About a year ago I got a space about two blocks from my house in Rogers Park, allowing me to work close to home during COVID. Twenty-twenty was a nightmare. I thought at first we’d be down for a few months and just weather it out, but yeah, it’s going to be a while still. I turned my workspace into a gallery and shop to sell my stuff and work from other local artists, and I started renting some of the upstairs space to other printers. My girlfriend Allison and I named the store Burgoo (she’s from Kentucky, and burgoo is a kind of Kentucky stew). Jon Langford has some pieces there. Jewelry makers, woodworkers, a lot of my friends that make art are selling it there.

It’s hard to guess what 2021 will bring. I’ve been trying to do my own art for fun, but I’m finding that I really relied on having deadlines to get stuff done. Anything I can do to get by and get through this—short of getting a real job. After 30 years of this, I don’t really have any skills that are useful in the real world. To be honest, there are days that I would kill for a real job, to not have the responsibility of doing everything. But mostly I like working for myself. 📷

🐦 @hollo

EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL AGES FREE



Claude featuring KAIT O'KEEFE

NEW

Gary Allan 4/29, 7:30 PM, Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet **ML**
Artifacts featuring Nicole Mitchell, Tomeka Reid, and Mike Reed 1/22, 8 PM, livestream at youtube.com/constellationchicago **ML**
Verzuz presents Ashanti, Keyshia Cole 1/21, 7 PM, livestream at instagram.com/verzuztv **FREE ML**
Billy Strings 2/18-2/24, 8 PM, livestream at fans.live **ML**
Black Country, New Road 3/6, 2 PM, livestream at dice.fm **ML**
Boombox (DJ set) 1/22, 9 PM, livestream at stageit.com/thisisBoomBox **ML**
Celtic Thunder 2/2-2/6, 6 PM, livestream at stageit.com/CTLive **ML**
Claude 2/4, 4 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv/streams **FREE ML**
Brian Culbertson 5/4, 7:30 PM, Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet **ML**
Dakhbrakha 9/23, 8 PM, Patio Theater **ML**
Glass Hand 1/29, 8 PM, livestream at youtube.com/constellationchicago **ML**
Goat Girl 1/27, 7 PM, livestream at dice.fm **ML**
Grandson 1/24, 2 PM; 1/31, 2 PM, livestream at youtube.com/grandson **FREE ML**
Happy Traum workshop 1/24, 10 AM, online workshop for intermediate guitarists on arranging Dylan's songs, hosted at oldtownschool.org
Kara Jackson 2/18, 1 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv/streams **FREE ML**
Keller Williams Trio 1/30, 9 PM, livestream at fans.live **ML**
Leftover Salmon 1/23, 9 PM, livestream at fans.live **ML**
Lever 1/27, 4 PM, livestream

at audiotree.tv/stream/lever **FREE ML**

Ramsey Lewis 1/30, 1 PM; 2/27, 1 PM; 3/27, 1 PM; 4/24, 1 PM, livestream at stageit.com/ramseylewis **ML**

Live the Spirit Residency presents the Young Masters directed by Ernest Dawkins 1/30, 8 PM, livestream at youtube.com/constellationchicago **ML**

Loona Dae 2/8, 5 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv/streams **FREE ML**

Lord Huron 2/18, 7 PM; 3/18, 7 PM; 4/15, 7 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/lord-huron **ML**

Moon Taxi 1/22, 8 PM, livestream at fans.live **FREE ML**

Over the Rhine songwriting workshop 2/13, 1 PM, online workshop hosted at oldtownschool.org

Jaret Reddick 1/25, 4 PM, livestream at stageit.com **ML**

Arsena Schroeder 1/24, 5 PM, livestream at stageit.com **ML**

Soul Rebels with Roy Hargrove 1/27, 7 PM, prerecorded stream of a 2015 Brooklyn concert; watch at fans.live **FREE ML**

Southern Culture on the Skids 10/13, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Laura Stevenson 2/13, 7 PM, livestream hosted by the Subterranean at gctv.stream **ML**

Jeff Tweedy, Trevor Hall 1/23, 7 PM, livestream hosted by Constellation; access provided with ticket purchase **ML**

Valentine's Day Concert featuring Liba Shacht & John Sharp, Ariella Mak-Neiman & Adam Neiman, Duo Diorama 2/13, 7 PM, livestream hosted by the Unity Temple **ML**

A Very Special Valentine's Day: A Benefit for Chicago Community Jail Support featuring A.J. Marroquin,

Ohmme, Parker Callahan, Monogamy, Maggie Winters, Nnamdi, Bone Reader, Meg Indurti, Grace Freud, Julia Shiplett, and more 2/11, 7 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/hideout **ML**

We Series: Screens featuring work by Chengan Xia, Katinika Kleijn, Norman Long, Sonnenzimmer, and Jordan Martins 1/26, 7 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/elasticartschicago

UPDATED

Carsie Blanton, Milton 11/14, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, rescheduled

Delta Spirit, Hideout 5/2, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, canceled
Every Shiny Thing: A Tribute to Joni Mitchell featuring Andrea Bunch 1/28/2022, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled **ML**

Front 242, Consolidated 4/4, 8 PM, Metro, canceled

Colin Hay 3/26/2022, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, rescheduled **ML**

JoJo 5/10, 7:30 PM, the Vic, canceled

Gilbert O'Sullivan 3/11/2022, 8 PM, City Winery, rescheduled **ML**

Judith Owen featuring Pedro Segundo 5/12, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, canceled

Rose Tattoo, Enuff Z'nuff, Hots, Criminal Kids 7/19/2022, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, rescheduled, 17+

Tokimonsta 2/13, 7 PM, Metro, canceled

Weathers, Moby Rich, Kenzo Cregan 2/28, 7 PM, Schubas, canceled

Jontavious Willis 1/28, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, postponed **ML**

UPCOMING

Agnostic Front, Sick of It All, Crown of Thornz 4/25, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Align, Tvvin, Levity 5/13, 8:30 PM, Schubas, 18+

Nicole Atkins 8/13, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Banda MS 4/30-5/1, 8 PM, All-state Arena, Rosemont **ML**

Barenaked Ladies, Gin Blossoms, Toad the Wet Sprocket 6/28, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre **ML**

Paul Bedal Quartet 2/20, 8 PM, livestream at youtube.com/constellationchicago **ML**

Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys 8/28, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Brevet 4/9, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Luke Combs, Ashley McBryde, Ray Fulcher 11/4-11/5, 7 PM, United Center **ML**

Cradle of Filth 2/20, 4 PM, livestream at veeps.com **ML**

Christopher Cross 3/19, 8 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan **ML**

Ekali 10/2, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Elephant Stone, Al Lover, Tinkerbell 3/24, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Damien Escobar 11/7, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery **ML**

Dirty Knobs with Mike Campbell 10/6, 8 PM, Park West, 18+

Ferris & Sylvester 3/27, 7:30 PM, Martyrs'

5 Seconds of Summer 6/18, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion **ML**

Flora Cash 6/18, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall **ML**

Flotsam & Jetsam, Wrath, Creep, Spare Change 5/23, 7:30 PM, the Forge, Joliet **ML**

Halestorm 7/14, 7:30 PM, Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet **ML**

Daryl Hall & John Oates, Squeeze, KT Tunstall 8/26, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park **ML**

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

Tigran Hamasyan featuring Arthur Hnatek & Evan Marien 6/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Sarah Harmer 2/12, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **ML**

Hawktail 3/7, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ML**

Martin Hayes Quartet, Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill 10/8, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **ML**

Justin Hayward, Mike Dawes 5/23-5/24, 8 PM, City Winery **ML**

Hives 1/22, 2 PM; 1/23, 6 PM; 1/29, 5 PM; 1/30, 1 PM, livestream hosted by Jam; access provided with ticket purchase **ML**

Never miss a show again. Sign up for the newsletter at chicagoreader.com/early

Hlday Magik 2/13, 7 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/hideout **ML**

Hollyy 2/10, 4 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv/stream/hollyy **FREE ML**

Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra 1/23-2/12, Silian Kirov, conductor (performing Valerie Coleman's *Red Clay & Mississippi Delta* and Mozart). Prerecorded; view with ticket purchase until 2/12/21 at ipomusic.org **ML**

Wynonna Judd & Cactus Moser 7/30-7/31, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ML**

Mariza 1/29, 7 PM, livestream at uchicago.edu **ML**

Alanis Morissette, Garbage, Liz Phair 9/11, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park **ML**

Nella 4/28, 8 PM, City Winery **ML**

Palaye Royale 7/9, 6:30 PM, House of Blues **ML**

Primus, Wolfmother, Battles 7/20, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre **ML**

Rufus Wainwright 1/22, 4 PM; 2/19, 4 PM; 3/4, 4 PM; 3/12, 4 PM; 3/19, 4 PM; 3/26, 4 PM, livestream at veeps.com **ML**

Russ 5/22, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom **ML**

She Past Away 12/1, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Watsky 4/23, 7 PM, Metro **ML**

The Weeknd, Sabrina Claudio, Don Toliver 6/21, 7 PM, United Center **ML**

Max Weinberg's Jukebox 9/23, 8 PM, City Winery **ML**

Susan Werner 10/22, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **ML**

Widespread Panic 4/1-4/3, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, 4/2 and 4/3 are sold out **ML**

Wilco, Sleater-Kinney, Nnamdi 8/28, 6 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park **ML**

David Wilcox 10/15, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **ML**

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

Alicia Witt 4/16, 7:30 PM, Uncommon Ground **ML**

Wood Brothers 11/6, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Steve Wynn, Linda Pitmon 1/31, 7 PM, livestream hosted by SPACE at stageit.com **ML**

Yam Haus 6/25, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Zucchero 3/10, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+ **ML**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

IMPROVISING DRONE trio **Good Willsmith**—aka **Natalie Chami** of **TAL**—sounds and **Hausu Mountain** cofounders **Max Allison** and **Doug Kaplan**—dropped their previous release, a collaboration with avant-pop duo **Dustin Wong & Takako Minekawa** called *Exit Future Heart*, in 2018. Somehow that seems like decades ago, but if any local band can bend the laws of spacetime, it's **Good Willsmith**. Two weeks ago **Hausu Mountain** finally released a new **Good Willsmith** album: the live tape *HausLive 2*, recorded from the audience by band pal **Joel Berk** during an April 2019 set at **Sleeping Village**. It's nearly 30 minutes of captivating acid-rock synergy, with an elevated incidence of proggy riffs—and “Third Eyebrow” and “The Burning Orphanage Sidequest” could give **Pink Floyd**'s most zonked-out early-70s jams a run for their money. Allison says the band are “using this live album release as a springboard for music that will see the light of day sometime in the future.”

Jason Shanley, aka ambient musician **Cinchel**, seems to release an exquisitely designed project whenever this wolf is in the mood for contemplative, otherworldly sounds. Shanley's new *Arcane Object* (out last week via a local cassette label also called **Arcane Object**) consists of two half-hour tracks from separate universes. “String Line Distance” floats soft tones on a river of feedback, while “Long-Standing Nightmare” smears Shanley's guitar into a howling digital storm. The Bandcamp download is “name your price,” and each \$20 cassette comes in a unique box with preserved leaves, an art booklet, stickers, and a card printed on handmade paper.

In the mid-90s, **Braid**'s **Bob Nanna** briefly led local emo band **Orwell**, with **Demetrio Maguigad** and **Sean O'Brien** (both from **Gainer**) and **Fred Popolo** and **Billy Smith** (both from **Haymarket Riot**). Last week, **Orwell** dropped a comp of rare and unreleased material called **1995**—a must-have for midwestern-emo obsessives!

—**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**
Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

NATIONAL POLITICS

Who's really controlling Trump's impeachment

Don't be fooled that their motives are moral.

By **LEONARD C. GOODMAN**

Leonard C. Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense attorney.

The second impeachment of President Trump, this time for inciting a riot, got a big boost last week when dozens of large corporations endorsed the effort. Amazon, American Express, Blue Cross Blue Shield, BP, BlackRock, Dow Chemical, Goldman Sachs, and other major companies announced their support for impeachment by stopping donations to Republicans who refused to certify the Electoral College vote. Meanwhile, Twitter and Facebook have banned Trump from their platforms, while his lender Deutsche Bank has reportedly cut off funding to his golf courses and hotels.

These moves by major corporate donors helped convince ten House Republicans to join the Democrats in voting for impeachment, even though their defection from Trump will likely invite challengers in future GOP primaries. Trump's impeachment now moves to the Senate for trial. The Constitution requires a two-thirds majority to convict a president, meaning at least 17 Republicans would need to join all 50 Democrats and independents in the new Senate.

According to the Associated Press, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell spoke to “major Republican donors last weekend to assess their thinking about Trump and was told that they believed Trump had clearly crossed a line.” McConnell now sees the House Democrats' drive to impeach Trump as an “opportunity moment to distance the GOP from the tumultuous, divisive outgoing president.”

All this is more proof that the big corporations control the levers of power in D.C. And in case you think that these corporations are taking a moral stand against Trump or to protect our constitutional democracy, don't be fooled. These companies have purchased our representatives outright, destroying democracy. They are enemies of working people and the environment. Amazon busts unions and

pays poverty wages, forcing its workers to rely on food stamps to survive while its head, Jeff Bezos, has increased his net worth by nearly \$70 billion since last March. BP is one of the world's biggest polluters; its 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which covered 68,000 square miles, killed 11 people, and inflicted untold ecological damage. BlackRock is the world's biggest financial backer of fossil fuel companies and has worsened the global climate crisis exponentially.

The sole objective of these corporations is stability, which they expect President Joe Biden to restore. They already got their tax cuts, deregulation, and bailouts from Trump. Now they want him to leave the stage. They don't care if the president is a Democrat or Republican. They own and control both of those parties. They just want someone less erratic and disruptive.

In 2003, President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney told outright lies to convince Americans that Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had stockpiles of chemical weapons and was seeking nuclear weapons. All to justify a war that killed and maimed thousands of American soldiers and hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis. When proof of this deception came out, House speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected calls to impeach Bush. No one was held accountable for this monstrous war crime, nor for the regime of torture used to cover up the fraud. To the contrary, CIA Director George Tenet, who helped the president perpetrate the fraud and the coverup, was awarded a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004.

The failure to hold war criminals to account guarantees that their crimes will be repeated by future leaders. Indeed, in 2011, the Obama administration again told lies to convince Americans that Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was supplying his soldiers with Viagra to encourage mass rape, and that he was planning to massacre civilians in Benghazi. These official lies spurred the NATO bombing cam-

paign that killed thousands of innocents and transformed Libya from the African country with the highest standard of living into a war-torn failed state.

War is incredibly profitable to the weapons manufacturers and Wall Street. Thus our major corporations will never support impeachment hearings for war crimes. The corporate donors demand that future presidents be free to lie us into disastrous (but profitable) wars without fear of impeachment.

Trump may well deserve to be impeached for inciting a riot, even though his trial in the Senate will be largely symbolic as it won't take place until after he has left the White House. But the focus on Trump as the villain will allow other culprits to avoid scrutiny. For example, the assault on the U.S. Capitol was planned for weeks out in the open on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Tens of thousands of Trump supporters who believe the election was stolen were encouraged to come to the Capitol on January 6 and stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden as president-elect. Yet our well-funded Department of Homeland Security and 17 intelligence agencies somehow failed to protect the Capitol.

The Capitol Police has more than 2,000 officers and a nearly half-billion dollar budget, bigger than the budgets for police departments like Atlanta and Detroit. It has one mission: to defend two square miles. Yet observers report that only a fraction of the force was on duty January 6, and that some of those officers may have aided the rioters. When Black Lives Matter protestors were feared to pose a threat to monuments and landmarks last summer, the National Guard was immediately brought in and the protestors were violently suppressed. But this time, requests to bring in the National Guard were denied or delayed.

An investigation into the failures of law enforcement before and on January 6 is critical. Especially since President-elect Biden has already announced plans to pass a new Patriot Act to combat “domestic terrorism.” In other words, just like after 9/11, our government wants to reward its own incompetence by expanding its powers. History teaches that agencies like the FBI will use its expanded powers to hunt down and neutralize the left. In the 1960s, the FBI used programs like COINTELPRO to harass civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., and to crush the Black Panthers, the Socialist Workers Party, and the American Indian Movement, all under the guise of weeding out “extremism.”

Congress itself deserves scrutiny for its

dismal performance during the pandemic. Most other governments around the world recognized that if you require businesses to shut down, you must take care of workers. Countries like Australia, Britain, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, and Canada are all providing subsidies and support for furloughed workers. But here in the wealthiest country on earth, Congress responded to the pandemic by passing the CARES Act, which protected the profits of the investor class and left most workers out in the cold. Many Americans are understandably feeling desperate and betrayed.

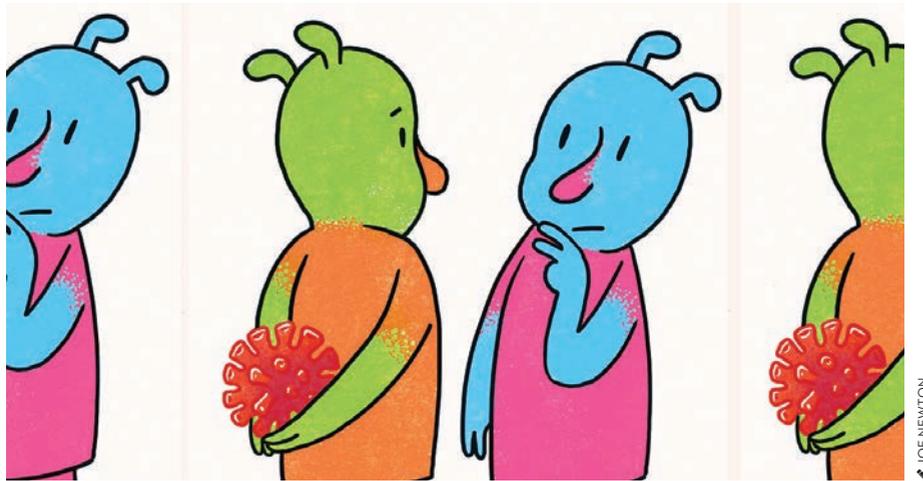
On January 3, 2021, Pelosi was reelected speaker of the House. Not one member of the progressive “Squad” withheld their vote or used the opportunity to make a floor vote for Medicare for All a subject of protest during the proceedings. The speed at which the Squad has been co-opted into the fold of the corporate Democrats is demoralizing for the true progressives who supported their campaigns and believed their promises. It shows that people don't change the Democratic Party, it changes them. It also illustrates why it is time for a People's Party that is not funded by corporations.

The spectacle of another impeachment trial also lets the mainstream press off the hook for its part in fueling the rage that erupted on January 6 at the Capitol. Once great bastions of unbiased journalism have become partisan tools of the corporate parties. While half of the country is told that Democrats stole the 2020 election from Trump, the other half is told that Russia stole the 2016 election from Hillary Clinton and that Trump is a Russian agent.

I do want to end the first column of the new year with something hopeful. President-elect Biden has nominated a respected and experienced diplomat to be CIA director. William Burns is a former deputy secretary of state and ambassador to Russia. Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst and cofounder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, says “Burns can be counted on to help Biden re-suscitate the Iran nuclear deal—the more so, since Burns played a key role in getting the negotiations with Iran started.” There is also hope that Burns will be able to bring the CIA back towards its original mission of unbiased intelligence collection instead of what the CIA has become—a dangerous paramilitary involved in drone targeting and regime change operations around the globe.

Here's to keeping hope alive and to better times in 2021! 

 @GoodmanLen



SAVAGE LOVE

The secrets we learn while snooping for multivitamins

Should my man disclose he's HIV-positive to the other guy in our threesome?

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: I could really use your advice. I recently found my boyfriend's HIV meds while I was house-sitting for him and went into his cupboard for a multivitamin. We've been dating for a year and I had assumed he was negative. I'm negative myself and on PrEP and he is undetectable, so I know there is essentially zero risk of me getting infected, but we agreed to some degree of "openness" at the start of the relationship—having threesomes together—and I recently found a guy we'd like to invite over. I'm trying

to get over the feeling of betrayal from the fact that my boyfriend hid his status from me for so long but I'm fine with continuing the relationship knowing his status now. The thing is, he told me that only five people on earth know and his mother, who he talks to almost every day, isn't one of them. He says being poz has really fucked with his self-esteem and that he has had suicidal thoughts because of his status. Is it unreasonable for me to expect him to disclose his status to guys who join us in bed? What

about asking him to share with a therapist or "come out" as poz to his mother? I really love him and just want him to be happy and healthy. —**WANNABE ETHICAL AND SUPPORTIVE SLUT**

A: If you're worrying about HIV at the moment, WEASS, you're worrying about the wrong virus. Unless you're lucky enough to live in New Zealand, you and the boyfriend shouldn't be inviting men over for threesomes right now. Assuming you do live in New Zealand...

I don't think your boyfriend is morally obligated to disclose that he's HIV-positive to a casual sex partner, WEASS, but in some states he is legally obligated to disclose that fact. While rarely enforced, these HIV disclosure laws almost always have the opposite of their intended effect. Instead of creating a culture of testing and disclosure, these laws disincentivize getting tested—because someone who doesn't know they're HIV-positive can't get in trouble for failing to disclose.

These laws were passed decades ago, back when contracting HIV was perceived—mostly accurately—as a death sentence. But they don't reflect what it means to have HIV today or to sleep with someone who has HIV today. Having even unprotected sex now with someone who is HIV-positive and has an undetectable viral load is less risky than having protected sex with someone who hasn't been tested. Condom or no condom, the HIV-positive guy with an undetectable viral load—undetectable thanks to meds like the ones your boyfriend is taking—can't infect someone with HIV. Undetectable = untransmissible.

But a guy who assumes he's HIV-negative because he was the last time he got tested or because he's never been tested? That guy could be HIV-positive

and could infect someone with HIV—even if he does use a condom, which could leak or break. (There are lots of other STIs out there we should be using condoms to protect ourselves from, including a nasty strain of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea, but we're just talking HIV here.)

In answer to your question, WEASS, I think it would be unreasonable for you to force your boyfriend to disclose his HIV status to the person you want to invite over for a threesome—but, again, HIV disclosure laws might require your boyfriend to disclose.

Now if the presumably sexually active, sexually adventurous gay man you're thinking about having over to your place in Christchurch isn't an idiot, WEASS, he'll know your boyfriend—the guy with the undetectable viral load—presents no threat to him, at least where HIV is concerned. And while you absolutely shouldn't out your boyfriend, WEASS, you could raise the general subject of sexual safety and see how this guy reacts. If he seems reasonable—particularly if he mentions being on PrEP too—he's probably not gonna freak out about your boyfriend being HIV-positive for the exact same reason you didn't: there's zero chance your boyfriend could infect him with HIV. (We're both assuming this guy isn't

HIV-positive himself, WEASS, which he might be.) If he seems reasonable you should encourage your boyfriend to disclose to him. Being told it's no big deal from someone your boyfriend wants to fuck before he fucks him could help your boyfriend feel less insecure about his HIV status.

Finally, you can't order your boyfriend to come out to his mom about being HIV-positive, WEASS, but you might inspire him to. He obviously worries people will judge him or shame for being HIV-positive; that's one of the reasons he hid it from you—and, yes, he should have disclosed his HIV status to you sooner. He obviously underestimated you: you didn't reject him when you stumbled over his meds after tearing apart the cupboards in his absence while you were searching for—what was it again? Oh, right: a multivitamin. (Sure.) Anyway, WEASS, tell your boyfriend he's most likely underestimating his mother in the same way he underestimated you—then let him make his own decisions about who to tell and when. **✉**

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North Park University is seeking comments from the public about the University in preparation for re-affirmation of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The University will host a team of peer reviewers from HLC for a virtual visit on April 26-27, 2021. The team will review the institution's ongoing ability to meet HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. North Park University has been continually accredited by HLC since 1926.

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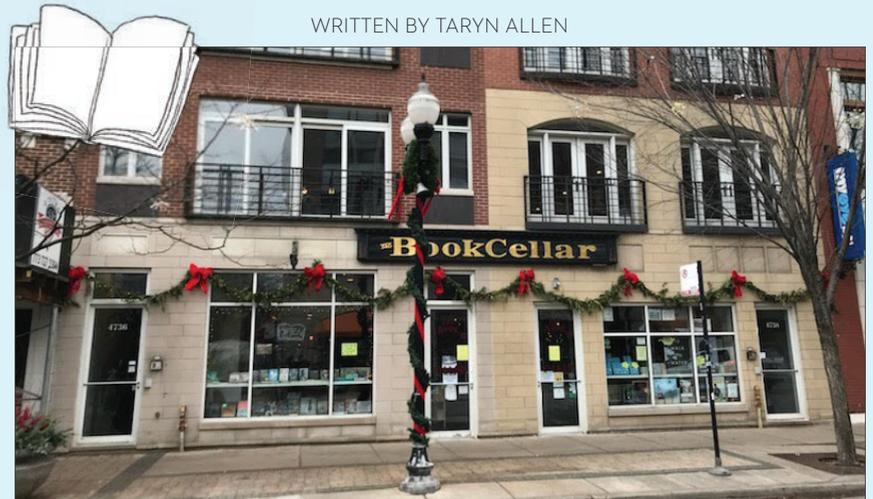
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WRITTEN BY TARYN ALLEN



COURTESY SUZY TAKACS

When the idea to open a bookstore first struck Suzy Takacs, it seemed like there were already enough to go around. But she wanted a space that would combine her love for books with her love for wine, a space nearby her Lincoln Square home that housed two of her favorite things. And when she pitched her business plan for The Book Cellar to the alderman and presidents of the North Center, Lincoln Square, and Ravenswood Chambers of Commerce, it just so happened that they were on the hunt for a new independent bookstore. Takacs resigned from her career at the time and spent about a year learning about the business, plans, and permits she would need to make The Book Cellar a reality.

The shop opened in June, 2004, and despite the fact that it felt to Takacs like she was opening an independent bookstore in a city with so many long-beloved others, The Book Cellar has become a fixture in the Lincoln Square community, and that's what makes Takacs most proud.

During non-COVID times, a trip to her store would include browsing books with a glass of wine, curling up on couches with treats from the café. The events calendar was always full, with something different happening almost every night: author events, storytimes, book groups, wine and bourbon tastings, an annual spelling bee, school events, zine launches, play readings, Chamber of Commerce events, and much more.

Today, The Book Cellar offers curbside pickup and browsing by appointment only, and supporting them is more important now than ever.

Says Takacs, "Bookstores are an anchor in the community. Bookstores are a place to interact with other people, have conversations and share ideas. . . I am proud to be part of the Chicago bookseller community. Chicago has a unique and accomplished community of bookstores and booksellers and it is an honor to be part of the group." And as long as the community supports them just as much as they've supported the community, The Book Cellar will surely be open post-pandemic for many years to come.

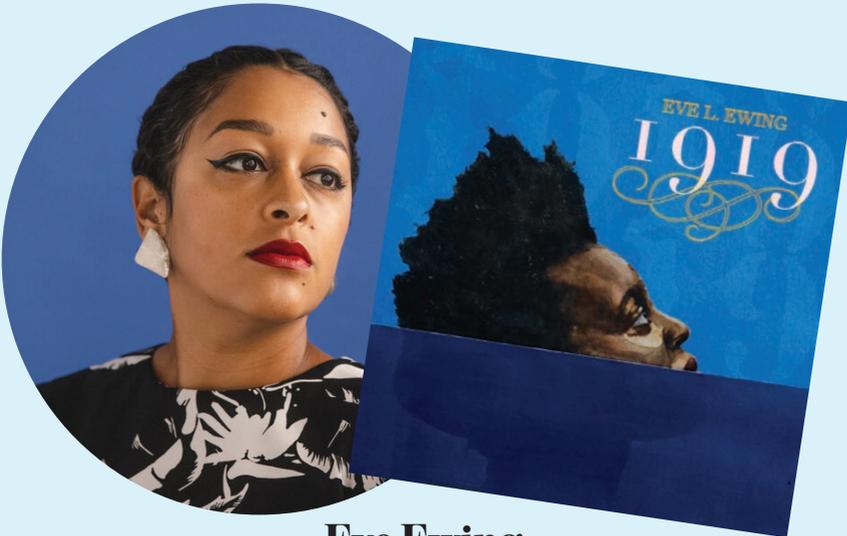
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Author Talk
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Eve Ewing
Author

Dr. Eve L. Ewing is a sociologist of education and a writer from Chicago. She is the award-winning author of the poetry collections *Electric Arches* and *1919* and the nonfiction work *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side*. She is the co-author (with Nate Marshall) of the play *No Blue Memories: The Life of Gwendolyn Brooks*. She also currently writes the *Champions* series for Marvel Comics and previously wrote the acclaimed *Ironheart* series, as well as other projects. Ewing is an assistant professor at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. Her work has been published in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and many other venues. Her first book for young readers, *Maya and the Robot*, is forthcoming in July 2021.



Maudlyne Ihejirika
Moderator

Maudlyne Ihejirika is an award-winning *Chicago Sun-Times* urban affairs columnist with 30 years of experience in journalism, public relations, and government.

Building on a B.A. in journalism from the University of Iowa and an M.S.J. from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Ihejirika's work in state government and media has resulted in countless achievements, including serving as president for both the National Association of Black Journalists Chicago Chapter and the Chicago Journalists Association; ranking one of "The 25 Most Powerful Women In Chicago Journalism" in 2019; publishing her book *Escape From Nigeria: A Memoir of Faith, Love and War*; and launching Ihejirika Media & Communications Group to manage media for members of U.S. Congress, Illinois Legislature, and City Council. Her awards include the Studs Terkel Award, national and local awards from the Society of Professional Journalists

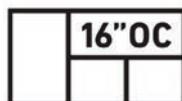
and National Association of Black Journalists, and several civic awards, including the Chicago Defender Woman of Excellence and African Festival of the Arts Community Servant Award. Ihejirika is a frequent guest contributor on PBS-TV's "Chicago Tonight: Week In Review" and FOX-32's "Good Day Chicago," and she has appeared as a political analyst on CNN, TV One, ABC, CBS, NPR, WBEZ, WVON, and V103.

She currently pens the *Sun-Times* "Chicago Chronicles," long-form columns offering diverse narratives and untold stories of inspiring people, places, organizations, and issues in Black and Brown communities. Follow her at @maudlynei on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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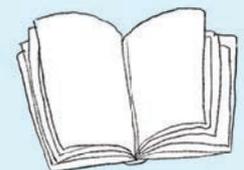
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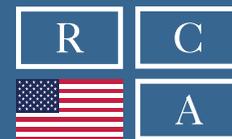
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Recovery Centers of America (RCA) provides individualized, evidence-based addiction treatment. RCA has eight inpatient facilities located in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and now St. Charles, Illinois. RCA treatment centers have been named by *Newsweek Magazine* as the Best Addiction Treatment Centers of 2020 in their states.

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