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Cover by Amber Huff. For more of Huff’s work, go to bernhuff.com

Now they love her
Karen Lewis knew you don’t make a lot of friends in high places when you stand up for teachers and poor kids.

Laughing at home
From a call center in India to video chat, Parvesh Cheena has starred in television shows that have defined an era.

Revolution vs. reform
Judas and the Black Messiah examines the need for revolutionaries when pushing for real change.
I never dreamed the pandemic would bring such challenges. How策 didn’t have to factor in too many issues surrounding closures and reduced capacity. How策 wasn’t particularly challenging at first because the business was still being built and didn’t have to factor in too many issues surrounding closures and reduced capacity. However, one big shift happened along the way.

“With the pandemic,” Lindsey says, “We’re constantly around each other and always have been, so we’re very good at understanding each other’s personalities,” Lindsey says. Rachel agrees, adding, “We have really clear-cut strengths and weaknesses.”

Also familiar is the neighborhood where they chose to open up shop—the twins grew up in Irving Park and for the last eight years Rachel’s been behind the bar at Community Tavern, which is only a two-minute walk from Kit. When the store opened on November 28, 2020 (also Small Business Saturday), it was clear that the support from the neighborhood would be paramount in keeping the business running through the pandemic and beyond.

In the future the Millers hope they can expand the use of the space, pivoting back to serving professional bartenders in the city and eventually using it as a non-bar space for those professionals to hold events, have meetings, and just connect with other folks in the industry. But for now they’re happy to help you build the home bar of your dreams.

“Bright side of opening a business in the pandemic is that what we happened to open, one, coincided with one of the hobbies people have taken up,” Rachel says. “And two, that like, it is a really tenuous time for small businesses; obviously a lot of the focus is on bars and restaurants and live music venues and arts and theater, all of those sort of like experimental things, but also brick-and-mortar retail as well. I think we benefitted from that renewed focus on small businesses, on local, on people and places you care about.”

“Kit brings the bar to you”

The newly opened small business offers professional quality bar tools and local expertise.

By Brianna Wellen

It’s time to perfect your margarita. According to bartender Rachel Miller, focusing on summery cocktails is one of the best ways to get through Chicago’s harsh winter months. Want to lean into the season? She suggests classic cocktails that are dark and spirit forward or maybe investing in a bottle of bénédictine, which she describes as an audacious spiced liqueur. And as one of the co-owners of Kit: A Bar Supply Store in Irving Park, she is more than ready to provide the tools to help you make whatever cocktail you please.

Rachel, along with her twin sister Lindsey Miller, worked through most of the pandemic to set up the store—in fact it was in February and March that they finalized paperwork with City Hall and signed the lease. The pandemic wasn’t particularly challenging at first because the business was still being built and didn’t have to factor in too many issues surrounding closures and reduced capacity. However, one big shift happened along the way.

“When we started, the focus was going to be providing equipment to professional bartenders,” Lindsey says. “When we did start looking at an open date, it was clear we had to shift to the home bartender as our primary focus. Like everyone now has a bar in their basement and is doing the thing I did, using the back end of their spatula as a muddler.”

The conceit of the business was born from a lack of places for bartenders like Rachel to buy affordable, high-quality tools for making craft cocktails. There are places like Restaurant Depot that have low-quality items in bulk or cooking stores that have an expensive but not comprehensive selection. And worse yet places like Amazon or big-box home goods stores offer supposed “complete bar kits,” with no one to ask about the quality or intended purpose of each item.

At Kit, that’s definitely not the case. “I could talk to you for so long about a spoon,” Rachel says. As the professional bartender, her main role in the business is selecting the inventory and offering her expertise to customers. The store opened with the most basic items for a starter bar: jigger, shakers, strainers, and mixing glasses. From there they’ve slowly expanded to include a wider range of tools and styles of the basics, as well as bitters, syrups, recipe books, aprons, and more.

Lindsey has worked in the restaurant industry, but she comes from a theater and corporate background. After nearly 20 years working as a stage manager for storefront theaters in the city, she decided to step away from that world to go into business with her sister. Based on their history, it was a no-brainer. “We’re constantly around each other and always have been, so we’re very good at understanding each other’s personalities,” Lindsey says. Rachel agrees, adding, “We have really clear-cut strengths and weaknesses.”

Also familiar is the neighborhood where they chose to open up shop—the twins grew up in Irving Park and for the last eight years Rachel’s been behind the bar at Community Tavern, which is only a two-minute walk from Kit. When the store opened on November 28, 2020 (also Small Business Saturday), it was clear that the support from the neighborhood would be paramount in keeping the business running through the pandemic and beyond.

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A tale of two tapas bars

El Internacional, Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba!, and bacalao at the dawn of small plates

America

By Mike Sula

Bacalao, reconstituted, was on the menu when Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba! opened to innocent but curious Lincoln Park diners on December 26, 1985. But the dried, salted codfish was also, oddly, dangling amid a curtain of jamon, garlic, and dried chilies above the bar at Chicago's first tapas restaurant.

“Whole smoked hams and dried salt cod hanging from rafters add a Spanish note,” according to the Tribune in its review of the 21st restaurant in Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises's mighty empire (14 years after Rich Melman and his partners invented the salad bar at R.J. Grunt's). Like many Lettuce concepts, it was a hugely popular novelty at the time. It was also one of the first tapas restaurants in the U.S., often credited with helping to launch America's obsession with an adapted form of Spanish drinking food. Along with a now-defunct Las Vegas satellite, it had no small influence on the small plates trend that arose in the aughts and persisted up until the pandemic (for better or worse).

It’s likely that the majority of mid-80s cool kids—bolstered by nearby DePaul University—who lined up for hours in those early days didn’t think anything of the bacalao bobbing above the bar. But it’s not a common accent in Spanish tapas bars, where the simple act of placing a piece of bread atop a glass of wine to keep the flies out evolved into a galaxy of bar snacks and an enshrined, communal eating culture.

But Montse Guillén certainly thought it was strange. And she would know—there was codfish hanging at her restaurant too.

Guillén was a Catalan chef of increasing renown in the early 80s when she and her partner, the multidisciplinary food artist Antoni Miralda, opened El Internacional in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood. Not only was it the very first tapas restaurant in the United States, it was an evolving two-floor art installation with a sidewalk mosaic of Coca-Cola cans at the entrance and an enormous replica of Lady Liberty's crown on the roof (featured for years in an opening credit cameo on Saturday Night Live). Inside, the Columbus Trophy Bar served blue margaritas under four large, hanging bacalao, and in the Marina Room, diners snacked on Guillén’s patatas bravas, orejas de cerdo vinagreta, and buñuelos de bacalao above four whole salted codfish on a bed of blue salt sunk into the floor.

Bacalao is a recurring motif in Miralda’s work. “I’ve always been interested by the codfish itself,” he says. “Not only for the importance it has in nutrition in the world: it was on all the transatlantic voyages. This was about survival. But also because it has an incredible shape like a triangle. A codfish has a presence, really, a holy presence.”

It also has a pronounced olfactory presence: “Their smell is always a trademark!” he says.

For this reason, they aren’t a regular presence in Spanish bars—at least in uncooked form. Montse Guillén might have neglected to mention this important piece of advice the evening she was summoned to the table of two men visiting from Chicago who said they were planning to open a tapas bar in their midwestern meat-and-potatoes metropolis. “You need to have somebody from Spain in the kitchen,” she told them.

So she was surprised and flummoxed to encounter the bacalao above the bar about a year later when she dropped by the new Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba! on a short visit to Chicago. “This I remember very well,” she says. “I talked with my friend: ‘Look they copied this maybe. They’re thinking in Spain they put codfish in the tapas bars.’”

Guillén and Miralda moved on to other projects not long after that, but Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba! has endured, recently celebrating its 35th birthday with a $70 Tapas Tasting Menu for carryout or delivery. And just last week, Lettuce “temporarily closed” its two-year-old River North Spanish wine spot Bar Ramone, replacing it with a new outpost: Lil’ Ba-Ba-Reeba! Its longevity is emblematic of LEYE’s overall success over the decades, with its carefully curated restaurants that present gleaming, easy-to-swallow facsimiles of particular cuisines or environments—restaurants both beloved for their theatrics and criticized for practicing a kind of Disneyfication of culture and cuisine.

There was, in fact, a Spaniard in the kitchen when Ba-Ba-Reeba! opened in 1985. Chef Gabino Soteleno was born in Vigo, Spain, and began cooking at the age of 14 in kitchens all over the world before joining forces with Melman to revitalize the legendary Pump Room. Together they opened LEYE’s first fine dining restaurant, Ambria, followed by the French bistro Mon Ami Gabi, before Sotelino convinced the boss to open a tapas bar.

At first Melman thought the chef said “topless bar” (a joke both men still tell). Neither remembers visiting El Internacional during the research and development phase. Nor do...
FOOD & DRINK

It’s unclear when—or why—the adornments above the bar at Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba! were retired.

Sotelino and Melman had different visions for the restaurant. The chef wanted a rigorously authentic Spanish experience, and his menu prototype included things like tripe, pigs feet, and “barnacles” (aka percebes). Melman was sure Chicago wasn’t ready for this: “I said ‘Gabi, there’s no way we are opening up. I just don’t feel it. I’m telling you, we’re gonna get killed.’”

Changes were in order. “I’m not interested in the six people who know it’s authentic,” says Melman. “I said, ‘Hey, I don’t know how they dress in Spain but I want to get crazy.’ We changed 80 percent of the menu. We left the paellas, and the hams, and stuff that were good, and then we opened it. And I had a lot of fun.” Servers wore capes. Flamenco dancers stamped and tapped among the tables. Chica-go ate it up.

It’s unclear when or why the hams and bacalao above the bar were retired. And it’s undoubtedly a good thing that the restaurants that took their inspiration from Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba! and El Internacional didn’t deploy salt fish as a decorative element.

As for Melman, he recognizes that the dangling bacalao was a mistake. “We fucked it up!” he laughs. And El Internacional? “Maybe we did get an inspiration for what was going on there.” After all, he didn’t get where he is today by ignoring inspiration when it strikes. He offers a quote from his unpublished memoir: “Imitators blindly copy an idea. But creative people are often inspired by something they see, or taste, or hear. Take an idea. Make it better. Make it your own. Make it fit your organization and culture.”

Christian (she/siya) is a queer, multiracial Filipina poet, teaching artist, and community organizer currently based in Chicago. She is the founder and Creative Director of Luya, a poetry organization that centers the voices of people of color. She believes deeply in using poetry to build community and to educate ourselves about history.

Poem curated by José Olivarez: José Olivarez is the son of Mexican immigrants. His debut book of poems, Citizen Illegal, was a finalist for the PEN/ Jean Stein Award and a winner of the 2018 Chicago Review of Books Poetry Prize.

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POETRY CORNER

2032
By Christian Aldana

All my friends can’t hang anymore, can’t keep their eyes open past 10:00PM. We wake up in time to catch the tail end of the sunrise, we are all morning people now. We stopped sleeping with one eye open.

Of course, the kids don’t even say “hang” anymore, they have new incantations to enchant their joy, their lexicon is a set of unknown spells. It’s so magical to be outdated and alive.

All my friends write sweet poems now, lollipop stanzas. They pull sugar through all the syllables, a rush of gratitude in their smiles. How lucky we are with our front yards, and our gardens teeming with children and summer fruits. How opulent to know peace, and to never have to ask if everyone made it home safe.
面上的这张图没有任何对齐问题。
New Obama Center ETA: 2025

But Protect Our Parks isn’t giving up yet.

By Deanna Isaacs

It was hot on the August day in 2016 when Mayor Rahm Emanuel presented the Obama Foundation with nearly 20 acres of Jackson Park as the site for the Obama Presidential Center.

On the concrete terrace on the south side of the Museum of Science and Industry, where journalists and officials gathered for the announcement, it was blistering—too hot to process much beyond the need to find some shade.

Emanuel might have handed over a 99-year, $10 lease for 50 acres without getting a rise out of that sweltering captive audience.

If any of them were thinking about the battle over a similar gift to George Lucas, resolved barely two months earlier, when he gave up and took his museum to California, I didn’t hear them mention it.

Besides, the difference was as clear as the panorama of lagoon and woods stretching before us: Lucas is a moviemaker with no Chicago roots; Obama is the nation’s first Black president, a hometown hero of unprecedented status, nurtured and launched on this very ground.

When Foundation chairman Martin Nesbitt stepped to the microphone that day, he said the center would open in 2021.

That turned out to be a bit optimistic.

Given government regulations, community demands, and legal challenges, construction on the Jackson Park land has yet to begin. But this month, in the wake of an appeals court decision favorable to the city and the recent completion of federal reviews, Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced that the Obama Presidential Center, including a 235-foot tower and major taxpayer-supported infrastructure, would finally be getting underway.

“Chicago is now officially the home of the presidential center for our country’s first Black president,” Lightfoot said. The new target date for opening is 2025.

In this frigid, masked, pandemic February, that should be welcome news. Every Chicagoan I’ve talked with says they want the OPC here and thinks it should be on the south side. But some of those to whom it occurred—even before that sweaty day in 2016—that the presidential complex shouldn’t be planted on parkland, haven’t changed their opinion. A half-billion dollar project planned for a future president? “It’s a long shot,” Caplan tells me last weekend. And, if that fails, POP’s prepared to file an array of new lawsuits.

That was the big news: POP was getting ready to unveil its own architectural plan for the Obama Center on a site abutting Washington Park. Created by architect and preservationist Graham Balkany, this detailed plan would better serve both the public interest and Obama’s legacy, Caplan said. “He could start building immediately; the lawsuits would be moot. All he’d have to do is turn it over to his construction company.”

Once Obama sees it, Caplan said, “We think he might suddenly decide, ‘Yeah, that’s a better plan.’”

FOTP isn’t the organization that’s taken it to court, however.

That would be Protect Our Parks, a quixotic little ad hoc group that says it isn’t caving now. POP president Herbert Caplan claims the federal mandated reviews were not adequately conducted. (A charge also made by Jackson Park Watch.) He’s fired off a letter about that to President Biden’s newly installed secretaries of transportation and the interior, asking them to “stop this project now,” and “properly review all feasible and prudent alternatives.”

What kind of reception is this likely to get from the administration of Obama’s former vice president? “It’s a long shot,” Caplan admits, “but the Biden administration has declared that they’re all in favor of environmental protection.”

POP’s also attempting to take its legal case, led by Hoover Institution fellow (Wait—there couldn’t be anything political about this, right?) and UChicago law professor emeritus Richard Epstein, to the Supreme Court.

I wondered how that would work, since the appellate court judge behind the decision to boot their case from federal court last August was Amy Coney Barrett, Trump’s latest appointment to the Supremes. Barrett would not be able to participate, Caplan told me last weekend. And, if that fails, POP’s prepared to file an array of new lawsuits.

But this was the big news: POP was getting ready to unveil its own architectural plan for the Obama Center on a site abutting Washington Park. Created by architect and preservationist Graham Balkany, this detailed plan would better serve both the public interest and Obama’s legacy, Caplan said. “He could start building immediately; the lawsuits would be moot. All he’d have to do is turn it over to his construction company.”

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@Deannalsaacs
Mandela: Struggle for Freedom was developed by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Winnipeg, Canada) in partnership with the Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg, South Africa). Tour management services provided by Lord Cultural Resources.

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I had a body. truck’s driver, who said he knew before he socks with no shoes. Her head rested to one a red T-shirt, purple-red pants, and white hair pulled into a tight ponytail. She wore the fetal position, with dark brown skin, her belonged to a mannequin. Then he saw the a hand in the truck’s hopper, assumed it lurch up the alley, emptying can after can. of Christ, past a tire repair, and began its later told detectives. got—

The alley was free of debris and sat behind a expanse of Trinity United Church settings. An owner of one of the homes took houses and yards as neatly arrayed as place settings. An owner of one of the homes took out her trash over the weekend and noticed nothing out of the ordinary, except that her out her trash over the weekend and noticed getting—

The list included 51 unsolved homicides. Fifty-one women murdered in Chicago, zero arrests. No public emergency alarms had said. The body count multiplied and few seemed to care. That is, until speculation grew that the same person might have murdered along with all the rest of these women. The crimes were perhaps the work of a serial killer. A suspected serial killer could also be a metaphor. If there wasn’t some homicidal fiend in Chicago who picked off women without detection for decades, then the city was broken in a way that gave off the illusion of one. Serial killers, often evoked to conjure the most deviant human behavior, were sensationalized, even romanticized. They were the stars of “true crime” and TV shows and films, and they and their victims almost always white. And they drew attention in a way that murders in Chicago rarely did. “There is a dreadful magic to the words ‘serial killer,’” Thomas Hargrove, who wrote the computer code that connected Reo Holyfield to the 50 other murdered women in the city, said. Hargrove runs the Murder Accountability Project, a nonprofit that tracks the country’s unsolved homicides, and he believed the serial killer in Chicago was a reality.

A former journalist, Hargrove is in his 60s and speaks with a studied dispassion, apologizing every so often for the macabre nature of his work. He began specializing in serial killers after the 2001 arrest of Gary Ridgway, the “Green River Killer,” who was linked to the murders in Washington state of more than 70 women and girls, most of them runaways or involved in sex work. Looking back at Ridgway’s crimes, Hargrove felt certain that the similarities in their locations, methods, and victim profiles could have been pieced together sooner, like a puzzle, to reveal the handiwork of a single suspect. Lives could have been saved. So he created an algorithm that crunches the nation’s crime data and sorts unsolved murders by their shared characteristics.

Cities like Chicago with exceptionally low homicide clearance rates have the potential to throw off the Murder Accountability Project’s serial-killer algorithm. From inside a labyrinth of unsolved death, with so much
dark material at hand, it was possible to construct all sorts of groupings, to see patterns where there were none. Hargrove called these false positives the “Flint effect,” for the infrequency with which police in Flint, Michigan, arrested murder suspects.

But Hargrove said the Chicago cluster was no accident. Even in Chicago, he contended, most murders of women were committed by intimate partners and solved. And the strangulations and the “high-risk” lifestyles of the victims lined up with what Hargrove knew about serial killers from the thousands of cases compiled in the Radford/Florida Gulf Coast University Serial Killer Database.

In 2010, Hargrove had warned authorities in Gary, Indiana, about strangulations of women there that suggested a single perpetrator, and he was proven right—a man later confessed to killing seven women he’d met on sex work ad websites or picked up on the street. “We know this is a series,” Hargrove suggested an orderliness. And just as a powful cabal or the Big Lie could be exposed, a single actor, as terrifying as it was, suggested being similarly possessed by a portent shadowy bad guy could be tracked down and apprehended.

A suspected serial killer was also a kind of conspiracy theory. It was the belief that a malevolent force of one was the secret source of much suffering and cruelty. Conspiracy theories thrive in times, like our present, in which the aggrieved and anxious and alienated want desperately to perceive hidden patterns that at least make sense of the senseless or oppressive world. Most of these beliefs are preposterous (the rigged election, the victimization of our social order). But a conspiracy theory doesn’t have to be false. Consider how here in Chicago the racial boundaries were literally drawn by a network of bankers and federal officials whose redlined maps denied home loans to African American borrowers. Or how the CPD’s Jon Burge and his subordinates really did torture and frame over a hundred Black suspects for decades, while politicians, prosecutors, and police officials pretended that the mounting evidence didn’t exist.

Fifty women preyed upon by maybe as many different people who simply considered the victims expendable was mayhem. But a single actor, as terrifying as it was, suggested an orderliness. And just as a powful cabal or the Big Lie could be exposed, a shadowy bad guy could be tracked down and apprehended.

CPD officials listened to Hargrove when he first presented his findings to them in 2017. They reviewed the full Murder Accountability Project report, the charts, maps, and spreadsheets. But the officers remained un unanimous. They didn’t see the same patterns as Hargrove. The predominantly Black neighborhoods where the bodies were found spanned much of the south side and west side, a total area the size of Philadelphia. The killings stopped in 2014, and then picked up again three years later. To Hargrove that suggested the killer was likely incarcerated and then released, but the police saw only the randomness of a violent city in which a lot of different people committed horrible crimes and few witnesses came forward to help catch the offenders.

“We don’t work that way with, like, the dots on the map, and this says x, y, z, so it must be this,” the city’s Chief of Detectives Brendan Deenihan said about Hargrove’s findings. “We can only work with what we know and what we can prove.”

HBO’s Vice News Tonight visited the south side in 2017 for a segment on Chicago’s potential serial killer, focusing on the most sensational of the crimes in Hargrove’s database: several of the strangled women who were stripped naked, stuffed in garbage cans, and set on fire. Strangulation, the feminist philosopher Kate Manne writes, is “paradigmatic of misogyny,” because of the intimacy of the violence, its enactment of male dominance, and physical silencing of women.

In 2018, the Tribune ran a front-page story about the extraordinary number of women on the west side and south side who had been choked or smothered to death since 2001. But the Tribune wasn’t reporting on another Gary Ridgway, on an individual psychopath whose capture might provide some closure. The paper was telling the far less splashy story of the constancy of the violence against women whose social position, race, and criminal records left them ever more vulnerable and ignored. “In the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the bodies of dozens of women were found, the Police Department responded by forming a task force that solved the slayings of forty women. The task force was eventually disbanded even as, the Tribune review shows, the attacks continued at a steady pace.”

It took more than a year after Hargrove alerted the CPD for the story to break in the city. “Serial Killer” in large type appeared on the CBS Chicago evening news in 2019 above the faces of the women in the Murder Accountability Project’s Chicago cohort. The special report showed photographs of Reo Holyfield smiling broadly. “Her body was dumped in a garbage can,” CBS’s Pam Zekman said to Riccardo Holyfield on-air. Riccardo replied, “She’s not trash. She’s loved by many.”

The police, in a provided statement, repeated that they saw no “actionable evidence” linking these murders. But people from the neighborhoods where the 51 bodies were found suddenly saw reasons to take action. A hundred serial killers couldn’t account for the relentlessness of the violence faced by Black women and girls in the city. But the CBS report somehow crystallized the threat.

A coalition of activists, religious leaders, and violence interrupters soon rallied outside FBI headquarters in Chicago to “demand justice for the 51 murdered.” In television and radio interviews, community organizers said they wanted crimes taken as seriously in their neighborhoods as they were on the north side, in the suburbs, in white communities, where accountability and protection were the norm. Why weren’t these 51 cases investigated properly? Where were the alerts? The dragnets?

Patricia Van Pelt, a state senator whose district includes the west side, hosted a public hearing at which she railed against a backlog of 13,000 DNA samples from murder cases statewide that had yet to be tested. U.S. Congressman Bobby Rush assembled a forum at his district in the south side, adding to the pressure on the police to review the cold cases. Congressman Rush declared, “We all must continue to think that there is a possible serial killer or killers that’s living among us.”

Beverly Reed Scott didn’t just see the 51 murdered women whose faces flashed on the CBS broadcast; she felt their energy enter her and fill her stomach. “It’s like I knew them and could feel them,” she said. “I knew that I had to do something because they wanted to be acknowledged.”

Scott, who calls herself an eco-agri-spirit muse, is 60, married and living in Olympia Fields, the well-to-do, mostly African American suburb south of Chicago. Yet she remembered being similarly possessed by a portent back in 1997, when she was on public aid, a single mother of five working at a community development nonprofit on the south side. Back then she saw the headline of yet another Cabrini-Green tragedy—a nine-year-old raped and choked, doused in roach repellent, and left for dead in a public housing stairwell. Disposed of like trash, the girl survived, but she was blinded and brain-damaged.

Scott couldn’t merely suck her teeth and complain to friends, repeating rituals of empty outrage. She organized a rally. “Rest well, Girl X,” Scott recited as part of a poem she wrote, giving the child a public name and turning her into a civic cause. The unknown variable performed a kind of alchemy, the victim no longer disregarded as Project Girl/ Black/Poor/Garbage but transformed into every nine-year-old. Scott had no intention of raising money. “I was raising consciousness. That’s my calling,” she said. But a lady handed her a check. Scott registered as a charity and opened a bank account, the fund swelling to more than $300,000. Then Girl X’s mother sued her, winning a summary judgment, since Scott had used $40,000 from the donations for expenses and a salary for herself.

The media that had sensationalized the crime turned on Scott. Her rap sheet was printed on the front page of the Sun-Times—a possession of a controlled substance, a conviction for writing a bad check. A lawyer quoted in the paper compared Scott to the man who raped the child. That’s when Scott decided to kill herself. She heard an ad on the radio for burial plots and called to purchase her own grave. But the man selling the plot realized who Scott was. He said anyone who could raise all that money could sell anything, and he offered her a job. Another sign? Scott took the job and recovered her will to live.

After her premonition in 2019, Scott went to the Murder Accountability Project website and copied down the information about each of the Chicago victims. “That could have been me,” Scott said. “I’ve been in situations. I’ve been almost murdered, choked on the railroad tracks and played dead to survive.” Some of the women identified by Hargrove’s algorithm were Scott’s age now. Some were her age at her lowest points. Some were her age when she left home. Scott grew up in Englewood and from the ages of eight to 12 a neighbor sexually abused her. Over the next few years, she said, she heaped every kind of abuse upon herself to validate a sense of worthlessness.

In her 20s, as a single mother living in the Chicago Housing Authority’s Hilliard Homes, she had a drug dealer named Cash who before selling to her would first check Scott’s cabinets and fridge to make sure she could feed her children. One day she tried to buy from him with $7 in food stamps. It wasn’t just that he said no; it was the way he said it. “Like
NEWS & POLITICS

ANGELA MARIEANNA FORD
1/4/01 Found in abandoned building 32 Black

CHARLOTTE W. DAY
3/28/01 Found in vacant lot 42 Black

WINIFRED SHINES
8/2/01 Outdoors 33 Black

BRENDA COWART
8/22/01 Found in vacant lot 52 Black

ELAINE BONETA
11/5/01 Outdoors 41 Hispanic

SAUDIA BANKS
12/28/01 Indoors 39 Black

BESSIE SCOTT
2/16/02 Found in abandoned building 43 Black

GWENDOLYN WILLIAMS
6/12/02 Outdoors 44 Black

JODY GRISSOM
8/14/02 Found in alley 20 White

LORAINE HARRIS
8/25/02 Outdoors 36 White

DELLIE JONES
9/7/02 Indoors 35 Black

CELESTE JACKSON
12/20/02 Found in alley 37 Black

NANCY WALKER
3/19/03 Outdoors 55 Black

TARIKA JONES
5/20/03 Found in abandoned building 30 Black

LINDA GREEN
5/20/03 Found in alley 42 Black

ROSENDA BAROCIO
8/14/03 Found in alley 20 White

LATONYA KEELER
8/16/03 Found in garbage can 29 Black

LATRICE HALL
10/15/03 Found in vacant lot 21 Black

LUCYSET (AKA MARY) THOMAS
10/15/03 Found in abandoned building 38 Black

ETHEL AMERSON
12/26/03 Found in abandoned building 36 Black

MICHELLE DAVENPORT
7/15/04 Found in garbage can 40 Black

TAMALA EDWARDS
10/16/04 Found in alley 37 Black

MAKALAVAH WILLIAMS
11/5/04 Outdoors 18 Black

PRECIOUS SMITH
1/13/05 Found in alley 23 Black

DENISE V. TORRES
2/1/05 Found in alley 35 White

WANDA HALL
8/50/05 Found in vacant lot 33 Black

YYETTE MASON
12/25/05 Found in alley 35 Black

SHANIQUA WILLIAMS
12/30/05 Found in abandoned building 40 Black

MARGARET E. GOMEZ
1/12/06 Found in vacant lot 22 White

ANTOINETTE P. SIMMONS
7/14/06 Found in garbage can 21 Black

KELLY SARFF
9/24/06 Found in abandoned building 34 White

VERONICA FRAIZER
3/25/07 Found in alley 46 Black

MARY ANN SZATKOWSKI
5/2/07 Indoors 56 White

THERESA BUNN
1/13/07 Found in garbage can 21 Black

HAZEL MARION LEWIS
11/14/07 Found in garbage can 52 Black

GENEVIEVE MELLAS
10/9/08 Outdoors 32 White

CHARLENE MILLER
6/13/09 Indoors 54 Black

LATOYA BANKS
7/5/09 Found in alley 29 Black

SHANNON WILLIAMS
8/6/09 Found in alley 36 Black

VANESSA RAJOKOVICH
12/9/09 Indoors 32 White

LAFONDA SUE WILSON
6/25/10 Found in alley 43 Black

QUANDA L. CRIDER
7/16/10 Found in abandoned building 37 Black

ANGELA PROFIT
8/28/11 Found in vacant lot 46 Black

PAMELA WILSON
8/9/12 Found in vacant lot 30 Black

VELMA HOWARD
2/21/14 Found in alley 50 Black

DIAMOND TURNER
3/3/17 Found in garbage can 21 Black

CATHERINE SATERFIELD-BUCHANAN
6/22/17 Outdoors 58 Black

VALERIE MARIE JACKSON
3/17/18 Outdoors 49 Black

LORA DAWN HARBIN
5/25/18 Found in vacant lot 44 White

NICOLE LYNELL RIDGE
6/12/18 Found in abandoned building 47 Black

REO RENEE HOLYFIELD
9/10/18 Found in garbage can 34 Black


I was pathetic,” Scott recalled. The rebuke forced her to take stock: “This can’t be my life.” She pulled out the yellow pages (it was 1991) and looked up drug-treatment centers. She later went on to work at the Defender, first as a reporter for the newspaper and then for its charity arm. She took a class in community organizing from a young Barack Obama, and she played a part in connecting the aspiring politician to Chicago’s wider African American community. She now had a fluorescent garden, a sunroom with walls covered in photographs of Toni Morrison and Lorraine Hansberry. Scott knew that the women on Hargrove’s list could have gone on to lead different lives as she had.

There were others in the city compelled to humanize the 51 women and raise awareness about their fates. John Fountain, a professor at Roosevelt University, assigned his journalism class portraits of the victims for a collection called “Unforgotten: The Untold Stories of Murdered Chicago Women.” Medill students filmed a documentary about the continual threat faced by women in the city’s sex trade. Scott called the public memorial she hosted the #50WomenGone Community Awareness Soul Session. She persuaded aldermen from the wards where the bodies were discovered to join her in reading the women’s names aloud. She brought out Riccardo Holyfield, too, and Pam Zekman, who filmed the event for CBS. Scott met with Chief of Detectives Deenihan at police headquarters, sharing with him a “remembrance quilt” that described each of the 51 victims. She distributed whistles that women could blow to call for help, her flyer for the campaign announcing, “Give as many whistles as you can to at-risk girls & women. Basically all girls & all women.”

In a TED Talk Thomas Hargrove delivered, he spotlighted Scott’s work on behalf of the murdered women. Scott believed that, like her, most anyone could see themselves in Reo Holyfield and the other women identified by the algorithm. They just needed to find the connection and then put some love there, put some energy into making things better. “But do something,” she urged. “Stop thinking you have to solve the case to matter. If you got some money, send some money to one of the organizations that do that kind of work.” She heard herself and laughed. “Don’t send me nothing.”
Murder cases are never closed, even ones that feel forgotten. In the spring of 2019, the CPD announced that it would conduct a thorough review of all 51 of the cold cases linked by Hargrove’s algorithm. The city’s homicide detectives were overwhelmed by fresh cases, mostly involving men and teenage boys killed by gunfire on the south side and west side, so the department could spare only four detectives who teamed up with agents and analysts from the FBI Violent Crimes task force. The CPD detectives and FBI agents read through the case files. They followed up on old leads, reinterviewed witnesses and suspects. They found that a few of the crimes seemed not to fit the same profile: they looked domestic-related, not women at “high risk” because of drugs or sex work or itinerary.

The police, somehow, had taken or kept DNA samples from fewer than half of the victims. But the 21 pieces of DNA that were now tested came back with 21 different male profiles, none of which was in the police database. Forensic evidence suggesting 21 killers at-large and still unknown to the police could be seen as an indictment of law enforcement. What it wasn’t, however, was evidence of a lone offender.

Chief of Detectives Deenihan, who oversaw the investigation, believed the findings nearly conclusive. At police headquarters, behind a desk topped with pictures of his five red-headed children and fat files labeled “SHOOTINGS,” he said, “They didn’t find any links that linked all of these cases together, or even five of them, or any at this time.”

The Chicago Police Department, however, has not built up a great deal of confidence in the neighborhoods where these crimes occurred. The federal probe of the CPD prompted by the murder of Laquan McDonald and the ensuing cover-up found longstanding practices of civil rights abuses and dereliction of duty. “I have to call somebody! This is not right! I don’t even know what you’re doing!” Anjanette Young, handcuffed and naked, shouted between her rails as a dozen police officers moved about during the mistaken raid of her apartment documented in the body-cam video released this past December. Violent crime in Chicago in 2020, amid the coronavirus pandemic and the protests sparked by the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, was way up—murders, shootings, domestic violence, carjackings. The terror of feeling both overpoliced and underprotected in the communities most affected by crime persisted.

While the FBI agents were reviewing the 51 murders identified by Hargrove’s computer code, a police research firm was also wrapping up a yearlong evaluation of the way the CPD investigates homicides. The aim was to improve upon the department’s meager clearance rate. “Chicago spiraled out of control when it started solving only a third of its murders,” Hargrove said. “Murder begets murder.” The research firm recommended an overhaul. The CPD needed to add more homicide detectives, allocate and train them differently, and bolster its cold case division. But this meant additional funding. Chicago already spends $1.6 billion annually on law enforcement, about 40 percent of the city’s total operating budget. Those demanding that the CPD be defunded wanted to redirect significant portions of the existing police budget to alternative forms of public safety. Sending counselors or social workers and not armed officers to calls involving people struggling with mental illness and addiction. Deploying community mediators to preempt retaliatory violence. Investing in the city’s underfunded social services.

“Black girls in schools can’t be safe if they have no one to talk to about how they might not be safe,” Asha Ransby-Sporns, a founding member of the activist group Black Youth Project 100, said of the Chicago school system’s shortages of full-time counselors and social workers. “But there’s more than one police officer for every school? What does that say about us, our understanding of safety and our priorities?”

It turned out most of the protests that sprung up didn’t confine themselves to the horrors of a possible serial killer. One deranged predator couldn’t sum up the dangers imperiling women on the margins in the city, let alone a range of traumas that were commonplace and systemic. The same racism and inequality that allowed the women’s murders to go unsolved and unexamined for 20 years had also torn apart Black and Brown communities in myriad other ways.

At a demonstration on the third floor of City Hall, the father of Kierra Coles, a pregnant U.S. postal worker who went missing in 2018, spoke about searching for her in the glut of abandoned homes in Chatham that were still boarded up more than a decade after the foreclosure crisis.

Kam Buckner, a state representative whose district stretches for 90 south-side blocks along the lakefront, spoke on the House floor in Springfield in May 2019 about Kierra Coles and two other missing pregnant women from the south side, both of whom were later found murdered with suspects arrested. “These women may not be from your district, your city, or even your region,” he told his colleagues, “but they all belong to all of us.”

That fall, Buckner introduced a bill to create the “Task Force on Missing and Murdered Chicago Women,” which would examine the “underlying historical, social, economic, institutional and cultural factors” contributing to the “disproportionately high levels of violence” against Black and Latino women and girls in the city.

Senator Van Pelt, at her public forum, said she also hoped to redress the root causes of institutional racism, beginning with the hundreds of people returning to her west side district each month from prisons who had received little in the way of counseling or job training during their incarcerations. “With all the violence and murders and unemployment, it’s a keg waiting to explode,” she said.

In late 2019, in front of a public housing building for seniors in Woodlawn where a 65-year-old was killed by her 72-year-old boyfriend the previous year, a woman named Latonya Moore stood alongside a west-side pastor named Reverend Robin Hooch, which was his real name, and a dozen people hoisting hand-drawn signs that declared “51 WOMEN DEAD WE THINK THERE’S MORE” and “WE NEED ANSWERS I’M SCARED.” Moore spoke about her daughter, Shantieya Smith, who was murdered in 2018, her body discovered in an abandoned garage two weeks after she was last seen with a man from their neighborhood.

That man, Charlie Booker, was also the last person seen with a west side 15-year-old named Sadaria Davis whose lifeless body was dumped in a vacant building, and he was later arrested for stabbing a sex worker in the back and sexually assaulting and shooting another woman. As far as Charlie Booker being the serial killer, though, he was born in 1995 and in kindergarten when the crimes linked by the Murder Accountability Project began. But that wasn’t the point. When Shantieya Smith’s family reported her missing, the police told them Shantieya had left on her own volition and would more than likely be back. Statistically, the police weren’t wrong. According to the FBI’s National Crime Information Center, some 200,000 Black people are reported missing in the United States each year, the vast majority of them under the age of 18, and almost all of them eventually return. Almost. When Booker sent menacing texts to Shantieya’s family, boasting of the crime to come, the police didn’t seem interested in that either.

Reverend Robin Hooch had recently turned his full attention to what he called an epidemic in Chicago of murdered and missing Black women. Before that he was preoccupied with protecting his flocks from a reverse-mortgage racket, a devilish throwback to both the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis and the predatory housing contracts of the previous century that had robbed more than $3 billion from the city’s African American communities. Asked about the common denominator of the many protests precipitated by the reports of a serial killer, Robin Hooch said it was the treatment of Black women. “Black women are not important to the Chicago police department,” he said. “They’re just not on top of the food chain.”

At the protest in Woodlawn, a woman next to Latonya Moore shouted, “We should never have to worry if something happens to us, are they going to look for us.” Moore was now in tears. She said, “Every time we call a detective, they never call us back. I leave voicemails. It takes two months. I’m sitting up here, I’m crying. It feels like no one gives a damn about us, period.”

Aziyah Roberts, a round-cheeked teenage, with doleful eyes and an endearing gap between her two front teeth, saw the many posts on Instagram and Snapchat about missing Black girls. “I just felt for them, like it could have been me,” she recalled recently. At the offices of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, KOCO, one of the south side’s oldest Black-led community groups, flyers for missing girls are taped to the front window, and a large mural inside depicts Ida B. Wells, poet Gwendolyn Brooks, and Margaret Burroughs, the artist who founded the DuSable Museum of African American History.

Aziyah was meeting there with two other girls, Kayla Chavers and Esi Koomson, then seniors at nearby Martin Luther King College Prep. Aziyah attended Dyett, one of the 49 Chicago public schools closed by the city in 2012, all of them in Black and Latino communities; hers reopened only after protestors, including organizers from KOCO, went on a hunger strike, ingesting nothing but water and other liquids for 34 days. Aziyah, in a quiet way, recounted how she finished school one day and noticed a white van following
her. She said she turned up one block and down another, and the van still trailed behind her. When she ran, a man hopped out of the vehicle and chased her on foot. She said he had on a bright yellow vest, the kind worn by city workers or crossing guards, people who were supposed to help. Aziyah spotted a group of friends. Only when she reached the crowd did the man retreat and the van disappear.

In the spring of 2018, Aziyah, Kayla, and Esi organized a march, #WeWalkForHer. Some 150 people joined them, blocking traffic on King Drive as they chanted, “Stop . . . and listen / Our girls . . . are missing.” They were inspired by their mentors at KOCO and by other political education organizations, such as BYP 100 and Assatta’s Daughters. A year after the march, on the same date, the girls led a second one. And a third one a year after that. “It’s not like a one time and done thing, you have to keep doing it and get more attention, get more things,” Kayla said. “It wasn’t like girls stopped going missing,” Esi added.

The three girls were deep into their organizing when they heard that a serial killer might be menacing their neighborhoods. Naturally, it scared them. But they also heard talk about missing Black girls all the time. Leaders at KOCO had discussed developing an app, an Amber Alert specifically for Black girls. There was even a nonprofit called the Black & Missing Foundation, founded in 2008 to provide ways to report and search for missing persons of color nationwide. But that each incident wasn’t splashed all over the mainstream media, that there wasn’t as much as a public-service announcement, made Aziyah and her friends wonder which threats were real. Compared to other conspiracy theories, a suspected serial killer didn’t sound that far-fetched. There was the belief that girls in the city were being abducted off the streets and trafficked into intricate sex rings. There was the chatter, too, that people were being killed in Chicago for their harvested organs, an idea that some thought proven true, in 2017, when a 19-year-old west sider named Kenmeka Jenkins went missing after going to a party at a hotel in Rosemont, near O’Hare, and was later found dead in the hotel’s freezer.

“So finding out that there was a potential serial killer was, like, wow, you weren’t just making stuff up,” Esi explained. “It was like a validation of what we’re doing.”

Kim Foxx, Cook County’s first African American state’s attorney, said she also heard all the same conspiracies. “I have four teenage girls, and they send out alerts to each other on our family group chat,” Foxx said. She was alarmed but not surprised by the speculation about a serial killer. “I can’t fathom the murders of 51 white women going unsolved without a level of urgency,” Foxx said.

People on the west side had been approaching Foxx at events for the past few years, pleading for help—their daughters or friends or friends of friends had gone missing. Foxx said, “They’re saying, ‘There’s a guy who is supposedly in a car going back and forth. I don’t think it’s folklore, right?’”

Foxx, who grew up poor in Cabrini-Green and was sexually assaulted as a child, said she regularly discussed her own background to demonstrate to other women of color that they weren’t invisible or unimportant. She wanted to show that the justice system could also work for them. “It doesn’t take magic ink for me to be able to see them,” Foxx said. “I see them because I am one of them.” As for illicit organ harvesting, Foxx insisted she could dispel that as pure myth. As the county’s top prosecutor, she said, she would know if the medical examiner was finding corpses without kidneys, livers, hearts, or lungs. “I haven’t seen that,” Foxx said.

Deenihan, the chief of detectives, said there were also “false narratives” circulating about Black and Hispanic girls being abducted. “If people were getting snatched off the street, there would be much more media attention on that,” he asserted. And yet within 24 hours of his reassurances, Chicago news outlets reported that two men in the west-side Austin neighborhood forced a 15-year-old girl into a gray van at knifepoint and that a woman in Little Village tried to entice an 11-year-old girl into a white van; two days later a man grabbed a teenage girl in Lawndale—snatched her—and carried her into a van.

Shannon Bennett, KOCO’s executive director, described the scope of the problem in a way that explained Chicago as well as much of the country at this time: “It’s a hysteria and a legitimate threat both.”

In the weeks before someone killed Reo, Ricardo Holyfield had chance encounters with his cousin at a McDonald’s on the south side, on the Red Line platform by Wrigley Field, at a liquor store on 79th Street. The randomness of the sightings made him think he could have saved her. “If I would have been driving down the street and seen Reo that night, I could have pulled over. She wouldn’t have bumped into that person who hurt her,” he repeated to himself.

Riccardo was in his early 30s, with ringleted dreadlocks that he wore well past his shoulders. As little kids, Reo was the one who made peanut butter and jelly on crackers for him at their grandmother’s Englewood house. In their teens, he used to tag along with Reo when she competed in rap battles. “She was like Nicki Minaj way before Nicki Minaj,” he raved. Later, she moved to the north side, in a city in which north and south were still code for white and Black. “She would walk anywhere, go anywhere,” he eulogized. “She was never scared.”

When Riccardo first learned that his cousin’s death might be part of a serial killing spree, it felt to him like a tragedy not only of opportunity and chance, but also of decades of neglect and indifference. Reo wouldn’t be on that list if the person who did it was caught in 2001 or 2009 or at any point up to her death in 2018. Riccardo worked as a security guard for Chicago Public Schools, but he was also one of many ordinary citizens who felt a responsibility to make the city safer and more humane. He started his own community organization in 2013, God’s Gorillas, which hosted youth basketball tournaments on the south side and threw parades they called “peaceful turn ups.” Riccardo taught boys how to box, with the message “gloves up, guns down.” He took teens to feed the homeless who slept in encampments beneath Wacker Drive. He didn’t know what was real or imagined as far as a serial killer, but the threat gave him more purpose.

“I bootied up. I was ready,” he said. He canvassed where several of the other bodies in Hargrove’s cluster were found. He was determined to help the “aunties” walking home, the mothers working third shift. He taped up posters with a warning and a plea: “Help Protect Our Women.” He said, “If we don’t do anything, then outsiders will think we don’t care. But if nobody is helping us when we care, then it means they don’t care.”

In January 2020, police arrested a 52-year-old Chicago man named Arthur Hilliard for the murder of Diamond Turner, one of the women identified by the Murder Accountability Project algorithm as a victim of a potential serial killer. Turner, like Reo Holyfield, had been asphyxiated, her body discovered in a garbage can on the south side. Detectives had suspected Hilliard of Turner’s 2017 murder from the start. He and Turner were in some form of a domestic sexual relationship, and her body was found behind his building. A witness reported seeing Hilliard clean blood stains that led from his bedroom to the back door, and police learned that Hilliard soon got rid of his mattress. So much evidence pointed to him, in fact, that it’s hard to fathom how he was allowed to walk the streets for three more years. But it took that long to process a specimen of DNA, extracted not from Turner’s body but from the crime scene, and the match led, finally, to the arrest.

Chief of Detectives Deenihan said nothing linked Hilliard to the other 50 cases. Hilliard knew Diamond Turner. He was suspected of a second homicide, but it was of a man. Deenihan reiterated that the police still had zero evidence of a serial killer, although the city was deluged, generally, by a scourge of unsolved crime. In terrible ways, however, whether or not the 51 murders were connected seemed almost beside the point. Either the racial and economic divides in the city were so deep, the abandonment and indifference to Black suffering so profound that a serial killer was able to operate for decades without anyone noticing. Or the racial and economic divides in the city were so deep, the abandonment and indifference so profound that it just looked like the work of a serial killer. Either way, the conditions were real. The threat of serial homicide, at least, made visible the city’s capacity to inflict harm as well as its power to deliver grace. But systemic crimes were more mundane, depressing, and difficult to solve.

Arthur Hilliard’s arrest did give Riccardo hope that the police were still investigating these crimes and might someday find out who murdered Reo. The not knowing, he said, was torture. He struggled with what to tell Reo’s children about their mother’s death. “When you lose a family member to an unsolved murder, it’s so heartbreaking you can’t understand,” he said. It kept him up at night, made him look over his shoulder. Both his grief and love were pending.
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Internationally known award-winning poet, writer, and performer of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation. She is the author of nine books of poetry and a memoir. In 2019, Joy Harjo was appointed the 23rd United States Poet Laureate, the first Native American to hold the position.

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Mariame Kaba doesn’t like to think about the past. She’s always looking forward, working to give birth to projects and grassroots organizations meant to serve the moment. “I’m not a reflective person and that’s important for me,” Kaba says. “I like to talk about my ideas for the future. That’s who I am.”

The longtime organizer, activist, author, and abolitionist is a household name in the Chicago liberation movement and helped launch a plethora of projects and collectives focused on transformative justice, ending violence, and dismantling the prison industrial complex (PIC) that have since developed into a world of their own. With a slow and clear cadence grounded in admirable confidence, she says that’s exactly how she wants it to be. “Organizations are dynamic and that means they should die,” she tells me. “They come and go, and you come and go. You are part of them for as long as they serve the moment and the time and the work, but you don’t hold onto them just because they exist.”

This lifestyle of always looking forward isn’t meant to be dramatic or radical. It’s a grounding practice rooted in Kaba’s identity and is why her passion for collaboration and growth flows so easily from one cup to the next. And yet, her newest book looks backward to the abolitionist’s decades-long fight for justice to meet the present moment.

*We Do This ‘Til We Free Us* (Haymarket Books), which releases February 23, is a collection of talks, interviews, and past work that can serve as an initial primer on the PIC abolition and community building rooted in transformative justice. Although Kaba says she resisted publishing the book for some time, the summer uprisings of 2020 were a timely push.

“I spent most of my life as a young [activist] building what I see as containers for collective action,” she says. “I hope that this book helps young folks and others who are building those containers find language for what they are doing and also gives them some fuel and inspiration because it’s hard work.”

Kaba knows how to give fuel and inspiration to her colleagues, too. Since 2018, she’s been in partnership with Andrea J. Ritchie, an attorney, author, and activist focusing on policing and criminalization of women and LGBTQ+ people of color. Together, the duo created an initiative called Interrupting Criminalization: Research in Action during their time as researchers in residence at the Social Justice Institute of the Barnard Center for Research on Women. Cofounded with researcher Woods Ervin, the project aims to interrupt the growing criminalization and incarceration of women and LGBTQ+ people of color for acts related to public order, poverty, child welfare, drug use, survival, and self-defense, including criminalization and incarceration of survivors of violence.

Ritchie has known Kaba for more than ten years and says she’s blessed to cofound the project with her and work with someone she calls a visionary leader. The amount of energy she puts into her work is rooted in Kaba’s vision of a liberated future—where safety is real, where survivors of violence can move past their trauma, and where there is less violence, her colleague says. “[Kaba] is one of the most brilliant, incisive visionary leaders of my generation, of this moment, and also one of the funniest, most practical and kind, even though she likes to hide it,” Ritchie says with a laugh. “Her love of Black people, survivors, migrants, working people, disabled people—her entire body of work is about what love looks like in action.”

After more than 20 years of organizing in Chicago, Kaba moved back to her native New York City in 2016, but she leaves her mark on the city of big shoulders. If you haven’t heard her name, you likely know the organizations
she helped birth. She is the founder and director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration. She co-founded the Chicago Freedom School, the Chicago Taskforce on Violence against Girls and Young Women, the Chicago Alliance to Free Marissa Alexander, and the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team. She runs the popular blog Prison Culture, which looks at the PIC structures around the country and its effects on society.

Kaba was also behind We Charge Genocide, an intergenerational effort that documented police brutality and violence in Chicago and sent youth organizers to Geneva, Switzerland, to present their report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture. She’s an advisory board member of Chicago Torture Justice Memorials, a group that worked to get the city council to pass a reparations law providing restitution to the victims of Jon Burge, the police commander who, along with officers he trained, tortured more than 100 suspects, most of them Black men, from the 1970s through the early 1990s.

She is also a founding advisory board member of the Chicago Community Bond Fund, which provides bonds for people charged with crimes in Cook County who cannot afford to pay bonds themselves. But in January, local abolitionists and organizers celebrated a victory years in the making: The Illinois General Assembly passed the Pretrial Fairness Act, a key component of the Illinois Legislative Black caucus’ criminal justice omnibus bill, which ends the state’s use of money bond and plans to transform the state’s pretrial justice system. It seems like Kaba works 20 full-time jobs, but that’s how she likes it. She says she’s learned how to live fully in the world by doing things she cares about, such as knitting and going out to dinner with friends pre-pandemic. But her work is a large part of that, too. These achievements in local liberation and restorative justice movements over the years make Kaba a memorable figure—but she takes credit for none of it on her own. Kaba’s motto, known by her friends, colleagues, and anyone familiar with her work, speaks to her values: “Nothing that we do that is worthwhile is done alone.”

“The idea that we need other people in order to be able to win the things we want to win and to put your talent and ideas together—that is something that was reinforced for me working in Chicago,” she says. “You will meet people beyond your specific interests and that’s incredibly powerful and generative because you are forced to look beyond your very narrow spoke.”

Kaba, who began her organizing career in the late 1980s in NYC before moving to Rogers Park as an early 20-something, says Chicago’s nature as an organizing city and the collaborative spirit from people she worked with here greatly shaped her into the activist she is today. “I came as someone who was struggling to understand myself in the world and where my place would be, and I left Chicago understanding myself much better as an organizer and as a Black woman.”

The diversity of the Chicago organizing community, part of the city’s identity, was a positive change compared to the siloed organizing scenes of NYC, she says. If you attend any rally, protest, or justice movement in Chicago, you’ll meet organizers standing up for labor issues, climate change, housing issues, religious institutions, LGBTQ+ rights, and more—this I saw to be particularly true over the summer while out reporting on the various social justice movements that were largely led by young folks. That overlap, which includes the use of creativity and art to assist political movements, makes Chicago stand out compared to other cities, she says.

Tony Alvarado-Rivera sees that intersectionality as critical to Chicago’s movements. Alvarado-Rivera is the executive director of the Chicago Freedom School, which was founded in 2007 and teaches youth how to use their unique experiences and power to create an equitable world through leadership, activism, and movement building. He says Kaba’s spirit still lives on at CFS and its youth learn about her work through its programs, staff, and personal visits from Kaba.

The recent youth uprising makes Kaba’s newest book expedient and captures the new generational youth who are pushing for an end to the police and the prison system, and create new community safety networks. “It’s that I feel most proud of—just how they have taken things they have learned and made it their own thing,” she says. “It makes me so happy to see that work because that’s what it’s all about: what gets generated that’s new from what it is we need.”

Asha Edwards, a 20-year-old youth activist and abolitionist with Assata’s Daughters and We Are Dissenters, was an active member of the #NoCopAcademy campaign. The south-side native, who currently studies sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, looks to Kaba as an inspiration and mentor. She is incredibly thankful to the veteran organizer for providing her with the necessary resources, language, and materials to end the PIC and the importance of organizing by way of her books, lectures, and social media.

“She made me believe in abolition,” Edwards says, who remembers learning about Kaba in high school. “With her knowledge and how she created a successful platform to understanding abolition, I started to think about, ‘How do I address conflict in my own relationships?’ or ‘How can I get to the root causes of what leads to violence?’ And believing that prisons don’t do that.”

The young activist remembers meeting Kaba at an awards ceremony shortly after the #NoCopAcademy campaign and getting a big hug from her, as well as useful quotes and lessons on how to undo oppressive systems during a 2020 abolitionist training. Having these direct experiences with Kaba gives Edwards a sense of hope for the future. Addressing harm is the hardest aspect for her when thinking about abolition, but Kaba’s tools makes the task seem possible, she says.

Others who have been touched by Kaba’s work and her newest book say her values of collaborative action and mutual aid have positively driven social change, and are lessons that will be passed down to the next generation. Notable Chicago writer, scholar, professor, and cultural organizer Eve L. Ewing, who met Kaba through mutual connections and her work around prison abolition, calls her an amazing writer who knows how to provoke the wisdom of people before her through her writing. We Do This ‘Til We Free Us is a needed resource for those looking to be more politically and civically engaged—and who want to be changemakers, she says.

“I imagine my kids or grandkids being in the back of a classroom and getting a tattered copy of this book that they got from the library or stole from somewhere,” Ewing says. “That’s the kind of book it’s going to be: an insurgent book that will be calling on and speaking to for a very long time.”

Ewing is currently writing a new book and isn’t taking any interviews, but she made an exception to talk to me about Kaba’s impact, a testament to the true power of her influence. Ewing says the abolitionist has inspired her to think about working together and drawing on people’s strengths to create the best possible outcome. Activism should be representative of the collective responsibility we all want to lead.

“If we dream of a society where everyone is collectively responsible for one another but our ‘activism’ is driven by wanting to jump out front and be the hero, I think that’s sad and not a great path to be on,” she says. “Mariame really shows and embodies what it looks like and to truly work collectively in humble partnership with other people.”

Kaba’s humility in her work, and her organic ability to practice nonattachment to the movements she creates, feels like a life lesson we can all carry. It’s a reminder to live passionately and presently in a world that can feel increasingly stressful and traumatic at times. As she told me, it’s not going away. It helps to pump love and constant curiosity into your days, whether that’s through watching Hallmark Channel movies, reading, making art, or fighting for liberation, if you’re Mariame Kaba.

“You have to figure out a way to live in the world, that’s life,” she says. “I don’t have to carve out my hobby time. I just have to live—live fully.”

@ArielParrella
FEBRUARY 18, 2021 • CHICAGOREADER 19
The graphic novel *Map of my Heart* begins with a cartoon map of Hoffman Estates: the high school, the Barrington Square Mall, a good spot to pick raspberries behind the hospital. At the bottom, everything is labeled: “Map of the Known Universe Circa 1982.”

The cartographer is comics artist John Porcellino. For the last three decades, he's self-published his influential autobiographical zine, *King-Cat Comics and Stories* (last month he released *King-Cat* #80.) On February 9, comics publisher Drawn & Quarterly reissued three Porcellino titles: *Perfect Example*, a coming-of-age memoir set the summer after high school, and *King-Cat Classix* and *Map of my Heart*, both of which collect zine content from 1989 to 2002.

Together, these publications represent the coin flip of Porcellino's career. On one side, he's a lauded comics giant, with titles so treasured they demand reprinting. On the other, he maintains a thoroughly DIY approach to publishing, running the Spit and a Half zine distro from his Beloit, Wisconsin, home, and releasing *King-Cat* totally independently.

“Once I started *King-Cat*, that became my
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focus right away,” Porcellino says. “I knew it could always grow and evolve, so it felt like something that could just be a home to me.”

When the first issue of *King-Cat Comics and Stories* came out in 1989, it cost 35 cents. Porcellino was 19 years old, drawing simple stories about his surreal dreams, suburban Chicago upbringing, and the stray cats of Dekalb, Illinois. He ran off copies to sell to his friends or drop at bookstores around town. Even from those humble beginnings, he imagined *King-Cat* as a long-running, all-encompassing endeavor: the record of his whole life.

An issue of *King-Cat* could be a textbook in midwest sensibilities. Porcellino’s spare, unhurried lines perfectly capture prairie grass and Lake Michigan horizons. Over decades of drawing comics, Porcellino’s artistic approach became more and more simple. A philosophy began emerging, quietly threading all of his work together. Moving slowly allows for true appreciation of things: a snowfall, a groundhog, a suburban house all lit up at night. He started translating his deep appreciation of the midwest landscape into every issue of *King-Cat*.

“It’s not like the Rocky Mountains where it’s going to hit you over the head with, ‘Look how majestic I am,’” Porcellino says. “It’s Paw Paw, Illinois. That beauty is there and that majesty is there, but it’s a thing that you have to learn to recognize. Once you learn to recognize it, you see it everywhere.”

As a teenager, Porcellino discovered the Hairy Who, the unconventional 1960s art collective that formed at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Around the same time, he found Matt Groening’s *Life in Hell* and Lynda Barry’s *Ernie Pook’s Comeek* in the pages of the *Chicago Reader*. Those three influences began shifting his ideas of what comics could accomplish. (In a full-circle moment, Porcellino published his own comic strip, *Prairie Pothole*, with the *Reader* in 2019.)

As photocopiers became more ubiquitous in the 80s, zines and minicomics began flooding into bookstores, record stores, and other counterculture establishments. The growing zine movement spawned *Factsheet Five*, a zine review magazine run by Mike Gunderlay. In the days before the Internet, Porcellino connected with other zinesters through the magazine.

That’s how he discovered Montreal cartoonist Julie Doucet, and her elaborate, raunchy zine *Dirty Plotte*. “I thought, ‘Wow, Julie is doing every single inch of this little zine,’” Porcellino says. “That was my direct inspiration. A real direct, personal way of trying to connect with the world. Shortly after I saw my first *Dirty Plotte*, that’s when I started *King-Cat.*”

If you were scouting for zines in the 90s, you would eventually encounter *King-Cat*. Back in the early 90s, comics artist Ivan Brunetti would scour Chicagoland comic shops for indie creators. Discovering Porcellino’s comics felt like permission to create his own. “The charms of [John’s] comic are actually its intimate scale, modest production, unfancy presentation, and accessibility,” he says. “Paper and mark, that’s as essential as one can get, the very heart of cartooning.”

From the zine’s earliest days, Porcellino chronicled midwest mundanities. Early issues explored fiction and experimental writing (including the Madonna ‘n’ Me issue, which just records his daydreams about the pop star), but Porcellino really hit his stride when recording quiet moments of everyday life.

A 1991 comic recalls an uneventful walk home from school—hopping a fence, cutting across a yard, greeting his mom. The sparse dialogue is so commonplace it might as well be white noise—“Would you take the dog out?”—and when John goes into the backyard, he looks up to the sky. The final page is shaded totally black with little gaps of white: It has started to snow. A moment of quiet profundity, surrounded by routine. These moments would become Porcellino’s specialty.

“Whether it’s the super exciting moments or happy moments or super low moments in life . . . In between those extremes is this vast swath of mundanity,” Porcellino says. “My work became focused on those simple, nondescript, seemingly superficial moments. When you learn to look at that stuff, this kind of beauty emerges in everything.”

Drawn & Quarterly editor in chief Tom Devlin was the first person to publish a collection of Porcellino’s work—the original run of *Perfect Example*, which came out under his former press Highwater Books in 2005. He recalls how, even in the early days, Porcellino’s comics felt different. “The 90s were a very sarcastic time, and John’s comics were not sarcastic at all,” Devlin says. “They did not fit in with the tenor of comics that people were making. He was celebrating small moments instead of puncturing big targets.”

*Perfect Example* is Porcellino’s memoir focused on the summer after he graduated high school, rife with house parties, unrequited crushes, and a depressive episode that teenage John doesn’t know how to handle. It’s also a portrait of suburban teenager-hood—and how much that involves piling into a car and driving into Chicago.

A pivotal early scene takes place at Belmont Harbor. While John’s friends mix 7-Up and vodka, he moves away from the crowd. Suddenly, the lake turns into frenzied lines and the bushes crush in like black clouds. John becomes a lone figure surrounded by darkness, and then the panels begin to zoom out. The beach, the parking lot, the Chicago skyline rendered in the simplest lines. The chapter’s final page shows Chicago viewed from above, as if Porcellino is saying: “Look, all of my conflicts and chaos are contained right here. And from this height, you can’t see them at all.”

In 20 years of working at Quimby’s Bookstore, Chicago’s emporium for all things zine, manager Liz Mason has seen a lot of *King-Cat* comics move off the shelves. “Chicago can claim him as its own, but really, it’s suburban Chicago,” she says. “He writes about what it’s like to be skating around in the suburbs. I sort of take pride in the fact that one of my favorite artists grew up not far from where I grew up.”

Porcellino immortalizes the places that most people would drive by without a second glance. The cover of *King-Cat #54* shows a cloudy sky, a parking lot, and the Hoffman Estates water tower. There’s nothing glamorous about the view. In fact, when he was growing up, Porcellino didn’t give it any thought at all. But when he moved back in with his parents after college, he found a new appreciation for the formerly unremarkable water tower.

“When I lived in Hoffman Estates, I saw it ten times a week,” he says. “I came back and there it was. It was there the whole time, wait-
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How shall we dance?

Almost a year into the shutdown, Chicago artists are still thinking on their feet.

By Melissa Perry

On March 9 last year, Ayana Strutz, a professional dancer and actress from Evanston, flew to New York City to try out for multiple Broadway shows.

“I remember I was sitting in the audition room—you know, hundreds of people waiting. And then this girl came into the audition room, and she’s like, ‘Broadway closed down,’” Strutz says. “Then little by little, other auditions that I have scheduled were getting canceled, one after the next. And literally that day, I just saw all the lights on Broadway start going out, and Times Square was so empty, and it was literally a realization of, ‘Oh, my God, what’s going to happen?’”

The 27-year-old cut her trip short and flew back to Chicago two days later in case New York imposed a lockdown order and left her stranded.

Unable to find work in the performing arts, Strutz now helps a family in her neighborhood with online schooling, leads workshops at the Actors Gymnasium in Evanston, and attends virtual acting and dance classes in preparation for the return of live dance and theater productions. This is her new normal.

Like Strutz, dancers are wearing sneakers more than pointe shoes these days. According to an Americans for the Arts survey, 95 percent of artists reported a loss in earnings due to the pandemic. Even with the hope that vaccine distribution brings, the financial impact that the pandemic has brought on Chicago’s dance community since last March is striking.

A Brookings Institution report from August estimates that Illinois lost 104,618 jobs in the creative industry from April to July of 2020 alone. Indeed, in October, the Joffrey Ballet canceled the remainder of its 2020-2021 season, and at least three dance studios—Lou Conte Dance Studio, Foster Dance Studios, and Miss Geri’s School of Dance—have permanently closed.

Joshua Blake Carter, operations manager of Giordano Dance Chicago, recalls the uncertainty and anxiety the company felt at the early stages of the pandemic. “There was a moment that we were fearful that this would be the end of the company,” he says.

Fortunately, through the federal Paycheck Protection Program, small grants, and budget cuts, Giordano has stayed afloat. “Normally, we’re at like a $1.2 million budget a year, something like that, and this year it’s just under $500,000,” he says. The company laid off half of its eight part-time and full-time staff members, and all the dancers stopped working regularly, Carter says.

Like Giordano, the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago also received federal relief from the first stimulus package, says the president and CEO of Joffrey, Greg Cameron. “The PPP loan was a godsend,” says Cameron. “The $2,019,000 from the federal government, I would guess, is probably more money from the federal government than the Joffrey has gotten in its entire 65-year history.”

However, federal support was not enough to keep Joffrey operational. It also required the elimination of 11 full-time administrative positions, a salary reduction for all staff members, and a reduction in the company’s fiscal year budget from $22 million to $10 million, Cameron says.

While both Joffrey and Giordano were fortunate enough to receive federal relief, that was not the case for every dance company. “We were on the hunt, like everyone else, to find relief money,” says Vershawn Sanders-Ward, CEO and founder of Red Clay Dance, an Afro-contemporary dance company in Chicago. “I will say that I was deeply disappointed that the federal government did not bail out the arts industry like I think it should have.” Individual donations and small grants have been crucial to the company’s financial stability, Sanders-Ward says.

Nonprofits such as See Chicago Dance, which promotes events and holds trainings for individual dancers and dance organizations, and Chicago Dancers United, which raises money to dancers with critical health conditions, have shifted their focus to relieving the economic burden of the pandemic.

The See Chicago Dance website features “COVID-19 Arts Resources,” which links to relief funds and grants. “What we’re best at is being the hub of information,” says Surinder Martignetti, community engagement consultant of See Chicago Dance. “The role that we took was making sure we had lots of updated information to share with people—to keep the community moving forward as best we can to keep making sure that people had enough
money to pay their bills.”

Three decades ago, artists founded Chicago Dancers United in response to a different health crisis. “It began as an outcry about what was going on in our dance community in Chicago as a result of HIV and AIDS,” says Julie Kaplan, board vice president of Chicago Dancers United.

Now the organization offers a new $500 grant that can go toward any medical need, including mental health services, physical therapy, and insurance copays. “It is not even need-based,” says Kaplan. “You don’t have to supply any of your financials. It is strictly medically based, which I think is a beautiful thing for our community,” she says.

In response to COVID restrictions, companies are experimenting with new ways of connecting with their audiences through virtual performances, classes, and dance films. For its 25th anniversary, Deeply Rooted held a hybrid performance at the Athenaeum Theatre. Fifty people attended in person, socially distanced and masked, while other audience members watched a livestream. “I think that is something that’s going to stay with us. Even after COVID, we’re going to continue to try and figure out how to make this virtual thing work for us,” says Nicole Clarke-Springer, artistic director of Deeply Rooted. “I don’t think it could replace live art. Never. Never. But I think we did an excellent job of keeping artistically who we are at our core alive.”

In September, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago announced the premiere of a virtual series of five new works for its 43rd season. It was essential for the company to keep creating, says David McDermott, executive director of Hubbard. So far two of the five pieces (A Tale of Two and The Sky Was Different) have premiered and are available for free on Hubbard’s website.

“We decided that the new public square was online and have been thinking about our virtual performances as public art that is free and accessible to all,” McDermott says. “That has been really powerful for us in helping us as an organization to cope with the trauma that has been the pandemic.”

Giordano has also been experimenting with virtual art. In October, Carter shot a dance film for the company on his iPhone. The film is a socially distanced recreation of Jolt, an upbeat jazz piece about caffeine addiction that the company first debuted in 2012. “We want to show you what you love about us, which is our energy and our passion and the joy that we bring,” Carter says.

With vaccine distribution currently underway and a consistent drop in daily COVID-19 cases, many dancers and company leaders are finally beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel.

“The morning that the vaccine approval was released, I took a deep breath and I was like, ‘Oh my God.’ It’s like if you’re going on a hike into a mountain and the mountain has been under fog for ten months but you’re not exactly sure where the peak is,” Cameron says. “That morning, I was like, ‘Oh, my God.’ We’re still at the base of a mountain and we have a long way to go but we can see at the top.”

While dance companies are hesitant to plan for live performances for the spring and summer, both Cameron and McDermott say they feel optimistic about returning to the stage in the fall.

“I think that we’re all looking at the fall of 2021 as a realistic time to be back on stages,” McDermott says. “We’re thinking really hard about what that looks like in order to ensure that our dancers are safe and our audiences are safe, but we’re early in the planning.”

Even with the hope that the vaccine brings, Strutz has mixed emotions about returning to the stage. For freelance dancers like Strutz, the instability of the performing arts world is nothing new, but the unprecedented nature of this pandemic has taken a severe financial and emotional toll.

“It’s just been like a roller coaster of emotions of being hopeful of theater coming back and also being like, why? Every day I battle with going after my passion even though it’s an unstable industry,” she says. “At the end of the day I just end up following my heart, which is theater, and I’m just hoping that I’m making the right choice.”

@melissaperry99
Solo theater gets a digital makeover at Court

Theatre for One aims for catharsis, one person at a time.

By Marissa De La Cerda

Before the pandemic, seeing a play often meant sitting in the dark and fading away amongst the crowd of other audience members, but with Court Theatre’s Chicago-land premiere of Theatre for One: Here We Are, “the audience is front and center,” according to Miranda González, director of Pandemic Fight and Thank You For Coming, Take Care.

Drawing from its pre-pandemic model, Theatre for One brings one actor and one audience member together in real time in a virtual room. Here, the audience member not only watches and listens to the actor but also essentially serves as the other character in the play (yes, their camera must be on for this digital experience)—and though they won’t have lines, their reactions will allow them to be an active participant in the dialogue.

This is because unlike in Zoom meetings where “eye contact” is seemingly nonexistent, the actor and audience member are able to look into each other’s eyes due to a platform designed specifically for Theatre for One by Marc Downie and Paul Kaiser of OpenEndedGroup. Using a computer, camera, and iPad, it creates the impression that the two individuals are making eye contact.

“It was designed to try to recreate the experiences of Theatre for One that we thought were really important and central,” said Angel Ysaguirre, executive director of Court Theatre. (The online version of this show originated with different actors and directors with New York’s Octopus Theatricals last summer.) “One is the intimacy of the actor and the audience member, and so the platform that Marc [and Paul] designed allows the actor to look the audience member in the eye, which is not something we can do with other platforms, so that really spoke to the intimacy.”

Moreover, unlike Zoom meetings where individuals have access to their self view, the platform does not allow for either the audience or artist to see themselves, making the experience feel all the more intimate. “It’s interesting because neither party can see themselves so it’s similar in the fact that, you know, when you’re going to see a performance in person, you don’t perceive yourself,” said director of Here We Are and whitely negotiations Monet Felton.

Another aspect the platform seeks to bring back from pre-pandemic days is the communal waiting-in-line experience.

“There’s a waiting room at the start of the experience where people who are waiting to be put into one of the plays encounter one another but only via text, so you can’t see one another but you’re all in this waiting room together,” said Ysaguirre. “We’ll have a facilitator who is helping to generate a conversation among the people who are in the room waiting so that there is some sense of small talk before you enter your performance in the way that people tend to make small talk with strangers who are in front or behind them in line.”

After a brief waiting period, audience members will be randomly pulled into a private room to see one of the eight microplays in the program. The plays are written, directed, and performed by Black women, Indigenous women, and women of color and they cover several issues that are fitting to the moment—the pandemic, the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, Black Lives Matter, and other calls for racial justice.

For example, Thank You For Coming, Take Care. written by Stacey Rose, focuses on incarceration and childcare. It follows a woman serving a long-term prison sentence as she discusses the “hope that her daughter gives her while she is incarcerated,” said González.

In Lydia R. Diamond’s whitely negotiations, a Black writer vents to her sister about the microaggressions she regularly faces and how difficult it is being a Black writer. The play also explores the ways articulating these microaggressions often comes with its own difficulties.

Other plays, such as Carmelita Tropicana’s

Pandemic Fight, tackle spirituality and the role it does or doesn’t play in fights for social justice. Here We Are, directed by Felton and written by Nikkole Salter, follows a male-identifying individual as he navigates his way through a new galaxy after Earth has become uninhabitable.

Ysaguirre says it was important to bring these stories to Chicago because Court Theatre’s audiences often come to see plays that represent the voices and experiences of people of color. “They come to see those plays specifically because of the interest in the dialogue that happens in and around these plays because they convey a sense of their experience living in the world,” he said.

By conveying these experiences, Ysaguirre not only hopes audience members feel represented, but also that “delivering them through art, through the experience of art, might feel different than delivering them in a conversation,” he said. “Hopefully there’s a catharsis or sense of being understood experiencing it in the art.”

Felton hopes this virtual experience allows audiences to sit with the words of the performers. “I hope that they actually hear the intricacies and the work that these artists have been trying to put into trying to create art for this platform,” they said.

For them, the experience of directing in a virtual setting really amplified the dialogue. “It puts me in the headspace of a [stage] reading in so many ways because it’s bare bones really, just the words and the performance,” they said. “And the performance is literally from the chest up so it’s really about sitting with these words, sitting with this language.”

Body language is also important in these performances to allow audience members to feel connected, according to González, who focused on “how they’re leaning in or falling back to create that type of physical energy that is needed for the person on the other end to connect.”

Once the microplay is over, audience members are asked to describe their reaction. And though their feelings and reactions may vary because they will all see different plays, one thing remains certain: with Theatre for One, they will all have been seen.
CANNABIS CONVERSATIONS
An exploration of cannabis and hemp topics from multiple perspectives: medical, historical, social equity, ecological and more.

Featuring:
Chicago Cannabis Tourism
Medical vs. Recreational: What’s the big deal?

Sponsored by:
Compassionate Clinics of America
Chi High Tours
People are asking important questions about medical cannabis versus adult-use cannabis:

- Why should I get a medical card?
- What is the medical vs. recreational tax in Illinois?
- Are prices cheaper with a medical marijuana card?
- How much does it cost to get a cannabis card?
- Is it worth it?
- Can’t I just go to a dispensary and buy cannabis anyway?

These are all valid questions. The information in this piece will help you make an informed decision.

**Inventory is legally prioritized for patients first.**

Whenever cannabis shortages impact the state, products must be made available to medical patients first, according to state law. As Illinois’s legal market continues to mature and dispensaries experience booming sales as an essential business during COVID-19, certain products have indeed run short in recent months.

While some patients have had to advocate for stronger guidelines to maintain their priority standing in the midst of surging recreational sales, the law is still on their side.

In other words, if you want to minimize the risk of running out of cannabis, it helps if you are a registered patient.

**Medical cannabis prices are lower than recreational.**

Medical cannabis is more affordable than adult-use cannabis.

Patients under the medical program can avoid up to a 34.75% tax which adult-use consumers will have to pay on the very same products. That means that a medical patient will spend $101 whereas an adult consumer can spend up to $134.75 for the exact same product.

**Patients can grow their own medical cannabis.**

Obtaining a card may have an upfront cost attached, but the investment pays for itself after just a few purchases of products in an adult-use environment.

However, one of the greatest benefits of being a medical cannabis patient in the state of Illinois is the legal right to cultivate your own cannabis at home.

Patients under the Illinois medical cannabis program are able to cultivate up to five plants for personal possession and consumption.

If you are intimidated by the learning curve of growing your own cannabis, no worries. Our team is happy to recommend helpful resources.

**Getting your medical cannabis card is now easier than ever.**

Obtaining a medical cannabis card in Illinois is no longer as difficult as it used to be.

In fact, through Compassionate Clinics of America, we have multiple locations around the state to provide convenient, effective, and affordable access to patients in need of assistance.

Our team understands the ins and outs of this program and continues to help thousands of patients find relief—and a better quality of life.

You can also engage with us via telemedicine, so you don’t ever have to leave your home!

Have additional questions? Send them our way, give us a call, or schedule an appointment so we can assist you in whatever way you need.

We hope this infographic brought you some knowledge and value! Don’t forget to share with someone who can benefit, and follow us on Facebook for additional updates, news, and frequent discount offers.
The Next New Cannabis Tourism Destination

Cannabis tour company Chi High Tours wants to make Chicago the cannabis place to be.

In a newly developing legal market, cannabis has been making its way into the public eye in more ways than dispensaries alone. As the cannabis industry begins thriving in Chicago and Illinois as a whole, opportunities have been opening up for cannabis-adjacent industries to find their footing in the Illinois business world post-legalization.

One company, Chi High Tours, is the first of its kind for the city. Instead of pushing for a license to operate a dispensary, Chi High Tours is the first official cannabis tour to hit Chicago. The company offers a handful of tours that highlight Chicago culture, history, local businesses, and of course, cannabis.

While the company exists on the cusp of this great economic renaissance that always comes along with the green rush in newly legalized markets, Chi High Tours firmly believes that the Windy City will be one of the latest cities to climb its way to the top of the booming cannabis tourism industry. In fact, founder and CEO James Gordon believes that Chicago is set to be the next top tourism destination.

In 2019, a full year before cannabis was legalized in Illinois, Chicago saw record-breaking tourism numbers, attracting a whopping 117 million visitors to the city. With that in mind, it’s clear that people are already visiting Chicago in record numbers, far surpassing places like Los Angeles and Las Vegas where cannabis tourism is booming. That said, there are already so many people visiting Chicago, even without legal cannabis—a good sign for additional streams of tourism in Illinois.

"Adding legal cannabis to the mix creates an opportunity to attract more tourists that are visiting legal states for the sole purpose of partaking in recreational cannabis use and tourism," Gordon said. In a study conducted by the department of tourism in Colorado, tourists seeking cannabis tended to stay longer and spend more money at local bars, restaurants, and shopping centers than people who were visiting for other reasons. Additionally, a whopping 6.2 percent of the 90 million annual visitors to Colorado reported that they visited solely for marijuana-related reasons.

"With data like this in mind, it’s easier to take our already astronomical tourist presence and add more to the mix or simply offer current tourists more to do. It’s an added revenue stream, and in a place like Chicago where Millennium Park, Willis Tower, Navy Pier, etc. are already attracting so many people, you can throw cannabis into the mix and see more small businesses taking off and captivate a larger audience of tourists who will stimulate our economy here in Chicago," Gordon said. “That’s where the tours come in. The tours highlight the cannabis industry and encourage tourists to support it while also showing them things they’d come to see even if cannabis wasn’t part of the mix.”

Another interesting aspect of Illinois’s cannabis market is the laws surrounding it. In places like California and Colorado, it’s illegal to use cannabis anywhere except in your private domicile, and only if you have your landlord’s permission. Illinois is expected to approve public consumption in approved venues in 2021.

“That’s one of the coolest things about our city. Our laws create the opportunity to offer so many more unique tourism outlets than other states are allowed to, attracting more people to the area. We could begin offering smoke parlors and 420-friendly museums and bed and breakfasts, which could all be supported and highlighted to tourists by cannabis tours like Chi High,” Gordon said. “It’ll put Chicago at the top of the list of travel destinations for people interested in cannabis tourism since we’ll have the biggest offering of services and cannabis-adjacent businesses that other states simply can’t have."

With millions of tourists visiting the Windy City annually and with the growing interest in purchasing and consuming cannabis, there’s potential for a lot of revenue to hit the state. If trends in states like Colorado, Nevada, and California are any indication, the possibilities for tourism revenue is incredibly high. As new cannabis-adjacent businesses emerge, more jobs and opportunities are created for small businesses, which in turn boosts the local and state economies.

Purchases of cannabis products with less than 35 percent THC are given a 10 percent sales tax, while edibles get 20 percent. Products with a THC concentration higher than 35 percent come with a 25 percent state tax. These taxes drive social equity programs in Chicago and can be used to help improve the community, including roads, schools, and social services.

“I think what we’d love to see most is more and more businesses getting involved in tourism. Glass shops for example can be highlighted in tours like ours, and in that case, each hand washes the other. There are so many creative ways to incorporate cannabis into our culture and with that comes more businesses, more jobs, more tourism, and ultimately more money for social services and the community from taxes,” Gordon said. “Cannabis tours create such a unique level of awareness in newly emerging markets that they can help support other small businesses, including bars and restaurants, and other attractions while also putting cannabis tourism on the map in Chicago.”

Chi High Tours is set to reopen March 11, 2021—exactly one year after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in the United States. With a vaccine available and COVID restrictions still in place, there has never been a better time to experience Chicago’s unique cannabis industry alongside all the other one-of-a-kind attractions the city has to offer. If trends continue to climb surrounding cannabis tourism in Illinois, there’s a good chance that Chicago will become one of the top travel destinations in the country.
WHOLE FLOWER

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Never separated. Never reconstituted.
Flower, and nothing else.
What we loved at Sundance 2021... from our couch

The best of the virtual fest is coming to you soon.

By Josh Flanders and Sheri Flanders

This year the 2021 Sundance Film Festival was virtual, and its offerings trimmed down from previous years. It included 73 feature films, 50 short films, four Indie Series, 23 talks and events, and 14 New Frontier multimedia projects. We watched 38 of the 73 films, including most of the award winners. Here are some sneak peaks of our favorites to look for in the year to come.

Ailey

Some things are excruciatingly difficult to articulate in words, and can only be expressed in an abstract manner such as dance. Things such as the lonely success of Alvin Ailey, a gay man born in the depression in 1931 who, against all odds, was able to realize his dream. Choreographer, former Ailey company member, and friend George Faison reflects on their groundbreaking work that was rooted in Black liberation: “We didn't have to go out to the street and protest, our protest was on the stage.” Director Jamila Wignot's film gives voice to the silent protest in Ailey's heart that did not have an audience. —S.F.

Captains of Za'atari

With beautiful cinematography and a gorgeous score, Captains of Za'atari follows two friends, Fawzi and Mahmoud, living in the largest Syrian refugee camp in Jordan. Their love of soccer unites them, providing an escape from life in the camp both figuratively and later literally when their team travels to Qatar to compete. Director Ali El-Arabi crafts a film of deep humanity, providing an exposé of the struggles and tragedies of refugee life, as well as the hope these talented young men possess in the face of nearly insurmountable odds. When provided a platform to share their dreams, they hope for a world where refugees can get opportunities for education, medical treatment, and sports, instead of pity, summed up with one of the final quotes, “Dreams cannot be imprisoned or confined.” —J.F.

Eight for Silver

In a foggy 19th-century village, a wild animal is ripping people apart. But we know it's not a wolf, like everyone suspects. Eight for Silver deliciously revives and enhances the werewolf genre with Boyd Holbrook (Pierce in Logan) as the Van Helsing-like hunter-come-to-town

to avenge the death of his wife and son and rid the countryside of a pervasive evil. Director Sean Ellis succeeds in crafting the mood and setting needed for solid suspenseful horror, and his new take on the lycanthrope myth is both fresh and gross, in a good way. —J.F.

Flee

Director Jonas Poher Rasmussen met Amin, the subject of his film Flee, when both were 15 years old. It wasn't until both men were adults that Amin shared his secret harrowing story of fleeing the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and arriving alone in Denmark by way of Russia. Today, as Amin prepares to get married to his boyfriend, his story, shared publicly for the first time, reveals secrets he had been hiding for 20 years about his family and his traumatic journey to freedom from war-torn Afghanistan to Russia and finally to Denmark. Beautifully animated to protect the identity of the main subject, Rasmussen's film examines the lengths we will go to in order to survive and protect those we love. —J.F.

Homeroom

The class of 2020 at Oakland High School had a turbulent year, captured with immediacy and intimacy in Peter Nicks's documentary Homeroom. As the only school in their district with its own police force, students, families, and the school board clashed after seeing numerous online videos and firsthand experiences of violence against students by security. As COVID empties out the school and the BLM marches start, many students journey from working with the school establishment to leading protests for social change. The role of social media for students, like the world at large, moves from a source of comfort to one of anxiety. —J.F.

In the Same Breath

On New Year’s Eve 2019, thousands of colorful balloons float through the sky haphazardly, a terrifying harbinger of the cost to come for the Wuhan government jailing eight people for “spreading rumors about a fake pneumonia.” Outstanding director Nanfu Wang was present enough to send a covert team of cameras into hospitals, homes, and morgues to capture the truth and anguish, then follow the virus—and the bungling cover-up—across the sea to America. Have your tissues nearby. —S.F.

John and the Hole

You know you’re in uncharted territory when Michael C. Hall, the star of the murderous hit series Dexter, is the least terrifying thing in a film. This dark fable is a breakout role for Charlie Shotwell, who plays John, the too-quiet son who holds his family captive in a hole in the ground. Director Pascal Sisto’s gaze drifts languidly across the scenery, building the slow, quiet terror of the dreaded certainty of an awful situation. —S.F.

Mass

Taking two pairs of seasoned stage and film actors and putting them in a room for two hours to hash out a shared trauma sounds like the making of a great Tennessee Williams play, but it is instead a riveting and unforgettable feature by writer-director Fran Kranz. Mass was initially intended to be set on stage, Kranz said in the Q&A after the Sundance premiere. The film instead allowed this actor-turned-director to put forth a powerful directorial debut about two couples coming together years after a school shooting; one couple lost their son, the other couple's son perpetrated the mass murder. Martha Plimpton, Jason Isaacs, Reed Birney, and Ann Dowd deliver award-worthy performances as parents coming to terms with the once-unthinkable that has sadly become more of a shared experience. —J.F.

Marvelous and the Black Hole

A delightful update in the tradition of 80s films like Uncle Buck, where a crotchety adult befriends a teen with a bad attitude and wise-cracks them out of depression. A wonderfully infuriating, surly, and grief-stricken Sammy (Miya Cech) is no match for the charms and take-no-prisoners attitude of Margot, played by Rhea Perlman in a welcome return to the screen. Funny without being forced, and sincere without being schlocky, Marvelous is guaranteed to warm the hearts of wannabe baby goths everywhere. —S.F.

Mayday

A curious magical realism metaphor for feminist despair, Ana (Grace Van Patten) is crushed by the patriarchy, and her essence is fractured into a merry band of sirens, representing different emotions that the real world does not hold space for, like timid fear and unchecked rage. The themes are applied with a light and jolly touch, creating a film that is quirky, bracing, and refreshing—in the manner of the first breath of air after nearly drowning. —S.F.

Pleasure

Swedish hopeful Bella Cherry arrives in Los Angeles hoping to be the next top porn star. Pleasure takes the viewer on an explicit journey into the business of adult films from the perspective of an enthusiastic but naive woman learning the ins and outs of the male-dominated world of porn. Cherry traverses the opportunistic competition and rapacious executives, enduring violence on set, all to fuel an industry that increasingly caters to the expanding, disturbing tastes of Internet fetishes. Writer-director Nina Thyberg explores questions of com-
**A HOME IN CHICAGO:**  
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**FILM**

**A HOME IN CHICAGO**

Rent, ownership, and neighborhood struggle since the collapse of public housing

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**Rebel Hearts**

A fascinating look at how independent, non-marriage-minded women in the 1940s-50s joined religious orders to escape patriarchal society at large, only to find themselves in another patriarchal society—and then how some became a bunch of kick-ass nuns. Rebel Hearts is the illuminating story of the trailblazing women of The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who, in 1950s Los Angeles, not only took on the dogmatic church doctrine, but also fought for civil rights, their jobs, and their autonomy against the powerful Cardinal McIntyre who tried to keep them under his thumb. Anita Caspary, Helen Kelley, Pat Reif, and Corita Kent, among others, redefined rules for nuns. An eye-opening look at an oft-overlooked group of women who have changed what it means to selflessly serve others while also fighting for yourself. —J.F.

**Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go For It**

A compelling and revealing portrait of an American legend with the ebullience of a teenager. Director Mariem Pérez Riera opens a door to Moreno's unstoppable ascent to stardom as a teenage actor with an MGM contract, struggling as the industry relegated her to racist "dusky maiden" roles while in a torrid love affair with Marlon Brando. Riera mercifully doesn't wallow in West Side Story, and instead shares Moreno's power as an activist and an EGOT-winning performer who continues to break barriers as an 87-year-old with a hit TV show, One Day at a Time. —S.F.

**Sabaya**

Sweden had a strong showing at Sundance in 2021 and Sabaya might be their best offering. Director Hogir Hirori has made an emotionally haunting film about real-life super heroes in Mahmud, Ziyad, and their group who, with just a gun and a cell phone, evade ISIS to rescue Yazidi women and girls being held hostage as sabaya (sex slaves). Hirori astonishingly documents actual rescues, dodging real bullets, with these brave men and women who risk their lives venturing into the most dangerous refugee camp in the Middle East, Al-Hol in Syria. Tense moments sneaking into the camps searching amidst hundreds of tents, the women covered in burqas, are balanced with serene moments outside captivity where the rescued women can remove their coverings and taste freedom. —J.F.

**Street Gang: How We Got to Sesame Street**

A nostalgic yet informative look at the most successful children's television show in history. When it was created, Sesame Street was groundbreaking not only in its idea of providing honest, quality children's programming without trying to sell kids products or speak down to them, but in assembling a team of educators, teachers, experts, even children to help inform their exhaustive approach. The film shines a spotlight on well-known players, like Jim Henson, but also on founders Joan Ganz Cooney, Lloyd Morrisett, composer Joe Raposo, and many of the lesser-known actors and characters. Several of the important moments in Sesame Street and television history are featured, including the memorable discussion of death after the loss of "Mr. Hooper," a script taken from the real-life death of actor Will Lee who played the beloved character. —J.F.

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**Summer of Soul (. . . Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)**

In 1969 a "Black Woodstock" festival was held in Harlem with more than 300,000 people in attendance, then forgotten by history. Questlove revives this electric, never-before-seen, deftly edited footage of Black joy and community, along with interviews of participants. Highlight performances include Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight and the Pips, a show-stopping duet with Mavis Staples and Mahalia Jackson, and tiny blink-and-miss-them cameos of Moms Mabley and Redd Foxx. —S.F.

**Try Harder!**

Welcome to Lowell High School, the top school in the San Francisco area with a majority of Asian American students, or what one student calls "tiger mom central." These young overachievers face immense pressure to succeed from themselves, their peers, and their parents in order to get into the top colleges, pinning their whole lives on a single test or acceptance letter. Most teachers, but sadly only a few parents, try to instill a greater purpose in these kids' lives than going to Stanford. An interesting film about how kids pursue things without knowing why, at its best when occasionally digging deeper into issues of race, stereotypes, and privilege. —J.F.

**Writing with Fire**

A triumphant and well-deserved spotlight on the journalists of Khabar Lahariya, India's only newspaper run by Dalit women—the lowest rung of the caste system. With steely tenacity and persistence, these women place themselves into terrifying situations to interrogate corrupt police officers and potentially violent Hindu Nationalists, with a dept and skill not seen by many top network reporters. Often armed only with a dying cell phone and the truth, they successfully gain justice for forgotten victims. —S.F. 🔨

@joshua_flanders  
@SheriFlanders
**Minari**

This is a movie so sweet, and so inviting, that what’s most beautiful and complex about it is bound to be ignored by a great many viewers. Yes, it’s an immigrant character with authenticity. **—Kathleen Sachs**

**Two of Us**

France’s official Oscar submission is a moving testament to coming out and staying together. Two of Us, the feature debut from Filippo Meneghetti, follows two neighbors who have been in love with each other for decades. Nina (Barbara Sukowa) is excited for them to sell their apartments and finally live the rest of their lives without being discovered by her daughter, Chevallier, and Drucker are kinetic together, feeding off of each other’s love and desperation until it bubbles up out of control. **—Cody Corral**

**Nomadland**

In Nomadland, Chloe Zhao’s vividly somber and heartfelt neo-western drama adapted from Jessica Bruder’s eponymous nonfiction book, Fern (Frances McDormand) struggles to find her place on the open roads of the contemporary American west. Having lost her husband and her home when the local plant closes in her small Nevada town, Fern sells off her possessions and sets off in her van in search of work. A series of temporary jobs put her in touch with a loose community of nomadic travelers, espousing a disconnect from typical American life. Zhao’s story is both sublime and consequential, with cinematography composed of the sweeping western landscapes mixed with the mundane tasks of temporary labor that make up Fern’s daily life. Loss and instability pervade the film, both in Fern’s grief over her husband, and the unmooring of the collapse of her previous life in a boom-and-bust Nevada town, and the temporary relationships that develop in her travels. Fern’s interactions with other nomads—with several appearances by the actual nomads described in Bruder’s book playing fictionalized versions of themselves—are fleeting but poignant, sharing moments of grace as they briefly cross paths and continue on down the road in search of fulfillment. **—Adam Mullins-Khatib**

**The Sinners**

Drenched in a dreamlike quality, The Sinners lures viewers into a dark and deadly world where writer-director Courtney Paige’s influences from Scream to Jawbreaker bleed through brilliantly. Part teen thriller and part police procedural, the movie follows seven girls who belong to a cultish clique called The Sins. The priddish Aubrey (Brenna Lewellen) narrates, while the lustful Grace Carver (Kaitlyn Bernard) leads the greedy Katie Hamilton (Keilani Elizabeth Rose), the envious Stacey Rodgers (Jasmine Randhawa), the wrathful Tori Davidson (Brenna Coates), the glutonious Molly McVor (Carly Fawcett), and the slothful Robyn Pearce (Natalie Malaika). Together, the girls complete and often commit the capital vices of Christianity. Struggling with their faith and fighting for their life when they become the targets of an unknown killer, the movie pushes past the standard dead girl narrative to provide a nuanced look at the teenage experience as each actor imbues their character with authenticity. **—Becca James**

**Red Dot**

Red Dot is a semi-contained, high-concept thrill-er with a strong reveal. Directed by Swedish filmmaker Alain Darbog, it follows Nadja (Nanna Blondell) and David (Anastasios Soulis) on a hiking trip intended to renew their deteriorating relationship. What starts as an idyllic getaway to snowy Sweden takes a foreboding turn, and soon the expectant parents are fleeing for their lives from an unknown shooter in the unforgiving wilderness. With a red dot perpetually trained on them, they do their best to dodge an untimely death but can’t escape several smaller yet still gruesome misfortunes. The resulting tension reaches a climax as the reveal identifies the killer and adds surprising context to the couple’s characters. A high-stakes take on fighting for family, the film ponders whether it’s better or worse to meet your fate face-to-face, that is, to exist in ignorant bliss or to understand your potential murderer’s malice. **—Becca James**

**Saint Maud**

It’s been said that good things come to those who wait, and after numerous delays, the highly-anticipated release of Saint Maud is finally here. True to the adage, it’s good—even great. The debut film from writer-director Rose Glass paints an eerie portrait of a pious hospice nurse obsessed with saving her dying patient’s soul. An engaging meditation on faith and foolishness, the film follows the mysterious and mousy Maud (Mollyfydd Clark) as she grapples with sinister forces and a sinful past while caring for the world-weary Amanda (Jennifer Ehle). Anchored by Clark and Ehle’s captivating performances, Saint Maud sees the women’s desires brush against one another in increasingly uncomfortable intersections that keep viewers guessing. Is Maud really a saint sent to do God’s bidding, or merely a troubled woman looking to save herself? Settle into the muted scenery, which comes with bursts of madness, to find out. **—Becca James**
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 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 855-211-6945.

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). 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. V2020.12.22

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

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In October 2019, Manaee Hammond hopped in a car and drove from Chicago to Akron, Ohio, with her friend Eric Christopher. They’d known each other for a month, and they were heading to the first show by their band Hospital Bracelet. It’d been Christopher’s acoustic solo project for three months, and would end up operating as a live band for just five more before the COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to concerts indefinitely. But though Hospital Bracelet had played only around 20 shows by then—including the 14 on their sole tour, to the east coast and back in January 2020—they swiftly sold out vinyl preorders for their debut album, *South Loop Summer*, ten months later.

The album was released five weeks ago by Counter Intuitive Records, a key player in the current underground emo ecosystem. It’s the only full-band Hospital Bracelet recording since a single that dropped in January 2020. But that single has racked up nearly 600,000 Spotify streams—a startling number for a brand-new band in a niche scene—and the album is outpacing that success already.

Hammond joined Hospital Bracelet in September 2019 after Christopher used a Columbia College student social app to recruit a drummer. During the first full-band rehearsal (the group’s original bassist only lasted till that first show in Akron), Christopher heard from emo cassette label 3rd Row Records with an offer to release their solo material. The label was tiny, but this was still big news—it had already worked with several stars of the genre’s insurgent fifth wave, including Worst Party Ever (Seattle), Guitar Fight From Fooly Cooly (Chattanooga, Tennessee), and Commander Salamander (Washington, D.C.).

“At that moment, I was like, ‘Oh shit, I guess I’m in this—I cannot turn back now,’” Hammond says. The Akron gig where Hospital Bracelet first played as a band was at Bless This Fest, a daylong DIY gathering that also included crossover phenomenon Dogleg.

“I hadn’t gone somewhere else to go play a show in a long time,” Hammond says. “I was like, ‘Oh yeah, this was kind of a lot to do, but I don’t care. This is so much fun.’ We drove seven hours there and seven hours back over the weekend. We played the show, came back, and just immediately started practicing more and more.”

In November 2019, Hospital Bracelet brought on a new bassist, fellow Columbia student Arya “A.J.” Woody. Christopher’s solo material, packaged as the *Neutrality Acoustic* EP, came out that month on 3rd Row, which also released the full band’s first single, the sweaty and unvarnished ballad “Sober Haha...

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**Hospital Bracelet break out while locked down**

The pandemic separated the members of this Chicago emo trio almost a year before their thrilling debut album made a splash in the scene.

*By Leor Galil*
continued from 35

JK Unless.”

Hospital Bracelet released the single in January 2020, at the start of what’s still their only tour. The trio’s time on the road helped them work out the material they’d written together as well as the arrangements the new members had built around Christopher’s older songs. By the end of February, when they began recording South Loop Summer with engineer Adrian Kobziar, they were a tight unit. “Halfway through recording, we were like, ‘Oh shit, oh no, COVID,’” Christopher says. “We haven’t actually all been in the same room together since March.”

The pandemic also delayed the release of South Loop Summer, which they’d planned to drop late last year. Counter Intuitive didn’t get involved till the fall. Label founder Jake Sulzer had kept an eye on Hospital Bracelet since noticing them on bills with Counter Intuitive bands. Ryland Heagy, guitarist and vocalist for hyperactive D.C. duo Origami Angel, is one of Hospital Bracelet’s earliest champions.

“I wasn’t the biggest fan when I first listened to them,” Sulzer says. “I did enjoy the acoustic songs, but I didn’t love the sound of the original single for ‘Sober Haha JK Unless.’ I wasn’t that big a fan of the production value on it. My opinion didn’t really change until I heard the mixes of their new record. Then I was like, ‘Oh, they’re the real deal.’”

Counter Intuitive has worked with some of the underground emo scene’s most popular acts, including Mom Jeans, Prince Daddy & the Hyena, and critical darlings Oso Oso. Hospital Bracelet are in a position to build on their precedents. “The first era of bands that got the label off the ground, some of those bands have moved on, some of them have been quieter over the last few years,” Sulzer says. “I’ve been consciously thinking, ‘OK, I hope that I have another era of bands that can not only participate in the community that first era built, but also have one of their own.’ And I feel like Hospital Bracelet really helped me solidify, in my mind, that there’s a new era of the label happening right now.”

Hospital Bracelet are beginning a new era too. Christopher plans to move to Charlotte, North Carolina, in June, to be with their partner, which will break up this version of the band. Hammond and Woody will remain in Chicago, and Christopher is recruiting new musicians in Charlotte.

“It’s stinky, because I know that if we weren’t in a pandemic, we’d probably able to do this a whole lot easier, and record something real that we want to do together,” Christopher says. “But we want to do something before everything comes to a close, because we all really enjoyed our time together and like this band.”

Christopher, 19, had already been a touring performer for a few years before starting Hospital Bracelet. At age 14 they became a fan of indie wrestling and began training to enter the ring in their native Indianapolis. Known professionally as Arc Williams (and nicknamed “the Teenage Bottle Rocket”), Christopher traveled as far as Florida to throw themselves at opponents.

“There are a lot of states in the U.S. where you can’t wrestle until you’re 18,” Christopher says. “But I would travel to Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, New York—all over the place.” In September 2018, Chicago promoter Kaju Atack Wrestling hosted a tag-team match that Christopher considers a career highlight—the opposing team included Shotzi Blackheart, who went on to join the WWE.

Three months before that match, though, Christopher had been involved in a career-altering car crash a mile from home. At their mom’s behest, they paid a visit to a chiropractor. “I went and I was like, ‘I have this really big important match next week,’” Christopher says. “Do you think I can still do it?” They were like, ‘Absolutely not.’ I was like, ‘OK, cool. I’m still gonna do it.’ Then I went, and I had the match, and I couldn’t move my body the next day. I was like, ‘OK, I have to go back to the chiropractor now.’ They were like, ‘You can’t move your arms above your head right now. You need to take a break.’

According to the chiropractor, Christopher had early-onset arthritis in their neck, either caused or aggravated by the crash, and it seriously complicated their wrestling aspirations. “It turns out that you’re not supposed to fall a whole lot,” Christopher says. “That’s bad for your body.”

Christopher moved to Chicago in summer 2018 to study acting at Columbia College, and initially resumed wrestling training as well. But that only lasted till halfway through their first year of college—they decided to take a longer break from wrestling, which allowed them to spend more time with an earlier love.

Christopher had started writing original music at age 12, and around the same time had begun volunteering to work the door at an Indianapolis all-ages venue called the Hoosier Dome. “I lied about my age, so I was allowed to volunteer,” Christopher says. “I was like, ‘Yeah, I’m 15, I promise.’ I was not 15, I was 12.” The Hoosier Dome gave Christopher free admission to concerts, and before wrestling took over their free time, they saw tour dates by Mom Jeans and Modern Baseball.

Chicago quickly reignedited Christopher’s love of music—the spark was a show at suburban DIY space Palace Panda. “I immediately fell back in love with going to shows all over again,” Christopher says. They made friends with a few people from the local scene, including indie singer-songwriter Nayla Jungheim, who’d later record the material on Neutrality Acoustic.

“One of those people, I got on Twitter and got into the DIY community that’s online,” Christopher says. “I’ve been nearly as involved as I’d like to be in Chicago shows and the local scene, but really, really involved with bands from all across the country and the friends I’ve made because of being online.”

The Web is where Christopher met their partner and connected with Heagy from Origami Angel.

In June 2019, Christopher answered a call for performers from Palace Panda, sending in old solo demos. They got a gig and had to come up with a stage name. Just days earlier, they’d gone to the hospital after being sexually assaulted, and they hadn’t removed their wristband since the visit. “I realized that it’s really hard to play guitar when you have a hospital bracelet on,” Christopher says. “I was still thinking about names. And I was like, ‘This stupid little hospital bracelet has been the only thing for the last four days that has kind of kept me from going insane, and I have to take it off now.’ So it only makes sense that the only other thing that seems to be keeping me from losing my mind is named after it.”

The following month, Christopher debuted the solo version of Hospital Bracelet at Downers Grove instrument shop Evolution Music, booked by the promoter at Panda Palace. Detroit band Dogleg shared the bill. “Dogleg played at Hospital Bracelet’s first show ever,” says frontman Alex Stoitsiadi. “We also sold them their first distortion pedal. It’s awesome to see how far they’ve come from just playing by themselves.”

Manae Hammond, 22, grew up around dance music—her mom is popular Chicago house DJ Lady D. For years Hammond resisted music’s call, but in middle school she got hooked on jazz and rock. As a seventh-grader, she enrolled in her school’s band class; she wanted to play drums, but that wouldn’t fly in her family’s 800-square-foot apartment. “I chose the trumpet, which makes no sense, but my mom was like, ‘OK, yeah, that’s more acceptable than the drums—you can mute a trumpet,’” Hammond says. “I did that for a year straight, and got my basic music education that way.”

In her free time, Hammond taught herself how to play an acoustic guitar she’d owned since childhood and toied with recording on GarageBand. While she was in high school at the Latin School of Chicago, a spot for a bassist opened up in the jazz band. “I really wanted to play guitar,” Hammond says. She’d never picked up a bass before. “I was like, ‘I guess that’s the only spot I have open.’ I ended up being an all-state bassist for the last three years of high school. That was when I really, really learned jazz, and really got my footing in that. And at night, I would go and play bass in any band I could get into.”

Hammond had her introduction to the DIY scene in January 2014, when she went to a basement show to see pop-punk-flavored indie band Parasol. “It was a religious experience,” she says. “I could touch the ceiling with my head if I stood on my tippy-toes. This loud, loud band was playing, and I was like, ‘This is amazing! How did I not know that this existed?’ I was hooked forever—it was a done deal.”

Now that her feet were wet, Hammond dove in with the aid of the DIY Chicago Facebook group. Within a few months, she’d joined a noisy art-rock group called Vaguewaves; by 2015, she was playing with Oxford Comma, a cheeky indie-rock band active in Evanston’s teen emo scene. She also had a solo project, Jaynt Steps, but she put it on the back burner after a fried computer lost the files of her debut album. “At that point, I was like, ‘Oh, so maybe this wasn’t meant to be,’” she says. “‘Maybe I’m supposed to be a supporting musician for the rest of my life.’ I took it really heavily.”

In fall 2016, Hammond moved to Los Angeles to attend Whittier College. “I immediately realized that if I was gonna be a musician in California, I needed way more money than I had,” she says. “I lived that year by the seat of my pants financially.” Near the end of her time there, she was living in a closet off campus because she couldn’t afford room and board.

California wasn’t a total wash for Hammond, though: she met her romantic partner, Indigo Finamore. Together they formed the experimental electronic-pop duo Oux, and they both transferred to Columbia College.

After returning to Chicago in 2018 (Finamore would follow later), Hammond got right back to juggling multiple musical projects. She joined postpunk group Blush Scars, but Oux increasingly took precedence in her creative life. “When it’s just two people in the band, half the work is on you and half is on the other person,” she says. “If you want to make great music, you have to put your whole foot
Another student they barely knew. “When we got there, it was a house, and the whole entire place seemed to be, like, just for music, which I hadn’t thought of as a concept,” Woody says. “Everything was new on top of new. It had a really nice community feel.”

Woody grew up playing in school jazz bands in the suburbs of Richmond, Virginia. “I was playing bass,” Woody says. “I started on upright and then moved to electric. I used to be in my school orchestra from third grade until, like, the middle of high school.” They briefly attended Nazareth College just outside Rochester, New York, before transferring to Columbia for its more robust arts education and diverse student body.

Woody met Hammond and Christopher shortly after moving here, Christopher just before that first house show and Hammond in a music class that had started in late August. Woody ran into Hammond and Christopher in late September and asked when Hospital Bracelet would perform next. “They mentioned that they might need a bassist for the show,” Woody says. Woody joined the band soon after Bless This Fest in Akron and began helping write what became South Loop Summer.

Some of the songs on the album are material Christopher wrote before they met Hammond and Woody—a couple also appear on Neutrality Acoustic. But the rhythm section quickly learned where to apply muscle to powerlift Christopher’s raw songs. “Eric’s songwriting is very tight, so it’s easy to follow structure and feel where momentum is supposed to be going,” Woody says. “And Manae’s drum parts are insane.”

Hospital Bracelet have evolved a nimble, slyly sound that foregrounds Christopher’s galloping, mathy guitar riffs and powerhouse voice—they sing in a higher register and with more confidence than most emo vocalists. Hammond and Woody ratchet up the songs’ intensity with focused, hyperactive energy. You can hear that the three musicians get along well. “It’s been fun,” Woody says. “It’s felt like I’ve known them for a little bit longer than I have, which only happens occasionally for me.”

Christopher returned to Chicago last summer, and in July they went back to the studio with Kobziar to wrap up their contributions to South Loop Summer. “All there was left to do was guitar, vocals, and harmony,” Christopher says. “We were like, ‘Oh shoot, we don’t get to do gang vocals now.’ But I would rather not have gang vocals than have a virus.”

In December, Christopher broke the news about their upcoming move to North Carolina to Hammond and Woody. Christopher no longer had school obligations keeping them in Chicago, having dropped out of Columbia after two years—in September they’d begun taking online classes toward a teaching degree from Grand Canyon University.

Christopher intends to put together a new band once they get settled in Charlotte, but the bond they formed with Hammond and Woody will endure in Hospital Bracelet’s music. “With those two, I was starting to make music that I always wanted to make that I didn’t think I was capable of,” Christopher says. “Manae and Arya both helped me make the kind of sound that I’ve been wanting to do for a long time. And I’m really thankful for them.”

Pittsburgh booking agent Alex Martin manages Hospital Bracelet and books them through their collective, You’ve Got a Friend in Pennsylvania. Before the pandemic hit, Martin was booking 30 acts, including Origami Angel, whimsical LA band Glass Beach, and mathy Pittsburgh group Short Fictions (in which they play bass). “With Hospital Bracelet, we were getting tour offers before the record was even finished—people were going after the band just because Eric is so captivating as a human being,” Martin says. “They have taught me that there’s not one way to do things. There’s not one way to book a band, there’s not one way to make it work.”

Christopher is extremely online, with more than 17,000 TikTok followers, and genuinely enjoys promoting Hospital Bracelet. This helped a lot once the pandemic made it impossible for the band to play shows.

When Illinois entered its first statewide lockdown last March, Woody returned to Richmond. Christopher then went to North Carolina to live with their partner for a few months. The bandmates dropped out of touch for long periods. “There were plenty of times where I just had to fall off the earth for a little bit, because I was going through a shit-ton,” Christopher says. “And then there were times when both of them had to do that too. In the end, we’ve always come back to being like, ‘Yeah, we’re a band. Right now we’re a band and it rocks.’”

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German indie veterans the Notwist draw from Chicago’s jazz community for the new *Vertigo Days*

**THE NOTWIST, VERTIGO DAYS**
Morr Music
thenotwist.bandcamp.com/album/vertigo-days

**LONG-RUNNING GERMAN GROUP** the Notwist perfected their airy combination of lovelorn indie rock and tender electronic sounds nearly two decades ago, but once they got it just right, they apparently decided never to repeat themselves. They preceded the new *Vertigo Days* (Morr Music) with an instrumental album steeped in the wallpaper aesthetics of library music (2015’s *Messier Objects*) and a live full-length whose tension and aggression contrast with the relatively restrained feel of their studio work (2016’s *Superheroes, Ghostvillains & Stuff*). For *Vertigo Days*, they reached out to musicians outside indie rock, and two prominent Chicago jazz artists make crucial contributions: Angel Bat Dawid’s snaking clarinet intensifies the hypnotic magnetism of “Into the Ice Age,” and Ben LaMar Gay’s resonant vocals bring a serene power to the nonchalant trip-hop of “Oh Sweet Fire.” The Notwist experiment with their sound throughout the album, which helps me hear its familiar baseline elements differently. Markus Acher’s tender, understated vocals on “Where You Find Me” remind me of the band’s best classic material, but when the clanging, stuttering percussion comes in, I can’t keep hearing this song as the same old band. —LEOR GALIL

**JOHN CARPENTER, LOST THEMES III: ALIVE AFTER DEATH**
Sacred Bones
johncarpentermusic.bandcamp.com/album/lost-themes-iii-alive-after-death

John Carpenter is a master of thrills. The legendary filmmaker and composer unnerves and titillates by fusing sight and sound—how the light catches a blade or outlines a breast, for instance, and the way heartbeat rhythms drive his bare synths. Because Carpenter’s horror and sci-fi movies establish a visual and emotional vocabulary for his music, the albums in his *Lost Themes* series similarly build up dangerous tension followed by resolution. That’s what makes his latest release, *Lost Themes III: Alive After Death*, surprising. Instead of being faithful to this formula, Carpenter and his longtime musical partners—his son, Cody, and his godson, Daniel Davies, son of the Kinks’ Dave Davies—have created an ambient unease that’s never fully realized or resolved.

Tracks such as “Weeping Ghost” and “The Dead Walk” have the manic, aggressive energy of someone escaping, stalking, or fighting—arguably the hallmark of Carpenter’s most beloved songs—but they’re not juxtaposed with pieces that evoke calm or recovery. Instead, Carpenter uses his distinctive flourishes—electronic bass lines, shimmering keyboards, and groaning chain-saw guitars—to create a simmering anxiety. This could be a conscious reaction to the pandemic, or to a sociopolitical climate fraught with hypervisible daily peril; it’s just as likely, though, to be a response to a new generation of synth artists inspired by Carpenter (such as Carpenter Brut and Boy Harsher), who more often create atmospheres and experiences than clear story lines. As musicians, Cody Carpenter and Daniel Davies work primarily in soundtracks, so they’re adept at serving narrative—an ambition they leave unrealized in *Lost Themes III*. But they’ve created something interesting by evoking an imaginary horror you can never totally escape—it’s certainly more compelling than a real one. —MICCO CAPORALE

**ENGLEWOOD B.U., 99 B.U.**
Matthew Mason Music
songwhip.com/englewoodbu/99-bu

Chicago’s Englewood B.U. is as much an alchemist as a rapper, combining elements to create effects that defy easy explanation. On his new debut, *99 B.U.* (Matthew Mason Music), the mature grit in his lilting voice gives his dusty instrumentals a worldliness that’s difficult to manufacture. He loves storytelling, and as his lyrics saunter casually atop checkered soul samples and sinewy percussion, his narratives gain extra dimensions as if by magic. On “Jabba,” B.U. juxtaposes brief anecdotes of youthful joy with painful snapshots of present-day loss, and when he mentions close childhood friends who’ve died, his voice tenses up as if he’s grieving all over again. “Nobody gave a fuck about how we feel,” he tersely raps, suddenly sounding a shade hoarse.

B.U. understands how isolating it can feel to lose a close friend in a society indifferent to Black death, but he can express empathy with enough poise to make anyone feel a little less lonely. —LEOR GALIL

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**PICK OF THE WEEK**

*German indie veterans the Notwist draw from Chicago’s jazz community for the new *Vertigo Days*.*

*Englewood B.U.*

Matthew Mason Music
songwhip.com/englewoodbu/99-bu

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MECHINA, SIEGE
Self-released
mechinamusic.bandcamp.com/album/siege

Progressive symphonic metal group Mechina are based in Chicago’s western suburbs, but I wouldn’t blame you if their inhumanly technical sci-fi sound convinced you they weren’t from Earth. For nearly 15 years, with album after album and single after single, Mechina have built an intergalactic narrative so complex that their most devoted fans can’t follow it—even the person diligently assembling a Fandom wiki explaining Mechina’s evolving chronicle admits that the task is beyond them. “I will be wrong about some things,” they write, “and there are gaps in the story which I don’t understand.” In a 2019 interview with Chicagoland podcast The Metal Experience, guitarist and programmer Joe Tiberi says the futuristic tale begins with a world-eviscerating war that pits religion against civilization-building forces, and grows to incorporate a theory about universe simulations.

For those new to Mechina, the new Siege is a great place to jump in: the album offers a singular, detailed vision so immersive that lyrical context feels supplementary. Mechina labor meticulously over every note in their vast, cinematic sound, no matter how fleeting—according to that same Metal Experience interview, it took them an entire year to program the computerized orchestration for 2013’s Empyrean. Singers Mel Rose and David Holch deliver pristine duets over an onrushing matrix of rapid-fire double kick drum, brawny palm-muted riffs, and slaloming strings, and the band’s unearthly blend of ultraclean, perfectionist djent and synthetic symphonic library music telegraphs their sci-fi obsessions as surely as the hypersaturated digital artwork on their album covers. Mechina’s exacting grandiloquence feels ready-made for a blockbuster video game—if they ever tire of telling this career-length story, maybe that’s the next creative frontier for them to explore. —LEOR GALIL

ROSCOE MITCHELL & MIKE REED, THE RITUAL AND THE DANCE
astralmitchellreed.bandcamp.com/album/the-ritual-and-the-dance

I’m a live-music addict, and it sometimes feels completely unreal that I haven’t been to a concert in almost a year. But one of the pandemic’s few silver linings is that some musicians are digging into their archives and issuing old live material that might otherwise have stayed on the shelf. Such is the case with reedist and composer Roscoe Mitchell and drummer Mike Reed. They’ve both contributed hugely to Chicago’s jazz scene, though Mitchell hasn’t lived here in ages (he’s now based in Fitchburg, Wisconsin), and I’ve seen both of them play many times. I’ve also seen lots of shows at the Hungry Brain and at Constellation, both of which Reed owns. But there was no way I could’ve caught their collaborative set on October 22, 2015, as part of the Oorstof concert series in Antwerp, Belgium. The fine Astral Spirits label has released that performance as The Ritual and the Dance, digitally and in a pressing of 500 LPs, and the album treats us to some live alchemy that might never have reached our ears if not for our current circumstances. Mitchell, a deeply thoughtful sonic prankster who’s best known as a cofounder of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, mostly takes the lead in this continuous instant composition. His sax flutters, drones, and skronks in its own uniquely unyielding way while Reed’s drum textures tag in and out of the ring. And when Mitchell backs off into his distinctive elongated, pitch-shifting tones, Reed takes the opportu-
Pink Sweat$, aka David Bowden  📧 JIMMY FONTAINE

**MUSIC**

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nity to shine. Sometimes they both take the fore-
ground at once in a fantastic convergence, building
sparse minimalism into crescendos of fierce free
jazz or the hardest bop you never heard. The con-
cert ends with Reed maintaining a meditative drum
pattern while Mitchell chimes delicately—and then
the crowd goes wild. The high quality of the pro-
duction lets you convince yourself that you’re hear-
ing the peaks and valleys of this mind-bending, soul-
stirring concert in the flesh. I still miss feeling the
physical vibrations pumping out of a PA and see-
ing sweat pouring off musicians’ faces, but I’ll take
what I can get right now—especially if it comes in a
gatefold sleeve with art by Roscoe Mitchell himself!

—STEVE KRAKOW

**MOGWAI, AS THE LOVE CONTINUES**

*Temporary Residence*
mogwai.bandcamp.com/album/as-the-love-continues

Mogwai have never presented themselves as a sen-
timental band, but the (mostly) instrumental Scot-
tish postrock group are leaning into nostalgia to
commemorate their 25th year: they’re releasing
their tenth studio album, *As the Love Continues*,
which updated their classic postrock sound with
vocoder-filtered singing and synth-centric songs.
Conceived during COVID-19 lockdowns, ATLC
reflects the band’s escapist approach to the studio,
urging us to join them beyond the realm of reali-
ty with the help of headphones and magical think-
ing. Mogwai attempt to cut the tethers between
place and time with uninged guitars (“Drive the
Nail”), carefully crafted atmospheres (“Dry Fanta-
sy”), and a dazzling anthem driven by the previously
underutilized vocals of guitarist Stuart Brathwaite
(“Ritchie Sacramento”). These pieces are relatively
pensive in tone, but vestiges of Mogwai’s cheeky,
guileless rock past remain on tracks such as “Sup-
posedly, We Were Nightmares” and “Ceiling Gran-
ny.” The B side of ATLC is bolstered by a pair of dis-
tinguished collaborators: one-man string section
Atticus Ross pours a prismatic froth of melody over
the neo-psycho shoals of “Midnight Fit,” and avant-
garde saxophonist Colin Stetson embroiders intri-
cate harplike arpeggios atop the patient groove of
“Pat Stains.” Mogwai recently admitted in a press
release that they’ve “advanced without a plan since
they were teenagers”—a comical confession from
a band who’ve made a legacy of willful grandeur.
What a comfort to know that beauty can not only be
presented in tone, but vestiges of Mogwai’s cheeky,
guileless rock past remain on tracks such as “Sup-
posedly, We Were Nightmares” and “Ceiling Gran-
ny.”

**PINK SWEATS, PINK PLANET**

Atlantic
pinksweatsmusic.com

There isn’t much to the story behind David
Bowden’s stage name, Pink Sweat$. As the Phila-
delphia singer-songwriter told DJ Booth in 2018, it
was inspired by a passing comment at the studio
where he was recording. “I would wear these pink
sweatpants every single day,” he said. “This dude,
he didn’t know my name, and I wasn’t around, and
he was like, ‘Yo, where’s pink sweat$?” Thankful-
ly the songs that Bowden crafted for *Pink Planet*
have a lot more depth: the new Pink Sweat$ album
is a soulful tour de force that solidifies his place in
the modern R&B canon. Bowden’s career has blos-
somed since 2011, when he began working at Sigma
Sound Studios, the epicenter of Philly soul in the
1970s. At Sigma, he worked as a demo vocalist and
songwriter, adding his touch to recordings by the
likes of Florida Georgia Line, Tierra Whack, and
Max. After Sigma closed in 2015, Bowden turned
more of his attention to his own material, and in
2018 he realized his vision of pop-R&B crossover on
the debut Pink Sweat$ album, the all-acoustic Vol-
ume 1 (Human Resources), whose straightforward
love song “Honesty” showcases his heartfelt tenor
over nothing but rhythm guitar. On Pink Planet, Pink
Sweats expands his sound with a bigger band
and songs that could’ve come from a modern-day Donny
Hathaway (“Pink City,” “Pink Money”). But Bowden
hasn’t completely abandoned the minimalism of his
first record. “At My Worst,” released as a single last
fall, recalls the great songcraft of “Honesty”; its gen-
tle melody, punctuated with finger snaps, feels like
a lullaby sung to a sweetheart. On the louder side,
“Not Alright” and “Give It to Me” sound like songs
that the Weeknd should’ve played at the Super
Bowl. With Pink Planet, Bowden has built a world
where his ballads can shine.

—SALEM COLO-JULIN

**ARCHIE SHEPP & JASON MORAN, LET MY PEOPLE GO**

Archieball
archieshepp.bandcamp.com/releases

After saxophonist Archie Shepp became known in
the 1960s as a fierce musical and political voice in
what was then called the avant-garde, he charted
a different path. In 1977, Shepp recorded a collect-
ion of traditional spirituals (and one jazz standard)
in a duet session with pianist Horace Parlan titled
Goin’ Home, which is as reverential as his earlier
records are fervent. Saxophonist and pianist Jason
Moran looks back at the direction and repertoire
of that 70s album on the new Let My People Go, a
duo with Shepp that compiles material from perfor-
ances recorded in 2017 and 2018. Shepp doesn’t
merely reflect quietly on the past—though Moran
shares his elder’s deep appreciation for these his-
toric works, he continuously pitches him daring
changes. As Shepp’s low notes nod to swing-era
tenor players on Duke Ellington’s “Isfahan,” Moran’s
fast high-register runs, which might seem to work
in contrast, become an ideal complement. Chicago-
ans may also note that Shepp’s vibroto sometimes
chooses Von Freeman. On the duo’s reconstruc-
tion of John Coltrane’s “Wise One,” Moran builds
a series of arpeggios that deviate from Shepp’s
breathy and meditative tone while anchoring every-
thing with hints of the blues. Shepp is also an actor
and playwright, and he delivers sections of “Some-
times I Feel Like a Motherless Child” and Billy
Strayhorn’s “Lush Life” as appropriately wearied
half-sung, half-spoken monologues. Despite the
gravity of some of its material, Let My People Go
never sounds too somber. The playful chord pro-
gressions that Moran tosses out at the end of The-
lonious Monk’s “Round Midnight” nod to Monk’s
pencil for humor—and elicit a fun response from
Shepp, who knows that challenging audiences also
means constantly testing himself.

—AARON COVEN

**AKI TAKASE, CHRISTIAN WEBER, AND MIHAIL GRIENER, AUGE**

Intakt
intaktrec.bandcamp.com/album/auge

Berlin-based pianist Aki Takase has been perform-
MUSIC

by Bill Meyer

WALTZER, TIME TRAVELER

Side Hustle

wltzr.bandcamp.com/album/time-traveler

Waltzer founder Sophie Sputnik spent half the 2010s fronting Fort Lauderdale blues-punk duo Killmama from behind a drum kit—she anchored the band’s sparse arrangements in time while lighting them up with her fire-breathing vocals. After Sputnik moved to Chicago a few years ago, she got down to work on Waltzer, a solo project that fuses her grungy garage attitude with her love of neo-soul. Late last month, she emerged with Waltzer’s debut album, Time Traveler (Side Hustle), which bundles together 50s doo-wop melodies, weathered blues riffs, and surging rock climaxes in red-hot, rambunctious songs that feel up-to-the-minute but unmoored in time—they’re a great complement to the ghostly neo-pop that former Chicagoan Meghan Remy makes as U.S. Girls.

Time Traveler includes the country-tinged throwback “I Don’t Wanna Die,” where Sputnik sings like she knows death intimately—and, well, that’s because she does. In a recent interview with Ari Mejia at CHIRP, Sputnik briefly talks about surviving leukemia as a child. “It changed my entire life,” she says. “I felt really grateful that I had this idea that I’m not immortal.” Sputnik supercharges Waltzer’s music with purposeful drive, flooding it with all the life force at her command. —Leor Galil

Sophie Sputnik of Waltzer Courtesy the Artist
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NEW

Phil Angotti and friends with Tony Richards 2/22, 8 PM, livestream at auditionchicago.com/constellationchicago The Fray 10/16, 8 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan

Nick Kuehn presents

World Premiere of Automaton
2/18, 7 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/automaton

Karla’s
2/25, 8 PM, City Winery

Dave Rector presents

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UPCOMING

Acid Mothers Temple & the Melting Paraiso U.F.O. 3/7, 7 PM, livestream at levitation-austin.com

The Weeknd 1/23-2/24, 2022, 7 PM, United Center, rescheduled and show added

Widespread Panic 11/17-11/19, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, rescheduled; sold out

Tallest Man on Earth 3/17/2022-3/19/2022, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled; sold out

Louie Limson 4/15, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, postponed

Vio-lence, Dysphoria, Wrath, Gavel 11/16, 7 PM, Reggies Rock Club, postponed

Stephen Wade 4/23/2022, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed

The Weeknd 1/23-2/24, 2022, 7 PM, United Center, rescheduled and show added

Widespread Panic 11/17-11/19, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, rescheduled; sold out

HFR

Süle Greg Wilson banjo workshop: Songs From the African American, Caribbean, and African Traditions 2/21, 1 PM, livestream at oldtownschool.org

TASounds 2/26, 8 PM, livestream at youtube.com/constellationchicago

Teenage Bottlerocket, Sack, Ray Rocket, Old Wives 3/27, 8 PM, livestream presented by Riot Fest

Valley Maker 3/20, 7 PM, livestream at gctv.stream

We Banjo 3 3/31, 4 PM, livestream at citywinery.com

Peter Yarrow & Noel Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul, & Mary 10/9, 7 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan

UPDAted

Rivissa Cesnna’s Auto Club, Bellrays 5/7, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, canceled

Christopher Cross 10/14, 8 PM, Genesee Theatre, Waukegan, rescheduled

Brian Culbertson 11/17, 7:30 PM, Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet, rescheduled

Dance Gavin Dance, Animals as Leaders, Issues, Veil of Maya, Wolf & Bear 2/25, 5:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, rescheduled

Irish DeMent, Ana Egg 5/21, 7 PM, City Winery, postponed

Alan Doyle, Chris Trapper 4/29/2022, 8 PM, City Winery, rescheduled

Get the Led Out 4/24/2022, 8 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont, rescheduled

James Hunter Six 3/12, 8 PM, City Winery, postponed

Lone Bellow 11/7, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, rescheduled

Moonrunners Springtime Festival featuring Days N Daze, Bridge City Sinners, We the Heathens, Crazy & the Brains, Tejon Street Corner Thieves, Matt Pless, Apes of the State, Suburbanists, Escape From the Zoo, Brit-tany Avery, LovenOMB, King Strange, and more 10/10-10/11, 11 AM, Raggies’ Rock Club, postponed

Off Broadway, Handcuffs 10/16, 8 PM, Raggies Rock Club, postponed, rescheduled

Peach Pit, Haley Blais 5/12, 9 PM, House of Blues, canceled

Jeremy Pinnell 3/35, 8:30 PM, Carol’s Pub

Blackhearts Extravaganza featuring Ernie Watts, Marcella Detroit, Lynne Jordan, Cantor Pavel Roytman, Frank Orrall, and Toronzo Cannon 3/36, 7 PM, livestream at citywinery.com

De Leppard, Mötiley Crüe, Poison, Joan Jett & the Blackhearts 6/29, 4 PM, Wrigley Field

Frames 9/23, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+

Gray Sound presents Chama-aine Lee 5/11, 7:30 PM, livestream at graycenter.uchicago.edu

Nielson Trust 2/24, 8 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv/stream/the-nielson-trust

Robin Trouer 9/10, 7:30 PM, Capri Club

Vetiver, Meg Baird, Suzanne Yallie 2/26, 8 PM, livestream at go.seated.com

Walterte TV Season II: Episo-dell featuring Walterte, Woes, Ratboys, and more 2/25, 8 PM, livestream at noon-charters.com/empty-battle-walterte.tv

Chicago Shows You Should Know About in the Weeks to Come

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Early Warnings

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Music has always meant community to me. I moved around too much as a kid. I went to four schools for eighth and ninth grade, but I could always find somebody who abused black eyeliner like I did, which meant they shared my politics and the music I liked. When I was 13, my mom sent me from Cleveland to LA to live with my dad, but it was easy to find community around music no matter where I was living. Sometimes that was really terrible hardcore with way too many rules and misogyny, but it all led me to get into local politics.

For most of my 20s I worked in local government in Portland, Oregon, with the most incredible mayor [Vera Katz], who taught me so much about what could be accomplished through sheer determination and creative problem-solving. I’d been scraping together a community college education, not knowing how to do anything, and knowing I would never be the smartest person in the room. The story of my life has kind of been: work as hard as possible and try and outwork everybody. I did nine years in Portland, so when I came to Chicago in 2005, it was like coming home.

In the midwest, it’s kind of taboo to be an asshole. There’s a sense of community, and people want to do good, so you look around and see how you can help and you just hustle. I initially came here to help a friend open a gallery, and it was the purest experience of sales, buying and selling art and antiques.

My father, who is legitimately kind of a con man—when I moved in with him at 13, he was a professional gambler—was so excited. He was like, “Every job in the world is sales. You have to connect with people and make them invest in your story or way of doing things.” I always thought, “That’s gross.” But now as a fundraiser, when people ask “How the hell can you do that?” I tell them, “I’m providing people with opportunity. This is the greatest job in the world.”

I got my master’s for free while working at DePaul’s College of Education and learning how to be a fundraiser. And I was a scholarship administrator too. So I felt like Robin Hood. I was raising the money to give it away, and talking to a lot of kids who were like myself.

I didn’t get my bachelor’s till I was 28. It was wonderful to be an older student and really think about, “This is what I want to learn: how to think and research and reason.” During this time, I also allowed myself to be immersed in music as my own little private thing.

I reconnected with the founder of Intonation [Mike Simons] about three years ago. When I first moved to Chicago, I volunteered for him, working next to his father putting on a music festival [the 2005 Intonation Music Festival]. When he told me his development director was leaving and asked if I knew anybody, I was like, “Look no further, buddy.”

Pre-pandemic, [the Intonation Music] model was to partner with schools and parks and get students to come together year-round in school, after school, weekends, and summers to form their own bands. They name the band, and they democratically pick a song that becomes their curriculum, whether that’s a Drake song, a Bikini Kill song, a Bon Jovi song, or whatever else they want. Then they learn every instrument for that song—guitar, bass, keyboards, drums, and vocals. Every student learns each one over the course of eight to ten weeks. At the end of that period, they put on a performance.

We don’t require students to learn how to read music, so it’s really playing by doing. And because they play every instrument, there’s a lot of camaraderie and peer learning and teaching. If you played drums last week and I’m playing them this week, you know how you struggled and you can help me.

All of our instructors are working musicians, and just about all of them are multi-instrumentalists, so they know how to break down a song. For younger students, the first couple of lessons might be as simple as clapping exercises to get the rhythm down. And that will turn into a drum lesson, which leads to a bass lesson, and so forth. There’s a six-to-one student-to-teacher ratio, so we’re talking really small groups.

About five years ago, we decided to have a geographic focus area of Bronzeville. It’s like a hub-and-spoke model. For instance, we’re at Ellis Park, and right next door is Doolittle Elementary School, and right behind Ellis is the UChicago Charter Donohue Campus, and a couple of blocks away is another school. So the idea is that we’re with all of those schools during the school day. And then we can do an after-school program at the parks with the same kids, and then we’ll do a summer camp there, a deep dive on weekends, et cetera.

We want those kids from third through 12th grade, because when we have those kids for years and years, the retention and the
social-emotional learning skills grow incrementally. We also create other opportunities, like all-star bands. We had our first graduating class of students two years ago. Of the five students, some had been with us since they were six years old.

When the pandemic hit, we had two big goals. One was to reach out to our families to figure out what technology they had at home and what kind of programs the students wanted while the lockdown was going on. The second was to keep every instructor working during the lockdown.

Our instructors took a deep dive into what kind of platforms we could use virtually to get the kind of collaboration that we get in classrooms and what kind of equipment would be needed for students at home. They came up with the idea that all of our students needed MIDI controllers and that we could work over this music education platform called Soundtrap. They designed this suite of pilot programs that we had up and running by early April.

We had a program called the Daily Beat, where every week there would be one song that you’d drop in and work on twice a day, three times a week. We did a video of the week, and we did an instrument ownership program, where students that had been with us for two years were sent a new guitar, bass, or keyboard.

Our donor committee community has been incredible. Our costs obviously went up to do this, but since the summer, every one of our students has received a MIDI controller of their own, which allows them to play every single instrument and record it and produce it and share it with their classmates. We have lost some enrollment because CPS and the Chicago Park District are our biggest partners. But I can’t even express how needed any kinds of arts education is for students right now.

I can’t imagine being a student and not being able to get out of my house or have my own people and creative outlets for all the emotions you go through as a teenager. It’s great to have something where you don’t necessarily need to put that into words.

The communities we serve are majestic—it’s been the greatest privilege of my life to get to work in Bronzeville and get to know its history and community—but they are incredibly divested of arts and education resources, among other things. This city is deeply segregated, and so many Chicagoans don’t know much about Bronzeville. But what this neighborhood has contributed to American music is insane.

I work at Kennicott Park, which is at 4400 S. Lake Park. That’s half a block from Muddy Waters’s house. I can walk to Louis Armstrong’s house. I can also walk to the Harold Washington Center, which used to be the Regal Theater, which opened eight years before the freakin’ Apollo. And the Regal was where Aretha Franklin was crowned the queen of soul. There’s also Curtis Mayfield and Chaka Khan and the Staples Singers, and that’s just music.

It gets really exciting for me when I get to be in a building in Ellis Park, and know Otis Rush grew up across the street. Whether or not our students know who the heck Otis Rush is, that’s shared soil. Our students are so amazingly talented, and when I see them onstage, knowing they are a part of this legacy of changing the way modern music sounds is exciting.

It’s also exciting on a grander scale. Not everybody is going to be a Chaka Khan or a Curtis, but they might get a moment to see a path forward. They might get recognition for these gifts, and that opens up worlds. If nothing else, it provides immediate community and recognition around this thing that moves us all, which is music.

When I was working in politics, we always went to the community for answers. Community organizations are going to be around a lot longer than any politician. I’m not shading any hardworking politicians, but when I get to speak with the people in the community of Bronzeville, those are the people that are making real change. It’s not some mandate from someone up on top. And that’s something I think punk rockers have always known. You want a festival, you do it yourself.
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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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My boyfriend’s libido has collapsed

Guilt trips, glory holes, and being there for those you love right now

By Dan Savage

Q: I’m a gay guy living in New York in his late 20s. My boyfriend has really been emotionally impacted by the pandemic having been a frontline worker. I think he is suffering from some mild depression or at the very least some intense anxiety so I just want to preface this by saying I completely sympathize with what he’s going through. Before the pandemic we had a really good sex life, but lately he hasn’t been interested in sex at all besides a few assisted masturbation sessions. While I know that these aren’t usual times, I can’t help feeling rejected. Normally, I would suggest opening up the relationship, for the sake of both myself and him, and I think that he might benefit from having sex with some guys where there isn’t an emotional investment. Of course, right now that isn’t an option. I want to be there for him and we otherwise have a solid relationship, but this issue has been making me feel hurt. I’ve encouraged him to masturbate without me but I do wish he could include me more in his sexual life. Do you have any other thoughts or advice? —THANKS FOR READING

A: As much as I hate to give you an unsatisfactory answer, the only way to find out whether his loss of libido is entirely pandemic-related, TFR, is to wait out the pandemic and see if your sexual connection doesn’t rebound and/or if opening up the relationship is the right move for you guys as a couple. But if you suspect the collapse of your boyfriend’s libido has more to do with what he’s witnessed and endured as a frontline worker than it has to do with you or your relationship, TFR, therapy will do him more good than sleeping with other guys or masturbating without you. Urge him to do that instead.

Q: My dad is dying. He had a stroke two days ago and is in a coma with no brain function. My aunt (his sister) is trying to make me feel guilty for not traveling to see him. Even though I’m pregnant and high risk. I would have to take an airplane across the country and multiple public buses to see him. I would have to risk my baby’s life to say goodbye to a man I love with all my heart. She insists that if I don’t, I didn’t love my dad. I’m heartbroken. I keep calling his hospice and they set the phone next to his head so I can talk at him. He was so excited about my pregnancy, and I know he would not want me to risk it. But now not only am I grieving my father, I feel guilty and selfish. Am I right to be angry? My aunt’s brother is dying. She’s sad. Everyone is sad. Everyone is sad. But this is not the first time she has used guilt to try and control others in moments of trauma. —CRYING ON MY ABDOMEN

A: There has to be someone in your life who would be willing to step in and tell your aunt to go fuck herself. If there isn’t, COMA, send me your aunt’s phone number. You have every right to be furious with your aunt for giving you grief when you have all the grief you can handle right now. Don’t get on that plane. And if your aunt never speaks to you again, COMA, just think of all the guilt trips she won’t be able to drag you along on in the future.

Q: I’m a 53-year-old gay man and I’ve never been hornier in my life. I really need to guzzle about a quart of jizz right now. I haven’t been dating anyone and the COVID isolation has intensified my loneliness but it’s the lack of D that’s driving me to distraction. The last time I sucked a dick was the afternoon Los Angeles began its first shutdown. Here’s the thing. I just had the first dose of the vaccine, and the second is scheduled in a couple weeks. Is it safe to suck someone’s dick who has also had the vaccine? Everything I found on Google only talks about how the vaccine may affect pregnant women. What about us cum whores? —GOT THE FEVER FOR THE FLAVOR

A: Where have you been? I predicted at the beginning of the pandemic that we were entering a new golden age of glory holes. Two months later the New York City Health department was recommending “barriers, like walls, that allow sexual contact while preventing close face-to-face contact,” aka glory holes—and that was the harm-reduction advice given by health professionals long before vaccines became available. Seeing as you’re vaccinated, your risks are going to be lower. But to play it safe: build your own glory hole, invite a guy over, tell him to keep his mask on, and avoid close face-to-face contact by staying on your knees on the other side.

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Such are the known unknowns, as former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld once so memorably put it. But, we can have a guess as to that dinner in the winter of 1947. In part this is so because before Algren attained national and international fame as a writer (Hemingway rightly called him the American Dositejivci), this grandson of a contrarian Swedish immigrant who converted to Orthodox Judaism in New York and (much to the chagrin of his family) took to itinerant prophecy of the New Deal 90s, then soon after, earned his first spurs in the context of Un-American Activities in 1943, the Federal Writers Project. From its inception under the New Deal in 1935 to its shameful closure by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1943, the Federal Writers Project employed thousands of writers, artists, and professionals who had lost their jobs in the publishing industry. Next to Algren, who became the FWP’s trump card in 1936, its Chicago office staff alone included Saul Bellow, Arna Bontemps, Jack Conroy, Katherine Dunham, Studs Terkel, Margaret Walker, and Richard Wright—a veritable who’s who of youthful Chicago artists who would eventually be propelled to national and international acclaim. A major focus of their work was the Illinois version of the 48 state guides the FWP was compiling, but other projects in which Algren was involved included “industrial folklore,” for which he interviewed bawlers, gamblers, prostitutes, loan-sharks, drug dealers, boxers, addicts, petty criminals, and other characters in the bars, pool halls, and brothels of “the old Chicago”. But he found his friend and FWP colleague Jack Conroy later recalled. Elements of these interviews often found their way into Algren’s novels and short stories in virtually verbatim form—a poetic ethnography of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual underclasses that had formed in cities like Chicago, the kind of “lumpen” that Algren, more so perhaps than any American author at the time, so success-

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The story of Tio Jú, a deceased relative of the González family, told through the dialogues of four cultural artifacts that were once his companions during his life: his first sugar bowl, his glass of water, his favorite teacup, and his favorite teapot. The artifacts were recovered during a family reunion, and the story was narrated by the family members who inherited them.

The artifacts were made by hand using traditional techniques and materials, such as sugar from the family’s own fields, water from a nearby stream, and the finest porcelain and silver from the local artisans. The story of Tio Jú was told through the eyes of these artifacts, who witnessed his daily life, his loves and losses, and his final moments.

The sugar bowl, made by a local potter, was his daily reminder of the sweetness of life. He would fill it with the best sugar, his favorite flavor, and use it to sweeten his food and drinks. In his final moments, he reached for his sugar bowl, his last act of simplest kindness.

The glass of water, made by a local glass blower, was his constant companion. He would fill it with the purest water from the river that ran through his village, and use it to quench his thirst and wash his face. In his final moments, he reached for his glass of water, his last act of simple physical comfort.

The teacup, made by a local ceramicist, was his favorite drinkware. He would fill it with the finest tea, his favorite flavor, and use it to savor his favorite beverages. In his final moments, he reached for his teacup, his last act of simple pleasure.

The teapot, made by a local blacksmith, was his favorite beverage maker. He would fill it with the finest tea, his favorite flavor, and use it to savor his favorite beverages. In his final moments, he reached for his teapot, his last act of simple comfort.

The story of Tio Jú is a reminder of the importance of simple acts of kindness, comfort, and comfort. It is a reminder of the power of simple objects and the stories that they can tell. It is a reminder of the importance of family, community, and tradition. And it is a reminder of the importance of memory, as we preserve the stories of our loved ones through the objects they cherished.
**A TALE OF TWO TAPAS BARS:**

**EL INTERNACIONAL**

**EL CAFÉ BA-BA-REEBA!**

By Heangjin Park

As a Korean living in Chicago, I cook and eat Korean foods at home. To be precise, I have learned to create a culinary version in my kitchen over the years. Still, there are a few dishes that I notably miss making: making me feel a terrible craving. Then, I dine out. When I venture out of my comfort zone and homesickness, I am doomed to have higher expectations. I am doomed when I find that my beef Bulgogi is not as tender as I’d like, or my white rice is not as fluffy as I prefer. I feel lost when I drive an hour and a half to get a bowl of jjajangmyeon, only to find that it is never close to what I imagined. I drive home for another hour and a half, feeling the distance between my home and where I want to be.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions. There are places where I know with certainty I can be cured of homesickness. I can feel closer to home if I left almost ten years ago. There are foods I think are better than the ones from my food memories in South Korea. However, it can be slightly complicated explaining why when the food Matters. "Dishest like jjajangmyeon (noodles with black bean sauce) tymg cru (frud with sweet and sour sauce), and jjajangmyeon (noodles with spicy both and seafood). The best way to label them is Korean-style Chinese, but the only way to explain what they are through history.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, many Chinese who faced natural disasters and wars, or find work opportunities. Some of them opened Chinese restaurants for other Chinese migrants and travelers, as well as local Koreans. The Chinese restaurants in Korea adapted to Korean customers, who often demanded the creation of new dishes. For example, there is a Korean adaptation of Chinese Zhajiangmian, a noodle mixed with a Developed profession and successful. The best way to label them is Korean-style Chinese, but the only way to explain what they are through history.

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But let us have Angélica tell the story in her own words, how it all started back in Mexico City, Distrito Federal:

I became a devotee of Santa Muerte when I was married to the father of my daughter, my first husband, in Mexico. I had a lot of problems with him because he treated me very badly. It wasn’t a good life, was it? So, among the needs of wanting my husband to change, and in this case, the son to change for my mother-in-law, and I happened upon the topic that a woman had been 

But, of course, Angélica is not only devoted to La Dama Blanca; she is also a savvy businesswoman who attends to the beautiful tableaux and much else in the restaurant. She also has some very contactable ideas about how to make good D.F. should taste like. As she explains:

I am the one who has the ideas. I like to stay in the store after closing and I like to program or plan. I like to program how to change the business. I’ve always had this thing where I like to stay and design mentally the changes. I’m going to do. And little by little the tapiquera has become a product of my imagination. The menu is always the same so it is the place where I feel happy. I am comfortable, where I do not mind working. But now it is different. I have a lot of issues because Santa Muerte is a business of truths that interferes with all the power. It is not that Santa Muerte is a god and God is another god, no. There is only one God, but God has his servants.

César agrees:

I’ve always said that every worker working in any type of work, as long as he does it with gusto, the things come out well. Because there’s some people who don’t like in a restaurant (if you order something from one person who doesn’t like their work, it’s come out disgustful. If you order something from a person who actually enjoys their work, it’ll come out differently). Broadly don’t enjoy it you enjoy it not. It’s like putting your own seasoning into what you do. You have to do the things with gusto and enjoyment. Because really, if you do something that you like, you’ll do it right and you’ll put your effort in it. Even if the ingredient is only a pinch of salt because they’re doing it with gusto.

According to César, the two bestselling fillings at La Chaparrita are al pastor (taco) and carne asada (taco). According to the customer’s specifications.

In the end it all boils down to the crucial question: “What is the quickest and cheapest?” To which César’s answer is: “tacos.” Done well, of course, just like La Chaparrita.

As César sings the song:

**Recipiente rápida de Pollo (taco de pollo)
Huevos Corridos (taco con huevos)
**

**Pasta dorada: Moño Rojo con Pollo, Frijoles negros, Tiza de Pollo (pechuga de pollo desatarada y escamada con cebolla, tomate, sal, aceto, chile chipotle y laurel), Tomillo de México.**
Hot dogs are a staple of American cuisine, enjoyed by people of all ages and from all walks of life. From the 1930s until recently, hot dog stands and carts were a mainstay of urban life. They awaited the next food truck and so stands are decorated in bright colors and plastered with colorful hot dog places.

First things first: what is a Chicago hot dog? It is a sausage normally made of cattle mixed with sawdust and subjected to hydraulic pressure and subjected to hydraulic pressure and subjected to hydraulic pressure and subjected to hydraulic pressure and subjected to hydraulic pressure. The process is called “hemacite”.

The architecture of the tradition- al hot dog stand is influenced by the neighborhood and family. Unlike corporate fast food restaurants, Chicago hot dog stands are part of the neighborhood and family. They are a mix of utilitarian eatery and decor are forms of vernacular art. The internet has been privy to high-end vampire fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value.

By Paige Resnick

Before nose-to-tail was a food embrace by guilty meat-eaters who couldn’t bear to give up the satiating power of a common household staple, doorknobs, milli- ners, button kits, complete with intricate silicone molds and even “donation” pins and burgundy-colored leather buttons as a form of self-expression. The painted doorknobs are a form of baroque artifice. Hot dog stands are symbols of taste and place, and symbols in the tradition of anthropomorphized hot dogs.

The Chicago hot dog is itself a grotesque: smiling Dachshund dogs ensconced in buns, ready to be served. The dog stands are influenced by the neighborhood and family. A search of “hemacite” on eBay yields one result, a burst design, listed for $35 (although the seller gave me a watch list, warning me in an email, “A few other interested buyers also received this offer—it won’t be for long”).

It is kind of anthropo- morphized hot dogs that are made of plastic completely replaced hemacite by the mid-1960s. In an era when eco-consciousness could be considered a trend, wouldn’t people give up their plastic for a more earth-friendly option? If so, we are making fabric out of mushrooms, why wouldn’t we make buttons out of the blood of animals already slaughtered for their meat? Wouldn’t we make buttons out of the blood of animals already slaughtered for their meat? Would we argue that Mosh is having a comeback, and blood buttons will be the next “vintage” fashion trend to see a revival. Social media has been a breeding ground for fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value. The internet has been privy to high-end vampire fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value.

By Bruce Kroiz

Photos by Patty Carroll

Like all cities, Chicago is composed of neighborhoods. Mostly defined by ethnicity, Chicago has been the classic example of immigration and settlement in America. It is used to be said that if you wanted to see Chicago’s ethnic mosaic, you had to walk down Halsted Street. Polonsky’s on the north side, following Greek, Italians, Jews, Czecks (called Bohemians in Chicago and later supplanted by Mexicans), Chinese, Irish, Lithuanians, African Americans, Bulgarians, and Serbs and Croats, among others. Many of these neighborhoods developed around industries large and small that made Chicago an industrial powerhouse. Drab as factories and housing might have been, grimm from industrial pollution and poverty, every neighborhood was enlivened by public art. Mostly in the form of signs and décor, this vernacular art signaled to the visitor the identity of the neighborhood they were entering.

From the 1930s until recently, hot dog stands were a main vehicle for identifying and sup- plying the nature of each neigh- borhood. The signs of these stands told stories about the stand owners, their ideas and aspirations, visions of an existing and imagined world. Smil- ing dachshunds sit in boxes, hats hanging up on bins, huge Chicago-style hot dogs overflowing with toppings, hot dogs with legs and arms dancing and marching, hand-drawn menus crowded in with bright colors and plastered over stands. Over a year’s worth, Patty Carroll has photographed these stands, documents of local cultures and themselves pieces of art. They are the core of our book Man Bites Dog: Hot Dog Carts and Stands in America. This book is produced in eight colors.

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The Chicago hot dog often is not just about eating a quick snack. It is kind of anthropo- morphized hot dogs that are made of plastic completely replaced hemacite by the mid-1960s. In an era when eco-consciousness could be considered a trend, wouldn’t people give up their plastic for a more earth-friendly option? If so, we are making fabric out of mushrooms, why wouldn’t we make buttons out of the blood of animals already slaughtered for their meat? Would we argue that Mosh is having a comeback, and blood buttons will be the next “vintage” fashion trend to see a revival. Social media has been a breeding ground for fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value. The internet has been privy to high-end vampire fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value.

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The Chicago hot dog is itself a grotesque: smiling Dachshund dogs ensconced in buns, ready to be served. The dog stands are influenced by the neighborhood and family. A search of “hemacite” on eBay yields one result, a burst design, listed for $35 (although the seller gave me a watch list, warning me in an email, “A few other interested buyers also received this offer—it won’t be for long”).

The Chicago hot dog often is not just about eating a quick snack. It is kind of anthropo- morphized hot dogs that are made of plastic completely replaced hemacite by the mid-1960s. In an era when eco-consciousness could be considered a trend, wouldn’t people give up their plastic for a more earth-friendly option? If so, we are making fabric out of mushrooms, why wouldn’t we make buttons out of the blood of animals already slaughtered for their meat? Would we argue that Mosh is having a comeback, and blood buttons will be the next “vintage” fashion trend to see a revival. Social media has been a breeding ground for fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value. The internet has been privy to high-end vampire fashion, particularly for its Instagram-worthy shock value.

By Bruce Kroiz

Photos by Patty Carroll

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Racoon à la Mode

By Catherine Lambrecht for this event.

They gave me a polite butratheraggressive response: "It's a food explorer. A founder of the Magazine of Food History. He has written extensively on the history of food in the United States, and is the author of several books on the subject.

When I saw the menu, I thought it was a bit pricey. I'm a college student and I didn't have much money in my pocket. But I was curious to see what they had to offer, so I decided to give it a try.

The first course was a consommé of raccoon broth, served with a side of croutons and a dollop of creme fraiche. I was impressed by the presentation and the flavor of the broth. It was rich and savory, with a hint of the raccoon's meaty, gamey notes.

The second course was a raccoon ragout, which was served with a side of mashed potatoes. The ragout was hearty and filling, with chunks of raccoon meat, carrots, and celery. The mashed potatoes were creamy and fluffy, and I couldn't resist the delicious gravy that accompanied them.

The main course was the pièce de résistance: a raccoon steak, served with a side of roasted vegetables. The steak was perfectly cooked, with a crispy crust on the outside and a juicy interior. The vegetables were sautéed in butter and seasoned with a blend of herbs and spices, which complemented the flavor of the steak.

For dessert, we were offered a choice of two desserts: a raccoon pecan pie or a raccoon cheesecake. I decided to try the cheesecake, which was served with a side of fresh berries. It was rich and creamy, with a slight tang from the berries.

Overall, the meal was quite satisfying, and I enjoyed the experience. I would definitely recommend this restaurant to anyone who is interested in trying something unique and different.

The final course was a raccoon liver parfait, served with a side of toasted bread. The parfait was smooth and creamy, with a hint of the raccoon's liver flavor. I was pleasantly surprised by how good it was.

In conclusion, this was a memorable dining experience. The atmosphere was unique, and the food was creative and delicious. I would definitely come back to try the rest of the menu and see what else they have to offer.
The Preparation of Meals

By Jen Delos Reyes

Jen Delos Reyes is a creative laborer, educator, radical community arts organizer, and author of countless emails. Defiantly optimistic, friend to all birds, and proponent that our institutions can become tender and vulnerable. Delos Reyes currently lives and works in Chicago, IL where she is the Associate Director of the School of Art & Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The Passage of Time

Butternut squash, dandelion greens, cheese and salsa verde tamales.

Homemade Giardiniera is my new currency.

Made these @squirilra biscuits.

Crying on your cake is the new sprinkling of fleur du sel.

A very Chicago quarantine dinner: homemade deep dish pizza with tomato sauce I preserved from my garden, dough I made, and homemade giardiniera.

Today’s harvest. Rainbow chard, collards, bek choy, lacinato kale, zucchini.

August 2, 2020 9:24 AM

My preserves palace: Canned tomatoes, pickles, giardiniera, kale, and butter summer squash pickles; spicy tarry pickled carrots, pickled Sichuan yellow long beans.

A casual amount of homemade kimchi.

Homemade bagels with house cured beet salmon, and my sweet pickled red onions.

November 9, 2020 9:40 PM

Kale, olive oil preserved cherry tomatoes. Finochiona giardiniera.

November 9, 2020 7:28 PM

Been working on perfecting a recipe for what I am calling Peanut Butter Cosmic Cocoa cookies using Moon Juice Cosmic Cocoa and cannabutter.

November 9, 2020 2:40 PM

Into these tie dye beets from my garden that keep on giving.

November 9, 2020 6:30 PM

Another Friday, another pizza and bottle of red. Kale, roasted eggplant, black garlic salami.

November 13, 2020 5:30 PM

Another night, another culinary adventure for one. I love this internet recipe.

December 18, 2020 6:40 PM

Another Friday, another homemade pizza. Vidalia onion jam ricotta, fresh mozzarella, collards, pickled chanterelles.

December 15, 2020 6:10 PM

Another Friday, Another pizza. Kale ricotta, butternut squash, dandelion greens, aleppo pepper.