

UHD **D**ATELINE

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Delayed project depends on student fee

By Keven Balderas

A town hall meeting was held in late Aug. to address students’ reservations about taking classes during the pandemic. During that meeting, David Bradley, the Vice President for Administration and Finance at UHD, confirmed that students this fall would still be charged the full fee funding a new recreational building, the Student Wellness and Success Center.

Bradley was responding to Daniel Villanueva, the town hall host and Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management at UHD, who brought it up after noticing that it was on many students’ minds, as evinced by the number of messages in the chat box and queries sent in beforehand by registered participants. Several students expressed discontent with regard to paying it, especially considering many of them will have graduated by the time the building is completed.

“It’s vital to carrying on the project,” said Bradley. “When it’s done, we’re going to have a fantastic Student Wellness and Success Center that our students will be able to enjoy, but we have to continue charging that fee right now. The project depends on it,” concluded Mr. Bradley referring to the fee that evening.

The Student Wellness and Success Center was originally scheduled to open in fall 2021, but is now expected to open in fall 2022. The project has been delayed, partly so by the (TxDot) I-45 rebuild project, which has become controversial for its potential to “[relocate] hundreds of families

and businesses,” according to the Houston Chronicle.

“Part of that is to bring the freeways right across land that we own. That is right up against where the Wellness and Success Center is being constructed,” Mr. Bradley told The Dateline. “So, that has been a complication, and that has resulted in things dragging out a little bit more than we would have liked.”

The referendum in which students voted in favor of the project took place from Oct. 15 to Oct. 26, 2018. The fee to fund it began to appear in students’ accounts fall 2019, following fiscal year for UHD, with the description of “Wellness & Success Center Fee Gr.”

For the academic year 2019-2020, the fee was \$32.50 every 8 weeks during the full 16-week semester. For the current academic year, it would be \$65 every 8 weeks during the full 16-week semester.

However, Students should not, expect further increases.

“The [UHD] President determined that we would charge one-half of what the fee is going to be. It was approved by the [UH System] Board of Regents,” said Mr. Bradley. “And the reason he did that was because he felt we were still so far away from having this project. There wasn’t even a groundbreaking or anything yet, so the students could see things moving and the project happening. That was

a good decision as to cut it in half.”

A recording of the town hall cited in this article may be found under the title, “UHD Student Town Hall,” in the UHD Network YouTube channel.

The Dateline has previously reported on the Student and Wellness Center. These articles may be found in edition 64.3 (Gator Life, Page 7) of The Dateline and can be accessed through the UHD website at www.uhd.edu/student-life/dateline.



Virtual rendering of the Student Wellness and Success Center, to be open fall 2022. Images courtesy of David Bradley.



THE DATELINE

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Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from the University of Houston-Downtown who complete all tasks required to produce the newspaper, which serves all UHD campuses. The opinions and commentaries expressed within reflect the views of the contributing writers. No opinions expressed in The Dateline reflect the viewpoints of the University of Houston-Downtown, its administration or its students.

The Dateline reserves the right to edit or modify submissions for the sake of clarity, content, grammar, or space limitations. All submissions become property of The Dateline and may not be returned.

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Any student interested in joining The Dateline may request more detailed information by sending an email to the editor at editordateline@downtown@gmail.com.

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"The Bayou Review" continues to publish despite pandemic

By Laura Dunn

UHD's literary magazine, "The Bayou Review," is created and designed by UHD students. After production and publication, the magazine is distributed internationally each semester.

The literary magazine is comprised of short fiction, poetry and visual art. Submissions are accepted from anyone and are not limited to current UHD students.

Every issue is unique to the time it is published in - perhaps this semester presenting one of the most unique and challenging time periods and also one of that is most challenging to capture. "Bayou Review" attempts to tackle this challenge in its upcoming edition with the theme "Upheaval and Unity."

No matter how it is viewed, it is true the pandemic is creating unique opportunities within itself. The COVID-19 pandemic began in the middle of last semester, which caused the previous issue to only be distributed online as opposed to the usual physical publication. There were never any physical copies created. However, nobody could have foreseen this, and the magazine was organized as it would be for physical print.

This semester, it is still unknown whether physical copies will be on the horizon for "Bayou Review," but the digital atmosphere, in which the magazine will definitely be created, is opening opportunities for new medias of submissions like videos, music and podcast inter-

views.

It is absolutely a time for creativity and working together, as the design team does via Zoom, twice a week. It is obviously not ideal, but it is amazing what can be accomplished when enough minds come together. In order to be a part of the design team, students must enroll in Faculty Advisor and Assistant Professor Daniel Peña's literary magazine course, ENGL 3332.

If you have creative work you feel needs, or deserves to be seen, submissions are open until Sept. 29. Please send all submissions to editor@bayoureview.org or visit bayoureview.org for more information.

CAB brings the show during Fall 2020 Welcome Week

By Salvador Hernandez

On Aug. 25, the Campus Activities Board (CAB) offered students the opportunity to attend their first event for UHD's Welcome Week, "Virtual Game Show." The organization focuses on bringing fun activities to UHD's student body in hopes of creating an opportunity for community building even during this recent shift to online learning.

The event itself was made up of a series of trivia questions ranging from pop culture to history within the Kahoot! app. Students were invited by CAB through their social media accounts. CAB informed the students to

DM them on Twitter and Instagram for the Zoom link. The winners of these events received \$25 Amazon gift cards.

Due to Hurricane Laura, CAB decided to push all remaining events for Welcome Week to Sept. CAB President, Carlos Huerta Enciso, commented on the impact that Laura had on their welcome week events stating.

"It affected us a lot... our advisor had to reschedule our events for welcome week. CAB as of now wants to do at least one event a week," said Enciso.

CAB is one of the largest student organiza-

tions on campus, second only to Student Government Association. The "Virtual Game Show" was hosted by Campus Activities Board President, Carlos Huerta-Enciso. CAB is one of the many organizations to continue providing students with extracurricular activities in their free time.

There are plans for CAB to host another "Virtual Game Show" event with the theme revolving around the 1960's and it is expected to be hosted on Sept. 17.

GatorLEADER trains students in diversity leadership

By Indira Zaldivar

The Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) scheduled ten GatorLEADER workshops from Sept. 1 through Oct. 2, which offer students and staff an opportunity to obtain a free certificate of completion for the GatorLEADER Diversity Leadership program. Each different workshop is offered online via Zoom twice in that scheduled day to offer students and staff a flexible opportunity to become leaders who promote diversity, inclusivity, and social justice to meet the needs of Houston's diverse community members.

John Hudson, Ph.D., Director of CDI, said that these workshops promote

social justice and offer marketable skills. Hudson said that small companies benefit a lot from employees with diversity and inclusion training because they often lack the funds to implement a social justice program.

"Get a certificate from the center, and it's going to make your resume look much stronger," Hudson said. "In the job market they need people to help with diversity and inclusion programs in the workplace. A lot of big companies will hire people like me, but small companies might not be able to afford that social justice program in the workplace."

To get the certificate, students

and staff must complete five core workshops: Diversity 101, Inclusive Language, Power and Privilege, LGBT Awareness, and Unconscious Bias. Participants also must complete three elective workshops: DreamZone Ally Training, Gator Ally Training, Diversity 201, Cross-Cultural Communication, Microaggressions, Power and Privilege on Social Media, and Transgender 101. Lastly, trainees must write a final paper that reflects on the lessons and experiences during the training.

The schedule of the workshops is posted on the official Facebook page of UHD Center for Diversity and Inclusion

and will be posted on the CDI website. Updates on the workshop scheduled for future months will be emailed to all the student body and staff.

Franklin Hayward, attendee of the programs, said he continues to attend workshops because he learns something new in each workshop. He said that one of the workshops caught him off guard when he learned that there were six genders. "It's an awesome program," Hayward said. "Take advantage. I am going to any new ones that he's offering. It's worth it, guys."

Hudson also noted that participants can complete the training at their own pace. The workshops

and final essay do not have to be completed in one semester nor in a specific order to obtain the certificate.

The increased involvement of the student body and staff with CDI and other centers at school have been key in creating an inclusive learning environment for Houston's most diverse student body. For the second consecutive year, UHD was awarded national recognition as one of the recipients of the 2020 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award from "INSIGHT Into Diversity" magazine. "Coming to UHD in 2007, that was a big eye-opener for me, and I got more and more involved in these issues," Hudson

said. "A lot of the learning I do is from folks like you who take part in the workshops."

Hudson shared that he did not grow up in a place as diverse as Houston nor experienced diversity while studying at University of North Dakota. His introduction to diversity was working overseas in Korea before working at UHD.

"It's always good to have work to do where you feel that you are making a difference for folks, but it's also good to have work to do that allows you to feel that you are always learning," Hudson said. "If I could've picked any career, I would be a professional student."

Eco-Reps recount CUAS internship experiences

By Indira Zaldivar

Summer 2020 Eco-Reps shared how the internship with UHD Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability (CUAS) introduced them to sustainability, environmental and social justice issues, and ethical business practices. They expressed that while the internship ended, they learned valuable skills to use both in the marketplace and communities as better-equipped citizens.

The Eco-Reps internship is offered to all UHD students from any major every semester to teach students how to live more sustainably and raise awareness on

green initiatives and environmental justice issues. Lisa Morano, Ph.D, director of CUAS, and biology and microbiology professor at UHD alongside Juan Martinez, coordinator of sustainability, met virtually with the Eco-Reps once a week for eight weeks. Christina Sterna, an environmental geoscience student at UHD, expressed the internship urged her a step forward in her career goals.

"I wanted to pursue a degree in environmental geoscience because I wanted to learn more about how our earth functions," Sterna

said. "Taking care of the Earth is taking care of ourselves and future generations. That's where Eco-Reps came in. When I heard about the program, I thought it would be a great way to learn how to live more sustainably and how to talk to others about living more sustainably."

Sterna also joined Support Undergraduate Sustainable Technology and Agricultural Needs (SUSTAIN) Scholars this current fall semester. The SUSTAIN Scholars is another program by CUAS, and it is a year-long program that starts on the

fall and ends with a guaranteed summer internship.

Elwin Jaime, a graduate student pursuing a degree in data analytics, said he gained insight of how his academic discipline serves to help others visualize how climate change puts millions of people at stake.

"Data analysis gives shape to sustainability by providing visuals with quantitative or qualitative information," Jaime said. "As such, we get a better understanding of how and when the people of the world become affected."

Morano expressed enthusi-

asm to have Yessenia Rincon, a fine arts student, in the internship. Morano said that art moves people more strongly than scientific evidence. Rincon believes people should approach sustainability and climate change issues through art.

"Art is a very powerful medium to convey the message of sustainability because it has the power to get to one's emotion and have a connection towards it," Rincon said. "An artwork whether it's a photograph or painting, it speaks more than words. People are more captured and moved through

art rather than factual evidence."

Eco-Reps said the internship enhanced their college experience at UHD and encouraged them to think critically.

"Learning about sustainability definitely improved my college experience by opening my eyes to so many problems we are facing that I would normally not pay attention or was not aware of; such as the connection of housing segregation and sustainability, to big companies spreading misinformation about climate change just for their profit benefits," Rincon said.

Continued on the next page

Eco-Reps recount CUAS experiences (continued)

By Indira Zaldivar

Rincon continued, “It also made me aware of where and who I give my money to when buying clothes, groceries, or cars.”

Sterna said learning about sustainability encouraged her to become a more aware global citizen. “It has helped me to really question everything that we do each day to see how it impacts our local community and our global community,” Sterna said. “What we do in our homes daily can affect people across the globe. The Eco-Reps program has

broadened my mind-set about how the Earth and its people all work together, for the good and bad in one unified system.”

Similarly, Alexay Lopez, a biology major said he has become a better person, critical thinker, and researcher. Lopez’s career goal is to become a medical doctor and explore the environment’s impact on society.

“Learning about sustainability has led me to become a better person... much better informed and prepared to face challenges such as

destroying misinformation and educating people on things like climate change and pollution,” Lopez said. “Sustainability has led me to believe it’s indeed possible to co-exist with the environment all around us.”

Applications for the Eco-Reps program open prior to the beginning of the fall, spring, and summer semesters. “Joining Eco-Reps has helped me practice my presentation, communication, and writing skills; as we had weekly meetings and presented point of

interests or concerns for the topic of the week,” Jaime said.

Summer 2020 Eco-Reps encourage gators to apply and participate in other CUAS programs to become empowered citizens and educate their loved ones about this growing academic discipline.

“I definitely encourage students to become an Eco-Rep. It’s an eye opener experience, and you can definitely make a change in this world now more than ever,” Rincon said. “People need to be more empowered to make

better decisions for our home, their loved ones, and themselves. We need to respect ourselves and not cause any more damage and change our habits for the better.”

“I encourage

everyone to be more environmentally and politically aware as both are intertwined!” Jaime said. “In closing, remember to value education as it is the first step in solving any problem.”



UHD’s sustainability garden and compost center. Image credit: Indira Zaldivar

MSA students recount Eid-al-Adha amid pandemic

By Indira Zaldivar

During the summer, UHD Gators experienced a different Eid-al-Adha celebration. While some mosques closed to avoid the propagation of the novel Coronavirus and social and family gatherings had to be reduced in number or hosted through virtual platforms, Gators remembered the Prophet Ibrahim’s devotion to Allah, and felt a sense of unity amid pandemic.

Eid-al-Adha is the last of two celebrations and is highly anticipated worldwide each year. Mays Al-Maliki, chemistry student and Vice President of External Affairs of UHD’s Muslim Student Association (MSA), said this is the most important celebration of her Islamic faith.

“To me and my family, Eid al-Ad-

ha is the most important festival as it reminds us of Prophet Ibrahim’s story and his willingness to sacrifice his son when ordered by Allah,” Al-Maliki said. “As Prophet Ibrahim was going to sacrifice his son, Allah stopped him and gave him a lamb to sacrifice instead. What Prophet Ibrahim did, showed Muslims that it is extremely important to be devoted to Allah even if it means sacrificing your own son.”

Hadiqa Malik, MSA Vice President of Finance and UHD biology student, said that devotion and obedience are the central message of the celebration.

“This festival is celebrated to remember that Allah does not want the lamb or any animal; it is devotion what Al-

lah wants us to show to him,” Malik said. “It is the intent behind the sacrifice that is important. This day serves as a reminder to us Muslims to not put worldly possessions before our relationship with God, and instead, walk the path that the Prophets before us had taken.”

Another important part of this event is sharing and remembering the necessities among members of the community.

“On this day, we sacrifice animals in order to provide meat for our families, friends, and for the poor,” said Anam Ali, UHD computer science student. “Overall, Eid al-Adha’s message is of compassion, equality, and especially, dedication.”

Hafsa Khalil,

biological and physical science student at UHD, said that typically they would invite friends and family, dress in their best clothing, gather inside their mosque for prayer, and provide food for the less fortunate. Khalil said that her congregation and family were able to rejoice even with restrictions to avoid the propagation of the novel coronavirus.

“Many things had to be restricted to prevent actions that could cause the spread of the virus, and thus the gatherings and prayers were not held in similar fashion of the years before,” Khalil said. “However, throughout the celebration, we were all able to join together, albeit virtually, and celebrate one of the most central holidays of

Islam.”

MSA President Shawn Ijaz, also a computer science major at UHD nor MSA Vice President Fnu Ayesha gathered with family or the congregation because of health precautions. Ayesha also added that some members of her congregation lost jobs and were struggling financially. Despite financial hardships, Ayesha also noticed increased help from the community amid pandemic.

Ijaz, MSA President, said that all events by MSA will be hosted virtually. He encourages UHD students to stay connected with MSA and other students from UHD and from Muslim student associations across Texas. In a collaboration started by the MSA of Lone

Star College University Park, Ijaz coordinated a fundraising event named project Sadaqa, to help refugees and asylum seekers along the Texas-Mexico border. The associations donated money to three organizations: Team Brownsville, Angry Tias and Abuelas of the RGV, and The Opportunity Center.

“We are determined to keep the MSA going with hosting different types of workshops, events and even game nights virtually,” Ijaz said. “We are also working on collaborating with other MSAs in the Houston area including UH Main, Rice, and LSC University Park. We also had a virtual leadership conference with different MSA’s across Texas and even some from out of state.”

Faculty Spotlight: Juan Martinez, UHD Coordinator of Sustainability

By Indira Zaldivar

As the coordinator of sustainability at UHD Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability (CUAS), Juan Martinez raises awareness among the student body and community members about sustainability, green initiatives, and social justice issues through the Eco-Reps, Support Undergraduate Sustainable Technology and Agricultural Needs (SUSTAIN) Scholars, and other programs by CUAS. Martinez's favorite approach to talk about sensitive topics such as environmental injustices, is to make it personal.

"Personalizing the conversation is going to drive the point," Martinez said.

Martinez witnessed environmental injustices at an early age while growing up in Dimmitt, Texas. Like the other cities in the Texas Panhandle, Dimmitt's economy is powered by the meat and dairy farms. While these farms drive the economy, the abundant concentrated animal feeding operations in the area have depleted resources in nearby communities.

"There's so many CAFOs, it's completely depleting the resources in the area, the water especially," Martinez said.

Martinez remembered how the many farms also impregnated a foul smell in the area of a mixture of cow manure, methane, and

other greenhouse emissions.

"There's always a constant smell of cow manure in the area," Martinez said. "You can smell the methane in the area; you can smell the cows from far away."

The foul smell is not only unpleasant but is also responsible for causing people in the community to develop respiratory health conditions. Martinez said that community members are suffering from a social injustice issue.

"They are getting asthma; they are getting sick because of all the dust and manure particles in the air," Martinez said. "It's a spiraling effect of obviously environmental injustices all occurring because of one industry."

His most memorable environmental injustice was regularly seeing how hundreds of cattle were confined to tight pens for their whole lives without being able to roam and graze naturally.

"We're taking these animals instincts away from them," Martinez said. "We're taking what's natural to them away from them."

While Martinez once saw the environment in Dimmitt as normal, he credited higher education for opening his eyes and changing the way he now views his experiences growing up and certain aspects of life. Martinez obtained a bachelor's degree in environmental sus-

tainability from the University of Oklahoma in 2016. In May 2019, he graduated with a master's degree in sustainability studies from Texas State University.

"Higher [education] reshaped my mentality about certain aspects of life and who we are as stewards to the earth, who we are as a species, and how we are supposed to manage all these different industries that we have created."

Fortunately, Martinez has also witnessed positive change throughout the Texas Panhandle. On his way back to Dimmitt from Odessa, after completing a summer internship in 2014, Martinez noticed that many farms implemented wind turbines. He said he felt excited and intrigued to see how this change to renewable energy was implemented in the span of two months. Martinez discovered that years of research proved to farm owners that the change to renewable energy would be beneficial, feasible, and government subsidized.

As for change in Houston, he encourages everyone to take advantage of the many local farmers' markets and to consider the health and environmental benefits of reducing their intake of meat and dairy.

"Be more conscious of what you are consuming and how it is be-

ing brought to your table," Martinez said. "Why pay for a cucumber that comes from Chile when you can produce your own in Houston, or in my hometown, or in your backyard?"

Buying food from local farmers reduces the carbon footprint attached to our food and brings back money to people in the community.

"You are supporting a local farmer, a local person, someone that is your neighbor; a local community member," Martinez said.

Martinez joined UHD on January 12, 2020 and has since served as coordinator of sustainability. He said he encourages students to learn about sustainability through UHD



Juan Martinez accompanied by his dogs Nahla (left) and Sheba (right). Image courtesy of Juan Martinez.

CUAS because of how this growing academic discipline has personally equipped him for the current and future marketplace and as a more engaged citizen.

"We are living in the Great Awakening," Martinez said.

"The marketplace has seen a huge shift in the way people want their stuff sourced. They're seeing a shift in the way people care about where their products are coming from and the quality of the products."

Martinez referenced that many of the leading clothing brands are sourced from developing countries such as Bangladesh. Less strict labor laws in poor countries offer clothing companies an opportunity to profit from cheap labor.

"My degrees helped me understand that there's more to it," Martinez said.

"There's more to where your shirt came from, there's more to who made your shoes, what your shoes are made of; there's more to everything that we have."

Even though he has only been working at UHD since the beginning of this year, Martinez has already witnessed the impact of sustainability in the lives of UHD students. In July, Gator Green team members,

Hector Melchor and Mariann Ribar, won audience gold for sustainable dorm designs in the Gulf Coast Green Conference's Student competition. Melchor and Ribar joined the SUSTAIN Scholars program by UHD CUAS in the fall 2019 semester.

Through the SUSTAIN Scholars program, Melchor and Ribar also completed an internship with GreenNexus, a sustainable architect company in Houston. Martinez said he felt proud of the students and that this award meant he is leading students in the right direction.

Martinez wants to entice students to visit the UHD CUAS website to find additional information on internship opportunities, stipends, and the sustainability minor. Applications for the Eco-Reps program are available before the start of every fall, spring, and summer semesters. The SUSTAIN Scholars program accepts applications every summer, and it is a year-long program starting on the fall and ending with a guaranteed summer internship.

Lastly, Martinez encourages students to contact their advisors regularly to make the most out of their college experience. "We're here to educate students," Martinez said. "In order to boost your resume and your ability to get higher, sustainability is a big standout that companies will take notice of your resume."

Faculty Senate discusses pandemic regulations

By Sheryl Sellers

The Faculty Senate held its first meeting of the fall semester on Tuesday, Sept. 1, virtually, of course. Ron Beebe, Ph.D., UHD Professor of Educational Research and Faculty Senate President for the 2020-2021 welcomed UHD Interim President Antonio D. Tillis, Ph.D., who addressed the Senate.

During his talk, Dr. Tillis reminded Senate members the importance of their role – shared governance. They are entrusted to bring important issues on campus to the fore and create joint resolutions. He looks forward to working with the Senate as the university weathers the current state of our civil society and national democracy. He affirmed that the Senate could effectuate critical discussion, as they are the bearer of knowledge. He also recognized and congratulated them on their ability to pivot.

However, he did caution the Senate to remain flexible, compassionate, and understanding in governing their decisions and policies for the UHD community, and to remember the campus' number one priority – its students.

He stressed that the safety of all is tantamount in opening the campus and limiting the number of individuals on site.

Assuring that it is an honor to serve at this time of crisis and transition, he concluded his talk.

Following Dr. Tillis' remarks, Provost Eric Carl Link, Ph.D. highlighted some of the university's recent accomplishments.

"These are just a tip of the iceberg," he noted.

Among the achievements mentioned was the approval of two new master's programs: A Master in Artificial Intelligence and a Master in Professional Accountancy, adding that two others are in the development stage.

He cited that 83% of students have completed the mandatory online COVID-19 training; and, that UHD is leading the UH System with these results. He praised IT for their ability to put together a program to provide 300-350 computers, internet sticks and webcams to students who need those tools for their online classes.

Summer enrollment was up by 20.5% from summer of 2019. Even though the budget committee was charged with creating a budget anticipating a 5% decrease in fall enrollment, UHD has so far reached a record for fall enrollment of 15,276 students.

The cutoff for student fall registration was slated for 11:59 p.m. on Sept. 1. Due to the three-day closure of the university due to the threat of Hurricane Laura, advising appointments were canceled. Of the 350 students

whose appointments were scheduled for those days, only 60 have been rebooked, as of Sept. 1. Enrollment management would need more time to rebook the remaining students. A decision would need to be made immediately as to whether the faculty would be disrupted if the enrollment deadline were pushed forward one more day. The faculty agreed to allow one more day so that additional students requesting an education at UHD could be accommodated. However, since these students will have missed the beginning of classes, the extra day will not be given to probationary or first time in college (FTIC) students.

Dr. Link moved onto the subject of the Care Act funds. UHD is to receive \$9.4 million in total. Of that amount, \$3.2 million was conferred to students in the form of financial aid. The remaining dollars will be distributed soon. These funds will go towards scholarships to students affected by the pandemic.

Nominations were then open for places on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee at Large. The request was made that the nominations be cognizant of the need for diversity in the Committee and representation of all colleges.

Cynthia Vargas, Specialist, Emergency Management and Fire Safety,

discussed procedures put in place as students, faculty and staff return to campus at Stage 2, Sept. 8, and beyond. Among the procedures, anyone entering the building must wear a face mask, markers have been placed on the floors indicating a 6' distance, and plexiglass barriers have been installed in several locations.

Facilities Management has been and will continue to aggressively clean the restrooms which have been equipped with hands free doors. The north and south stairs in the One Main Building will be one directional, and only four individuals will be allowed in an elevator at one time. Classroom density will be reduced by 30%. Faculty and staff will be given face shields, available in the office of their department, so students who rely on lip reading will have the ability to do so. Sanitizing wipes will be available at the entrance of each classroom for students to wipe down their area before placing their books on desks, and to wipe down again prior to exiting the room.

Contact tracing will be implemented. Everyone entering a UHD building will be required to sign in (with a pen that they will then keep). Thirty individuals have been trained as contact tracers to monitor and assist with any necessary quarantine.

Should an individual arrive on campus and there is an indication that they have the virus, a COVID-19 "fire alarm" will activate emergency management, campus police, University Relations, Provost, and the Registrar. The door to the room where the individual is located will be closed and locked, the individual sent home, and hospital-grade cleaning will ensue. The classroom professor will immediately release this information to the students via Blackboard.

Should an individual not conform to wearing a mask, they will first be requested to comply, if they still refuse to wear a mask they will be asked to leave, and the individual will be reported for non-compliance.

The meeting indicated continued concern over the safety of staff, faculty and students as the campus reopens. Dr. Beebe stated that he, Provost Link and Dr. Tillis have had many conversations on safety matters. They understand that there is a fine line between the Texas Governor, Gregg Abbott's mandates, and the health and safety of everyone on campus.

Per Dr. Beebe, "We are taking the safest path through those two poles."

There was also concern over students, and "people who come in off the street" unable to retain a 6' distance

in department offices, creating a greater risk to faculty. It was maintained that offices would be open with restrictions.

Since COVID-19 appeared in the U.S. in March, UHD has had 68 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 67 of which have since recovered.

Alan Modrow, Student Government Association (SGA) president spoke up. SGA receives many calls from students asking what to do when they cannot reach an individual in certain UHD departments, primarily Financial Aid and the Registrar. The complaints are that these departments are not answering their phones or returning calls and emails and students do not know what to do. Students have timely and compulsory needs to hear from these departments. Modrow and his team have also fielded discussions from students who comment that the syllabi are hard to navigate and understand on Blackboard.

Dr. Duncan applauded Modrow's speaking out, calling his contribution the most valuable of the day.

Student evaluates pandemic regulations, shortcomings

By Sheryl Sellers

The Sept. 1 Faculty Senate meeting articulated the processes that were to be implemented for a safe return to campus at Step 2, Orange and beyond. It is critical to remain diligent in making sure that these processes are visible, implemented and followed. Otherwise, the work that goes into creating the procedures is worthless.

When it comes to protecting the health and safety of 15,276 fall semester registered students and the 1,363 faculty and staff (according

to UHD 2019 Statistics), it is tantamount to be vigilant with the directives. For students, faculty and staff, returning to campus fraught with concern over contracting COVID-19 can be stressful.

Implementing uniform systems is critical when it comes to getting a successful start for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, newcomers just out of high school, or returning scholars. Navigating a new system such as Blackboard — known for having irrelevant, outdated information and inconsistent

class pages — can be exhausting, time consuming, and frustrating.

Case in point, I recently visited the university to deliver documents and distribute The Dateline. As expected, I signed in at the entrance near the parking office. Unexpectedly, there were not pens for each student to keep, as announced at the Faculty Senate. I had to suggest that the officer sanitize the two lone pens before I signed in with one that the previous student also signed in with. While this was happening, a

masked woman walked in, and asked to use the restroom. She did not sign-in, nor was she asked to sign in, but instead, she was immediately directed to the ladies' room.

Now, maybe the officer knew the woman. I certainly do not know; however, it did not appear so, as she said, "I just want to use the restroom." And clearly, she needed direction to it.

My next stop was floor three of One Main Building. I was gratified to find that there was a plexiglass partition between myself and the student at the Information Desk, who promptly found a staff member to take the papers from me

and deliver them to the correct office.

At floor two, I met with The Dateline editor, Jaida Doll, to retrieve and distribute the newest issue. I took the stairs. It was not until I was on floor two, that I realized the door was marked as "Up Only" after I had descended from that stairwell. Further investigation showed that the door on floor three was

open, and the sign denoting "Up Only" was not visible.

On my rounds to place The Dateline on floor three, I passed the vending machines. I had heard that these machines would include quick lunch items such as sandwiches and salads.

Continued on the next page



Some vending machines are stocked with disposable masks. Image credit: Jaida Doll

SGA fills the silence of Financial Aid communication

By Sheryl Sellers

During the Sept. 1 Faculty Senate meeting, Student Government Association (SGA) President, Alan Modrow, apprised Faculty Senators of the conversations SGA has with worried students who are unable to connect with anyone at several UHD departments.

The Dateline interviewed Modrow to learn more.

The majority of the noncommunication reported to Modrow lies within the departments of Financial Aid and the Registrar. With phones not answered, emails and voicemails not returned, and enduring the phone being hung up on them, these current and prospective students reached out to their

student government.

According to Modrow's Instagram account, @mr.uhd, student questions ranged from "How do I access Blackboard?" to "I can't get a response from Financial Aid."

Students are reaching out to SGA via social media, mainly Facebook and Instagram, as well as emails to Modrow in response to his presidential newsletter. He leads them in the best direction that he is aware of in each department.

According to Modrow, a pitfall at UHD lies in customer service. Modrow believes this is one reason that UHD loses students, as well as top administrative professionals. Stu-

dents simply cannot get the information they need to get a successful start.

He likens an attempt to connect with one of these two departments "like playing Russian Roulette" as to who will be, if anyone, on the other end of the communication. He wants to connect them with an individual who will be able to provide students with the information they need.

Modrow states that some of the issues could be linked to the lack of internal communication.

For instance, some students are told by Financial Aid to go to the Registrar's office with their questions, and the Registrar's office

sends them to Student Affairs. Student Affairs does not have the requested information, so the student is sent back to Financial Aid.

Not only are the departments not provided with timely information, but neither are students. Late on Sept. 1 Modrow made some calls to learn how delinquent fees are gauged.

Because they had not heard back from Financial Aid, students were worried that they would incur the fee for late payment. He was told that they need not be concerned because late fees are not assessed until the end of the semester. That would be good information to give to students who are waiting on answers

from Financial Aid.

As recently as Friday, Aug. 29, five students in a particular class reached out to Modrow. Classes began on Aug. 24, but they still had not heard from their professor, messages sent to him/her were not returned, and the class Blackboard site was not open.

"I told them that when this happens, they should contact the department chair, followed by the Dean, and finally the Provost, if any of the former do not respond."

If an administrative office is non-communicative, he suggested they email the specific person and copy the Vice President or Dean that oversees that depart-

ment.

This lack of communication particularly from Financial Aid and the Registrar is not a new problem, but one that has been exacerbated by COVID-19.

Though the many departments of UHD often lack the communication that is necessary to students and faculty, Modrow explains that SGA is trying to combat this gap in communication. We do what we can," says Modrow of his team.

Student evaluates pandemic regulations (continued)

By Sheryl Sellers

Most of these, along with the beverage machines, were either empty or on the verge of being empty.

I did not see any vending machines that provided masks, as was discussed in the Senate meeting, but Doll reports that she did find one on an upper floor. However, the main entrance would seem like the most appropriate location.

Other than COVID-19 precautions, the Sept. 1 Faculty Senate Meeting also addressed Blackboard and Financial Aid frustrations. Some of these frustrations are the result of a lack sufficient communication among faculty students and staff.

Apparently the UHD Facebook group has become a resourceful path for desperate students to receive answers to their queries. Calls, emails, and other means of contact are often left unanswered, while Facebook and Instagram heeded responses. Where is UHD's customer service to its number one priority - its students?

Now, I am not so naïve as to think it is possible to have 369 full-time faculty and 361 part-time faculty (according to 2019 UHD Data) to not only have their ducks in a row but have their ducks quacking the same tune. But I do think that faculty could peek at their Blackboard data and consider deleting the

previous semester's announcements, along with other outdated information. It would be helpful to implement training to make the technological navigation both simple for its students and as streamlined and consistent as possible.

I will also bring attention to similar matters, ones that I can shrug off from experience. Others, maybe not so much.

Sometimes a chosen career, for instance academia, may take an unexpected turn, as a student who prefers a face-to-face class but is relegated to online. Both the instructor and student may become frustrated. However, I do not believe it is ever correct to berate stu-

dents when they ask a question. Where is the respect and civility?

When the written words are capitalized and followed by exclamation marks, I see that as yelling. An instructor or professor unwilling to give a student who inadvertently strays from the syllabus, the benefit of the doubt is appalling. It could be that the person is having a bad day. I get that. Take a breath and then answer. Injecting fear into a student is not the avenue for future student success, neither is it a comfortable setting for them to ask other questions.

My hope is that faculty will think about the student before insisting that

they turn their camera on in a Zoom class. There there be a baby home, or toddlers interrupting a single mom or dad. I hope that they will, and the student will take

a breather before spouting criticism. I hope that Blackboard will be navigable for all classes. I also hope that we will all stay safe and healthy, eventually being able

to walk the halls and greet one another at our educational home: The University of Houston-Downtown.



Although water fountains have been turned off, students can still refill their water bottles at designated stations around campus. Image credit: Jaida Doll



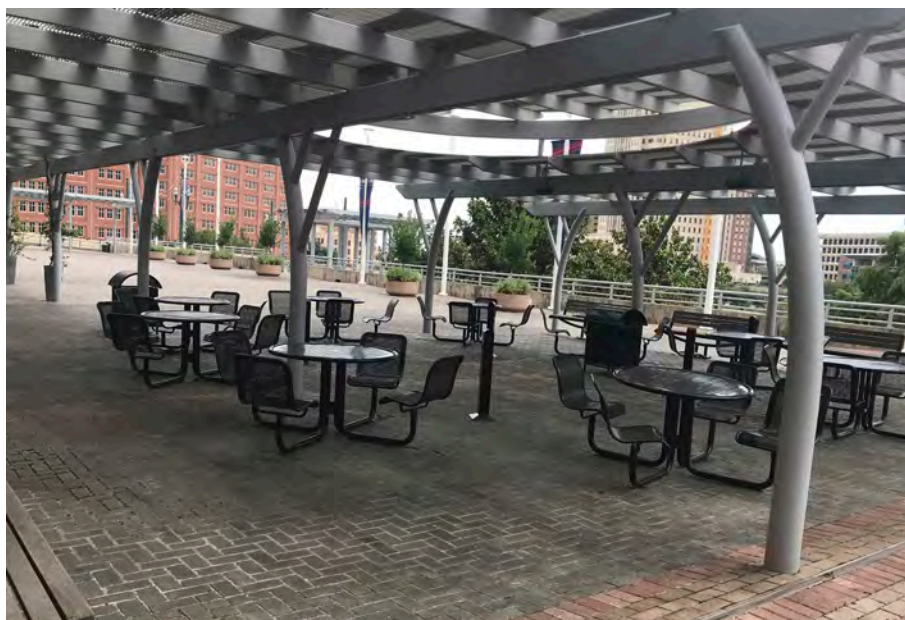
Most vending machines remain empty, despite Faculty Senate's conversations to fill these with snacks and grab-and-go lunch items. Image credit: Sheryl Sellers



Signs encouraging students to mask up and social distance are posted around campus. Image credit: Sheryl Sellers

Campus during COVID-19

Image credits: Jaida Doll



Cafeteria (left) and South Deck (right), both deserted, despite campus re-opening on Sept. 8.



Sanitizing stations positioned at the entrance of every elevator on each floor of the Academic Building.



Some study spots have been restricted to enforce social distancing and encourage working from home.

Gator Support

By Keven Balderas

The on-campus bookstore is much more than just a bookstore.

For some students, it may very well be the most visible champion of school pride, where t-shirts and sweatshirts with the university's logo are always unabashedly available.

For others, it may represent the brightest lighthouse when memory fails, which, by offer-

ing scantrons and stationary, regularly spares many students the awkwardness of asking their classmates, right before a test, whether they have any extra.

The official bookstore of UHD is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on Friday, 9a.m. to 1p.m.

Curbside pick-up services have been suspended for the time being, now that UHD has advanced to Step 2 - Orange of the

COVID-19 Response Step Matrix.

Measures to counter the spread of COVID-19 include signage on the floors and in the aisles to maintain social distancing, and hand sanitizer dispensers located throughout campus. Meanwhile, the bookstore is allowing only 50% capacity, that is to say, no more than 48 people inside at any given time.

Should students wish not to

Campus bookstore remains open amid COVID-19 pandemic

enter the bookstore, they may order their items online and pick up at the window located on the second floor of the One Main Building and near the Main Street elevators.

Should students have any questions or issues, they may email the bookstore at uhd-bookstore@uhd.edu. Sue Pahi manages

the bookstore, and she may be reached at 2161mgr@follett.com. Mary Alice Torres, Director of University of Business Services, is likewise available to assist students, reachable at torresm@uhd.edu.

Additionally, "students that have Veteran Affairs funds, Workforce Solutions funds, and particular

scholarship funds can use their aid to pay for their online orders," Ms. Torres told The Dateline.

"This COVID virus is a great example about the advantages for students to purchase digital course materials. It now only takes minutes to receive the digital content after the initial purchase."

Texas Attorney General appeals Harris County's attempt to send applications for mail-in voting

By Priscila Batres

On Sept. 15, the Texas Supreme Court, for a second time, blocked Harris County Clerk Chris Hollins from sending mail-in ballot applications to over 2 million registered voters in Harris County. This court decision favors Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton who recently appealed a lower court's decision in favor of Hollins.

This ongoing fight between Paxton and Hollins started when Paxton first issued a lawsuit against Harris County on Aug. 31. While state District Court Judge, R.K. Sandill allowed Hollins to send all registered voters mail-in applications on Sept. 11, Paxton quickly filed the

appeal that resulted in the recent Supreme Court's ruling.

Sandill explained in his ruling that Hollins did not overstep.

"The Legislature has spoken at length on the mechanisms for mail-in voting. There are no fewer than 42 Election Code provisions on the subject," Sandill wrote. "In those provisions, the Legislature has made clear that in order to vote by mail a voter first 'must make an application for an early voting ballot.' But, as to how the voter is to obtain the application, the Election Code is silent."

This comes at a time when mail-in ballots have been a

large topic of debate and controversy. However, health experts say mail-in voting is the most reasonable and safer option to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In May, more than 800 health experts called on Congress to fund mail-in voting.

"In order to ensure the integrity of the electoral process and protect the public health at the same time, it is incumbent on our leaders to prepare for a Presidential election by mail, in which ballots are sent to all registered voters, to allow them to vote from home and ensure their health and safety in the event of a new outbreak of SARS-CoV-2," the public

health experts wrote.

Texas Republicans have opposed mail-in ballots, but this is the first time they have done something to prevent this action from happening. Paxton and the secretary of state's office argue that sending mail-in ballots in Harris county is



"an abuse of voter rights and impede the ability of persons who need to vote by mail and clogging up the

vote by mail infrastructure." Despite this argument, there is not a law in Texas that prevents elected officials from sending mail ballots to register voters, so Hollins said he does not plan to back down.

Harris county has laid out a plan to mail applications

to vote by mail and instructions that would answer any confusion that voters might have. County Clerk Hollins mentioned that each ballot

would have "detailed guidance to inform voters that may not qualify to vote by mail." Harris coun-

ty also plans to hire temporary workers who would focus on sorting out the mail-in vote process and purchasing much-needed equipment to sort ballots.

Despite Harris county efforts to send their registered voters' applications for mail-in ballots, this lawsuit will be an obstacle with an unclear resolution. The upcoming general election comes at a time of uncertainty due to the significant health crisis. Time is running out before the election, but updates in how this lawsuit will end for Harris County are expected to surface in the upcoming weeks.

Officer shoots Jacob Blake as children watched

By Jazzmin Jones

In Kenosha, Wisconsin on Aug. 23, Jacob Blake was shot seven times by police officer, Rusten Sheskey. Blake was shot from behind, as three of his small children watched from the car. Blake is currently in the hospital paralyzed from the waist down, while three of the involved officers, including Sheskey, were placed on leave.

Jacob Blake is the father of six children and was training to be a mechanic. The justice department has opened a civil rights investigation into the

shooting. In July, a warrant was issued for Blake's arrest on third-degree sexual assault charges, criminal trespass, and disorderly conduct.

According to Wisconsin state police, officers responded to a 911 call from the woman who had initially filed charges against Blake. Upon arrival, police officials said Blake was combative, stating that "tasers had been deployed twice to subdue Jacob Blake, with no success." According to the police report, Blake admitted to having a knife,

which was later found under his car's seat. After failing to detain Jacob Blake, officer Sheskey fired his gun at the suspect.

Blake was shot seven times, facing his vehicle with his three small children inside.

Ben Crump, the Blake family lawyer, denied that Blake had a knife at the time of the shooting. He also denies that Blake was trespassing, but instead breaking up a fight between two women when police arrived. The shooting was video recorded on a cell phone show-

ing that Blake was trying to get into his car before being shot.

The news of the shooting sparked outrage in Kenosha. Protests erupted on the streets with demonstrators expressing their anger and sadness late into the night. In the first nights after the shooting, buildings, and cars were set on fire. Officers responded in riot gear with tear gas and rubber bullets. The protests inspired the Milwaukee Bucks NBA team to sit out for a playoff game. The team called for justice for Jacob

Blake. This brave act caused a domino effect in players fed up with police brutality and systematic racism. Members of the NBA, WNBA, MLB, and MLS teams refused to play their scheduled games in solidarity of the Bucks.

On Aug. 25, a 17-year-old boy shot three protestors in Kenosha, killing two with an assault rifle. He was arrested at his home in Illinois and charged with three counts of intentional homicide. The boy claimed to be with a group protecting the

remaining businesses in Kenosha from violent protestors who sought to destroy property.

On Sept. 1, President Donald Trump visited the damaged buildings in Kenosha. He did not see the Blake family. Trump met with law enforcement in Kenosha and held a press conference. The president called for the "cracking down" on violent demonstrations. He described the shooting as the result of a few "bad apples."

Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest-serving leader, resigns

By Riyasa Shrestha

The Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, resigned from his position on Aug. 28 due to his declining health conditions. He suffers from an intestinal condition called ulcerative colitis. The 65-year-old leader was the longest serving Japanese prime minister in history.

“Now that I am not able to fulfill the mandate from the people with confidence, I have decided that I should no longer occupy the position of the prime minister,” Abe said at the press conference in Tokyo where he officially announced his resignation.

“I would like to sincerely apologize to the people of Japan for leaving my post with one year left in my term of office, and

amid the Coronavirus woes, while various policies are still in the process of being implemented,” he said, bowing deeply.”

Abe has achieved major success since he took over as the prime minister in 2012. He became the dominant force in Japanese politics and benefitted his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). LDP controls both houses in parliament, with a majority in the lower House of Representatives. Abe said he will remain in office until his successor is chosen.

Over the years as prime minister, Abe has overseen Japan's recovery from an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear disaster. He restored the economy and created a positive relationship with Presi-

dent Trump. He was the first world leader to make it to Trump Tower. During his conference, he cited his accomplishments such as strengthening Japan's defense, reducing unemployment, and reaching free-trade agreements with the European Union and Asian nations. He also helped secure the 2020 Summer Olympics for Tokyo, which has since been postponed due to the pandemic. Abe's “Abenomics” revival plan brought economic prosperity in Japan.

“Japan is no longer the Japan of the past,” Abe said. “We have succeeded in completely breaking through the ‘wall of resignation’.”

Even though the “Abenomics” boosted the country's economy, the public



Shinzo Abe announcing his resignation. Image courtesy of CNN.

is largely dissatisfied with Abe's way of handling of COVID-19. His disapproval ratings have risen to the highest level since the onset of the pandemic.

Kristi Govella, an assistant professor of Asian studies at the

University of Hawaii at Manoa praised Abe's leadership.

“I think Abe's biggest legacy for his successor is that he managed to stay in power in Japan longer than any other prime minister,” Govella said. “He man-

aged to really evaluate Japan's profile on the international stage and make substantial changes in policy across a number of issue areas, and in Japan that is something we have not seen very often.”

COVID-19 and the race for a vaccine

By Priscila Batres

Finding a vaccine for the COVID-19 pandemic comes with many questions and concerns, but amid uncertainty and confusion, there are a few things that we know.

There are over 150 vaccines that are in development worldwide; some have been in trials since March. Once a safe vaccine becomes available, the objective is to distribute over 300 million doses by January of 2021. The World Health Organization (WHO) plans to have two billion doses ready by the end of

next year. So far, there have been both positive and negative results from some of the vaccine trials.

On Sept. 9, the University of Oxford, one of the top developers in the race for the COVID-19 vaccine, paused phase three of their vaccine trial because one participant fell ill. Oxford has not released details on the type of illness the participant has but said the patient is expected to make a full recovery.

“We cannot disclose medical information about the illness for reasons of participant confiden-

tiality,” said Oxford researcher. “We are committed to the safety of our participants and the highest standards of conduct in our studies and will continue to monitor safety closely.”

Oxford had planned to enroll over 30,000 participants by the end of Aug. On a positive note, some vaccine trials have seen positive results like Moderna Therapeutics, a biotech company from Massachusetts. If successful, this would be the first vaccine that uses mRNA to fight a disease.

National

Geographic reported Moderna's method in developing this vaccine consists of “injecting snippets of a virus genetic material, in this case, mRNA into human cells.” The virus genetic material then creates viral proteins in human cells that train the immune system to recognize the presence of the new coronavirus. This method is now in phase three. If its positive results persist, this biotech company plans to distribute 500 million doses at the start of 2021.

Despite these trials, it is uncertain

when a successful vaccine will come out. However, Anthony Fauci, Ph.D. Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told CBS, that despite the setbacks, advances in trials pose hope by the end of this year.

“There would likely be an answer by the end of this year around November or December,” Fauci said. “Seeing results in October is possible, but unlikely.”

While the public awaits the vaccine to become available, health experts continue to recommend that

people follow CDC guidelines: keep social distancing, avoid large social gatherings, and wear a face mask in public places. As we approach the flu season, it is also vital for people to recognize the difference between allergies, the flu, a cold, and COVID-19 since they share similar symptoms. In the upcoming months, developers will release updates regarding the effectiveness of the vaccine trials.

Jeanette Epps, first Black woman to live on the ISS

By Jazzmin Jones

Jeanette Epps, Ph.D., will be the first black woman to live on the International Space Station (ISS). Along with NASA astronauts, Sunita Williams and Josh Cassada, she will embark on Boeing's Starliner-1 headed to the orbiting space lab for a six-month stay. While there have been over a dozen Black Americans that have traveled to space, none have been selected for long-term research missions aboard the ISS.

Epps received her BA in physics at

LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York in 1992. She then went on to earn her MA in science in 1994, as well as her Ph.D. in aerospace engineering in 2000 from the University of Maryland, College Park. During this time, she worked as a NASA graduate student research fellow, publishing multiple articles on her research. After being recruited by the CIA, Epps spent seven years as a technical intelligence officer. In 2009, she was selected for the NASA astronaut class.

In 2018, Epps was chosen to go to the ISS via a Russian spacecraft. She was removed from the mission six months before the scheduled launch date. There was no explanation, according to Epps, who publicly expressed her confusion. NASA never released a public statement about the removal of Epps from the mission. Astronauts are typically removed from missions for health or family issues; however, neither of which applied to Epps.

The Starliner-

er-1 is expected to be the first fully operational flight of Boeing's new spacecraft. There are still quite a few tests the craft will need to complete before Epps's mission can get final approval. Starliner must successfully finish an unmanned orbital flight test and a manned flight to the ISS. The new spacecraft is the first of NASA's commercial crew program.

With the help of American Aerospace Industries, commercial flights to and from the space station will significantly

improve the research capabilities for long-term space travel. The goal is to allow

NASA to focus on deep-space missions and rockets.

If both tests prove the vehicle is operational, then Epps will become the first Black woman to live on the ISS for an

extended period. The launch is currently scheduled to take place in 2021.



Jeanette Epps. Image courtesy of NASA

Detroit honors more than 1,500 victims of COVID-19 with drive-through memorial

By Lauren Anderson

A total of 15 processions were led on Aug. 31 in Belle Isle Park in Detroit to honor those lost to COVID-19. Over 900 large photos were displayed in a temporary drive-thru for the COVID-19 memorial until Sept. 2. The park was closed for the day, to prioritize access for family members who desire to commemorate their loved ones.

Meanwhile, government officials throughout the U.S. make plans to reopen schools, businesses, and sports arenas. As states allow students to go back to school, restaurants allow dine-in customers, and fans fill college stadiums, the death toll continues to rise

worldwide. More than 800,000 people have died from the virus, and 27 million people have contracted it. Experts say that these numbers are understated because of limited testing and the inability to detect many mild cases.

The pictures featured during the memorial illustrated victims of COVID-19 during their happy times. Some included photos were Darrin Adams at his college graduation, Daniel Aldape catching a fish, and Veronica Davis crossing the finish line in a race.

Detroit's Director of Arts and Culture, Rochelle Riley, explained the origin of the local officials' idea to use

the large photos in the memorial.

"We had the idea to use photos because I know that so many people not only didn't get to say goodbye to their loved ones, but didn't get to see them sometimes for weeks while they were sick in hospitals or being quarantined, and I wanted them to have one last look," Riley said.

Mayor Mike Duggan named Aug. 31, "Detroit Memorial Day" to pay tribute to the victims because many were unable to host funerals for their loved ones due to the restrictions implemented to prevent the spread of the virus.

Duggan said that the idea had

come from Cher Coner, whose mom died of sepsis in the spring. Duggan also said that he and his family could not have a funeral for his dad, who passed away in March.

"You don't realize what an important part that is in

the grieving process until you go through it," Duggan said.

The state of Michigan was hit hard by the virus with 113,000 cases and around 6,000 deaths.

"I think that people are starting to realize there have got to be ways for us

to deal with this than to make it a political battle," Riley said. "COVID-19 is not a political battle, it's not a political story. It's a medical tragedy, and we have to start taking it that way."



A procession of vehicles driving past the pictures of the Detroit COVID-19 victims on Aug. 31, 2020. Image courtesy of Carlos Osorio, AP.

Harris County's voter expansion explained

By Jazzmin Jones

The Harris County Commissioners Court approved a voter accessibility plan requested by Chris Hollins for the upcoming presidential election and an additional \$17.1 million dollars to fund the plan. This comes after Governor Abbot's decision to extend early voting by one week.

This election is expected to have one of the highest voter turnouts in recent years. The goal is to implement COVID-19 safety measures. There will be 12,000 poll workers hired this fall. In addition, Harris County will open 120 locations for early voting, a significant increase from the 46 areas seen in 2016. There will be 808

voter sites on Election Day and ten drive-through polling stations for those that cannot enter traditional polling locations due to health issues.

The project's additional \$17.1 million is largely funded by the CARES Act and was approved by a 3-2 vote. Last month, Harris County Clerk, Chris Hollins, announced that the county would send out mail-in voting applications to all 2.4 million registered voters. On Sept. 2, the Texas Supreme Court temporarily blocked Harris County's attempt due to a lawsuit opened by Attorney General, Ken Paxton. However, state District Court Judge R.K. Sandill's ruling on Sept. 11, allows

Hollins to mail application to vote by mail to all registered voters in Harris County.

The only citizens eligible to vote by mail in Texas are those who are 65 and older, are disabled, are incarcerated and eligible but otherwise eligible to vote, and are traveling out of the county during the voting period. The Texas Supreme Court has ruled that a lack of immunity to COVID-19 is not a qualifying disability to vote by mail. In a quote to KPRC, Hollins highlights the wording of the ruling.

"The lack of immunity to COVID-19 can be considered as a factor in your health decision, it just can't be the only factor," Hol-

lins said. "So, if you are perfectly healthy, then you don't qualify. But any number of other conditions -- breathing conditions, asthma, arthritis, lung disease, heart conditions, diabetes, obesity, hypertension, smoking physical conditions... You can consider these in your condition, and it's your decision to make."

Given Judge Sandill's decision, Hollins said he still plans to proactively send mail-in voting applications to all voters and educate voters about who can qualify to vote by mail.

"Our office's top priority is to protect the right to vote and, during the time of COVID-19,

to ensure that Harris County voters can cast their ballots safely," Hollins said. "Since voting by mail is the safest way to vote, it is my duty to educate voters on who qualifies to vote by mail and make it convenient for qualified voters to apply."

As a result of the expanded voting plan, NRG stadium will be a voting location for early voting and Election Day. Parking will be free, and all Harris County registered voters are invited to cast a ballot. Last week the NBA and Houston Rockets announced that the Toyota Center would be a voting location for the upcoming presidential Election. This move comes after the NBA

players' strike over the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The Toyota Center will be open from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. seven days a week during early voting and Election Day.

"Our elections this November will be historic - not only because we are electing the President of the United States, but also because we must meet the challenge as a community to ensure that every Harris County voter can cast their vote safely," Hollins said. "I'm thrilled that Toyota Center, home to our beloved Houston Rockets, will be a voting center during the Early Voting Period and on Election Day."

Trump pardons suffragist, Susan B. Anthony

By Salvador Hernandez

On Aug. 17, President Trump signed an Executive Grant of Clemency pardoning the suffragette leader, Susan B. Anthony. This event came as a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote.

The night prior to the signing, there was speculation of who President Trump would pardon because of a statement he made. Some said it would be Julian Assange while others, Edward Snowden. However, some view the choice

to pardon Susan B. Anthony as a symbol that Anthony's stand against the status quo was justified.

In a piece published by The New York Times, President Trump highlighted the inefficiency of previous administrations to acknowledge that government was wrong in their convictions of an individual.

"She was never pardoned," Trump said. "Did you know that? What took so long?"

Susan B. Anthony is a historical figure who fought for women's suffrage and a person revered in modern day America. She was a figure

that represented the rights of the individual and strived to keep the United States accountable to the words of "justice for all."

Even though the pardon might not result in immediate social impact, critics view Trump's decision as an attempt to appeal to the women vote for the next upcoming election. Even the National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House rejected Trump's pardon. President and CEO of the museum, Deborah L. Hughes also disagreed with Trump's decision.

"If one wants to honor Susan B.

Anthony today, a clear stance against any form of voter suppression would be welcome as well as advocating for human rights for all," Hughes said.

This will mark

the 44th pardon that the president has given among such names as the first African American boxing champion, Jack Johnson, and criminal justice reform activist, Alice Marie Johnson.

In the late 1970's to early 1980's, the United States Mint started to issue Susan B. Anthony dollar coins to commemorate her stand for women's suffrage.



Suffragist Susan B. Anthony. Image courtesy of the National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House

QAnon conspiracy group gains traction in U.S.

By Jazzmin Jones

QAnon is a group of extreme conspiracy theorists who believe President Trump is a hero sent to save America from the “deep state.” This new sub-theory resembles the “Pizzagate” conspiracy that also emerged prior to a presidential election in 2016.

According to one of the many QAnon Facebook groups, the “deep state” is comprised of “democratic politicians and Hollywood celebrities involved in a massive sex trafficking cabal.” The goal for members of the “deep state” is to capture children and harvest their blood to extend their own lives. QAnon supporters believe that Trump will expose this democratic-driven cabal and stop them from eating our children.

Once considered a fringe phenomenon, QAnon has gained a massive following. Due to the pandemic, Americans are spending more time engaged in online research and socialization. The exact number of followers is unknown, but Facebook cites thousands of QAnon Facebook groups with millions of members. The group accuses people like Hillary Clinton, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, and Barack Obama of running illegal trafficking rings from their private properties and businesses.

QAnon began as a single account in 2017 on a 4Chan message board, guided by an alleged top-ranking military official with access to secret government files, which explain

how the democratic cabal has taken over the U.S. government. The account is continuously circulating among sites of the deep web, but the original user’s identity is unknown.

The user randomly releases cryptic messages for its supporters to decode on their various discussion boards and social media groups. There are many sub-theories associated with this group, but the leading theory is that Donald Trump was recruited to break up the child-trafficking crime ring.

Supporters claim that Donald Trump sends subliminal messages through his tweets and speeches using symbolisms like the number 17, which some say is code for Q for being the 17th

number in the alphabet. Others believe Trump intentionally wears specific colors to indicate different meanings. There is no evidence that Trump knows he is sending these messages, however, he has stated that QAnon followers are “people that love our country.”

The pro-Trump viral delusion has entered the mainstream social media by hijacking hashtags like #savethechildren. Save the Children is a century-old organization largely supported by Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda Gates, committed to stopping child trafficking. Recently QAnon supporters have begun to organize rallies through Facebook and Instagram.

In over 100 cities, people were holding signs that

read, “Hillary Clinton is Satan.” There were “Q” posters and just plain pizza slices, a reference to “Pizzagate.” In 2016, Pizzagate was the first QAnon sub-theory to make rounds in mainstream media. The theory accuses Hillary Clinton and Bill Gates of running a sex trafficking ring hidden under the guise of a pizza parlor.

A documentary was released in Aug. titled “Plandemic: Indoctrination.” The documentary is divided into two separate videos explaining how the current COVID-19 pandemic is nothing more than a planned hoax. The film contains false information about the virus and its origins. The feature was so controversial that Facebook blocked its

users from sharing the link in order to combat dangerous misinformation and various conspiracy theories from circulating online. According to the “Plandemic” documentary, the virus was released into the democratic cabal to instill fear into Americans.

Not all QAnon are Trump supporters. Numerous self-proclaimed Democrats believe the government is behind the COVID-19 pandemic. Followers urge non-believers to do a “deep dive” into some of their claims and see what comes up. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have all begun to crack down on QAnon accounts, stating that they violated harassment guidelines.

Trump’s irresponsible response to the pandemic

By Aansa Usmani

Since the beginning of this pandemic, President Donald Trump has consistently undermined the gravity of the COVID-19 situation, leading to over two-hundred thousand deaths and counting. In November, he — among other legislative officials — will be challenged at the ballot box. Will it be a continuation of his administrative ruling or an end to the Trump era?

Every day, the news continues to report daily averages of COVID-19 cases; in some areas, cases

are spiking, especially within rural and college towns. In others, former hotspots such as New York, are starting to witness a reduction in cases, proving the success of social distancing measures in preventing further spread.

However, inconsistent messaging and disregard for these safety measures show how deep the polarization has become within the country. Wearing masks and remaining in lockdown are viewed as “controlling measures” from the right-wing,

believing that the government is finding new ways to control one’s life and eradicate their freedom of speech.

A Trump-rally goer commented on how this pandemic is fabricated on CNN.

“There’s no COVID,” he said. “It’s a fake pandemic created to destroy the United States of America.” Throughout this pandemic, comments like these continue to rise, especially among those within the President’s base.

Trump and his administrative

officials have not condoned this type of rhetoric, leading to further misinformation and politicizing the virus. Although Trump has tweeted — at least once — about wearing a mask, his rallies and the Republican National Convention (RNC) do not mandate mask-wearing. His comments to Bob Woodward about undermining the virus show that despite knowing how deadly and widespread this virus could be, he chose not to do anything in fear of stoking panic and an economic crashing.

Trump knew how deadly COVID-19 could be, and he could have acted prior. He had intelligence briefing inform him two weeks before the public knew its potential danger. He has access to the best experts, officials, and briefings in the world. His response to this pandemic shows a lack of leadership, courage, and compassion for his fellow countrymen.

It continues to alarm the American people how his blatant ignorance of virus precautions has

led to over 200,000 deaths and counting. Individuals who were once leading healthy lives, are now on ventilators, fighting for their lives from this disease.

Gatherings and get-togethers of over ten people have become a thing of the past. Occasions such as graduations, weddings, and other milestone events are being put on hold or canceled due to this crisis.

Continued on the next page

Trump's irresponsible response (continued)

By Aansa Usmani

This type of liveli- hood would not have occurred if there were consistent messag- ing and precautions implemented.

Irresponsi- ble governmental officials like Texas' Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, believe in "sacrificing their lives for the sake of the economy" while

re-opening their states too soon, leading to further transmission and growing cases. Their actions to bol- ster local economies have cost American lives and contribute to overwhelmed hospi- tals and healthcare workers. It is selfish to put the economic needs ahead of others' lives. How many

more lives will it cost before governmental accountability and responsibility occur?

It is an elec- tion year, and pres- idential responses to crises and issues speak volumes. This pandemic has been the biggest test for Trump and adminis- tration to date. The election may be less

than two months away, yet his actions and tweets speak volumes. They have spoken volumes for years, but at a time when the country needs a uniting, reas- suring voice, there is not one.

decide wheth- er there will be four more years of Trump rule, or if a change is

truly needed within America's leadership. This election is more important than ever. Amid a confusing pandemic climate, straining racial tensions, and other significant issues, it is important to partic- ipate civically—and responsibly.

If voting in-person seems

uncomfortable or risky, register to vote- by-mail, and do so as soon as possible; every voice matters, and everyone's vote counts.

For more information about voting by mail, refer to Vote.org.

Issues plaguing Kamala Harris as Biden's VP pick

By Anthony Raul Ramirez

Once former Vice President Joe Biden announced Senator Kamala Harris as his VP pick, criticism arrived from both the left and the right wing of the political spectrum. Some of the left wing believed that Harris has a shady history in politics that veers away from issues they believe in, while the right wing thought Joe Biden had handed President Donald Trump a second term on a silver platter.

Harris has received much criti- cism throughout her political career. The most notable example of this criticism, came at the Democratic presidential debate in Detroit last year from U.S. Representative Tulsi Gabbard. The claim by Gabbard explained that Harris placed 1,560 inmates in jail for marijuana offenses as California Attorney General. PolitiFact announced that according to California Department of Corrections and Offenses the actual

number was over 1,800. The website does point out that the yearly number of marijuana-related offenses went down from 817 to 137 after her first year as AG.

Several other claims against Harris ensued, including that Harris withheld the use of DNA testing that could get an inmate off death row and that prison sen- tences were extended under her authority in order to use the inmates as cheap la- bor during California fires. However, expla- nations came down to Harris having other people in charge of those cases.

Many of Harris' words seem to contradict. She said she supported US Representative Alexandria Oca- sio-Cortez's plan, which involved the Green New Deal but voted "present" when it came to the Senate floor. Speaking of green, Harris stated in an interview with The Breakfast Club that she would smoke marijuana in college,

while listening to ear- ly Tupac and Snoop Dogg albums. Ac- cording to timelines, this is impossible. Harris graduated from UC Hastings College of Law in 1989, but at the beginning of his rap career, Snoop Dogg was featured on "Deep Cover" by Dr. Dre, a solo single that was released in 1992. Tupac was a backup dancer for Digital Underground in 1990 and did not release an album until 1992.

In June, she tweeted for people to donate to the Minne- sota Freedom Fund (MFF) during the protests regarding the death of George Floyd. MFF released several people regard- less of how violent their crimes were. A sum of \$75,000 released Jaleel Stall- ings, charged with attempted murder; \$100,000 released Darnika Floyd, charged with sec- ond-degree murder; \$350,000 released Christopher Boswell, convicted rapist charged with kid- napping and sexual

assault. They also re- leased Lionel Timms, charged with assault. He was then immedi- ately placed back in jail for another assault case.

MFF Board President Greg Lewin stated in an inter- view with a local Fox station in Minneap- olis, "I often do not even look at a charge specific[ally] when I bail someone out. I'll see it after paying the bail because it's not the point."

When asked about lowering the voting age to 16 during the 2019 pres- idential campaign, Harris claimed to be "interested in having that conversation." However, during a keynote address as AG years prior, Harris called the 18 to 24 age group "stu- pid" and that "That is why we put them in dormitories... They make really bad decisions." A spokes- person questioned this inconsistency, also mentioning that it was just a joke.

This incon- sistency brings into

question how much of what Harris says is legitimate. During a segment on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert after Biden's decision announce- ment, Colbert brought up that Harris was very much against Biden during the de- bates, to which Harris replied, "It was a de- bate" multiple times and began laughing. Colbert asked, "So you don't mean it?" and Harris continued to merely call it a debate.

During the debate, she said: "When Vice President Joe Biden was in the United States Senate working with segre- gationists to oppose bussing. Which was the vehicle by which we would integrate America's public schools. Had I been in the United States Senate at that time, I would've been com- pletely on the other side of the aisle. And let's be clear about this, had those seg-regationists had their way, I would not be a member of the United States Senate. Cory

Booker would not be a member of the Unit- ed States Senate, and Barack Obama would not have been in the position to have been nominated to the title he now holds."

Harris, during the same debate, also said during her work reforming the crimi- nal justice system in California, she was "cleaning up the con- sequences of the bills that [Biden] passed when [Biden] was in the United States Senate for decades."

During a Nevada campaign in 2019, Harris stated this about Biden's sexual assault allega- tions: "I believe them, and I respect them being able to tell their story and having the courage to do it."

It is very beneficial for voters to have a thorough look into the current candidates in order to make an informed decision on Election Day. Research your choices before mak- ing a decision this November. Happy voting!

The crisis after the crisis

By Michael Kowis

According to the CDC, the U.S. has surpassed over 173,000 COVID-19 related deaths. As a society, we are not prepared to deal with the magnitude of the disaster after the dust of COVID-19 has settled. The damage to our economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic is massive, to say the least. Although, there is something even worse than that, and we are not yet ready for the scope of that disaster. I am not referring to a physical malady that will further cripple us. I am referring to the mental well-being of those who survive and the ripple effects of this altered mental state. When COVID-19 ends, and we count the people we have lost, and the economists count the damage COVID-19 has inflicted on our economy, we will have to deal with the fact that those who survived the ordeal will likely suffer from

PTSD-like symptoms, including anxiety, depression and delirium.

To illustrate what is meant by this, RET Engineer at Bechtel, Sandra Bierstedt Gallegos, shared her experiences. She went to the hospital for issues unrelated to COVID-19. According to her own account, she was drugged, put in an isolation ward, taken care of by competent nurse and doctor staff, and then sent home. She explained how she felt very isolated in her time at the hospital, and mind you, she was only there for a few days.

During those few days, however, she felt an unsettling amount of anxiety. She could not use her phone to talk to anyone because of the drugs prescribed to her. Along with being placed in an isolation ward, she had very limited contact with anyone. This caused acute anxiety, which lasted for the duration of her short stay at the

hospital.

Though fortunate that she recovered so quickly from that bout of anxiety, this would not have been the case had she stayed in that ward for any serious length of time. It would be fair to say she might have left the hospital with a burgeoning case of an anxiety-related disorder. This is what we should be most worried about.

Yes, over 173,000 deaths from the virus have happened, but many, many more have gone to the hospital and have been intubated and have worried about losing their lives to the virus. While individually, the symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD can easily be treated, I am worried about the volume of mental health-related cases from survivors of this pandemic. Equally important, though, is that often the management of some mental health cases hinges on

having an available robust family support. The sheer volume of cases means that a good percentage of people will have to take leave from their work to tend and to help their family members who have contracted this virus.

If Gallegos' story didn't convince you to take mental health seriously, this example, courtesy of Medpage Today, might increase your awareness of the issue. Jessi Gold, M.D., of Washington University in St. Louis speaks on the landscape of the ICU.

"The ways in which we were normally trying to avoid Post Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS), we don't have as much ability to do that [with COVID-19]," she said.

For example, healthcare providers in "giant spacesuits" and geared up with personal protective equipment (PPE) - leaving them near faceless - may make patients afraid. To mitigate this, pro-

viders have taped a picture of their face to their chest to put the patient at ease.

"COVID-19 has stripped ICU patients of the usual factors that help them feel safe and grounded," Gold said.

"You don't have family at the bedside, reorienting you or making you feel like you belong in some capacity," she said. "You don't have family getting you up and walking, which happens if you're in the ICU and can move. You don't have a lot of staff coming in and checking on you as much -- there's a lot less in and out movements of people. And yet there's more codes and beeping and noise and worry and stress -- [the patient] might not understand what's going on."

"Adult patients may experience difficulties resuming the activities of daily life or struggle to return to work. Physically, patients may suffer from muscle weakness

and chronic pain. Cognitively, these individuals may have trouble with concentration and memory, and cognitive issues may be particularly pronounced in people with a history of dementia. People suffering from PICS may experience anxiety, sleep difficulties, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)." Equally, troublesome is the fact that pediatric patients are at equal risk of developing PICS as well. With much of the same symptoms, no one is safe from this Crisis.

This is, by definition, the Crisis after the Crisis. If we are not prepared for PICS, the levies of our current mental infrastructure will not hold the sheer volume of cases and will surely collapse our existing mental health system - that is why this author is so worried. We must work to strengthen our mental health institution now because we cannot afford to wait.

Category 4 hurricane could be Houston's Chernobyl

By Priscila Batres

The effects of the climate crisis have been evident over the past few years. Houston and the surrounding areas could be severely affected in the not-so-distant future. According to environmental attorney, Terrence O'Rourke, Houston could experience a similar version of the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster that took place in Ukraine in 1986 and caused more than

4,000 deaths.

This hypothetical scenario could become real if a category four hurricane hit Galveston Bay. The worry comes from the physical damage a storm of this magnitude would leave to homes and businesses. It could greatly damage Houston's ship channels and refineries. O'Rourke believes that the debris from this hypothetical Galveston

Bay damage would find its way to the containers and nearby refineries in the ship channel, breaking them and releasing their chemicals.

O'Rourke states that there are "thousands of chemical tanks and many refineries with products so poisonous, so volatile, and explosive that the result of this could be the greatest environmental disaster."

O'Rourke's statement sparks skepticism, especially as some may say that this prediction is an exaggeration that should be ignored. However, many scientists and ecological experts have mentioned that Houston's chances of getting hit with an intense storm have increased with recent years, showing how climate change is worsening. This scenario is clearly

visible, especially after two hurricanes formed back to back in the Gulf of Mexico. An event that happened for the first time this past Aug.

Though skepticism ensues, this prediction should be taken seriously. A project to protect Houston's ship channels from any natural disaster should be on the city's list of tasks to develop. With this type of warning,

Houston should also be doing more to update the ways it deals with extreme flooding. Furthermore, there should be zoning regulations in areas in which new construction is taking place since Houston's infrastructure contributes to the city's increase in floods. 2020 has proven that anything is possible, and the city of Houston must prepare before disaster strikes.

Media representation of Black lives vs. Black deaths

By Shirley Bright

Another young black man is shot and killed. Emotions are charged, and the riots begin. Fuel has been poured onto a small ember of emotions, and now things explode and will not be contained. Are these emotions and outrage spewing from the 48 gunshot victims in the city of Chicago in the month of August 2014 or the one victim Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri?

The one is greater than the 48, of whom 22 victims were under the age of 25. The death of Michael Brown enflamed the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. BLM was stirred after the shooting and death of Trayvon Martin by an officer who was not convicted. The movement was recently stirred by the death of Houston native, George Floyd, by Minneapolis, MN police officer in May. The most recent shooting of Jacob Blake by police officers Kenosha, WI, has literally exploded the BLM force.

There are many sources of statistics of black men being killed by police officers. There are percentages relative to the black population, or black encounters with police officers while armed and not armed. The bottom line of these statistics is this: Too many young black men are needlessly dying.

Bo Wagner is pastor of the Corner-

stone Baptist Church of Mooresboro, NC, and a writer for The Daily Courier digital, chose to give the statistic in relation to the millions of encounters for all police departments. His data was gathered from a July copy of the digital USA Today.

Wagner's point from the statistics was, there were 39 unarmed individuals shot and killed in 2019, and only 14 of those were black. His perspective was, "they are looking through a microscope to examine a single hair on an elephant while ignoring the tons and tons of 'elephant' that the hair itself is on."

Todd Beer of the Society Pages, Sociology Tool Box, also looks at the statistics in the correlation of population percentages in society. His perspective is, if blacks make up on 12% of the population, then it would only be fair if only 12% of blacks were killed by police. But from 2015 – 2019, the actual number was 26.4% of deaths by police officers were black. Todd's perspective was that blacks, under all circumstances, were disproportionately killed by police officers compared with their white counterparts.

Once again, irrespective of the exact numbers, the statistics show the blacks and especially young black men, are dying too fast and too many.

The cry of

George Floyd's, "I can't breathe" from that Minneapolis street has cried and screamed across America and beyond. The seven shots into the back of Jacob Blake has been blasted through the news media speakers and analyzed over and over for some reasonable answers for a better outcome. Buildings and businesses have burned; riots have made the front page of national newspapers and virtual news sites, relentlessly echoing shouts of injustice for black Americans. The perception from the morning news outlet would have you to believe that every American city was on fire and burning down. Cities are burning because of the injustice of systematic racism within every police department.

In August of 2014, as the slogan of "Hands Up. Don't shoot" was shouted out in Ferguson, MO, and the local support systems of grocery stores, shopping centers, and other businesses burned, forty-eight individuals were gunned down in the city of Chicago. There were no marches or protest at the fact that 27% of those individuals were under twenty years old. No doubt, these children had dreams and goals of growing up and do something great. The news of their death did not resonate in our lives across the breakfast or dinner tables. Where is

the outrage at these senseless deaths?

The viewing of the almost nine minutes of George Floyd crying out for air and, in a desperate measure, even calling for his mother, spawn a great pimple into the Black Lives Matter organization. This pimple burst and propelled everyone into action. The senselessness of it all must come to an immediate halt. This kind of behavior cannot and should never be seen in the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

Even so, the city of Chicago, Superintendent of Police, David Brown, had to stand and say another 85 people were murdered in the month of May 2020. The cries of George Floyd overshadowed the 85 gunshot victims and 24 fatalities during the weekend of protest against Floyd's death. There ensued around-the-clock coverage of riots, burnings, police briefings, Floyd's family mourning, the funeral procession, and the final burial of George Floyd streamed from nearly every media outlet. While Floyd's image was spread across every facet of media coverage, there was not even a minuscule news clip of the number of black individuals murdered in Chicago or the gunshot victims over the last month.

The winds of Chicago have blown over the death of young black men and

women but have not reached the flames of BLM or the major media networks. The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Service Division 2018 crime statistics reports that 88% of black homicide were committed by other black individuals. The FBI listed the homicides, but no one is willing to label them as Black-on-Black crime. Over forty years ago, J. H. Johnson and Earl G. Graves Sr, editors of two powerful African American magazines Ebony and Black Enterprise, respectively, dared to call out this behavior as "Black-on-Black crime."

Ebony magazine article was quoted, "Although the Black community is not responsible for the external conditions that systematically create breeding grounds for crime, the community has the responsibility of doing what it can to attack the problem from within."

Ebony magazine was a source for news, culture, and entertainment for the black community. Black Enterprise focused on black business and economics. Prior to Ebony's article, Black Enterprise had written, "You might not know it from reading the daily newspaper or watching the evening news on television, but most big-city crime is committed by blacks upon blacks,".

Assuredly it can be believed these articles were written

with no ill intent to their audiences. Yet today, whenever the phrase is mentioned, it is in the context of a debate of police brutality and black-on-black crime. The public perception is the phrase insinuates a propensity for the black community to be violent people. In the recent wave of horrific crimes, others have called the crime for what it is: a Black-on-Black crime. As reported by ABC News', Samara Lynn, New Orleans Police Superintendent, Shaun Ferguson, declared the Black-on-Black crime as "senseless violence" in reference to the death of 9-year old, Devante Bryant, in July. Also, Atlanta's city council members had to face the same music of senseless crime in reference to the death of 8-year old, Secoricia Turner.

As we bring it home to Harris County and Houston, Texas, where is the outrage and riots for the loss of young black men? Are we waiting for a George Floyd or Jacob Blake type of incident from one of the more than 2,400 white police officers in Houston? The black community makes up only 19% of the population of Harris County. But according to the 2019 Homicide Report from the Houston Chronicle, of the 456 homicides reported, 51% were black individuals.

Continued on the next page

Black lives vs. Black deaths (continued)

By Shirley Bright

There has not been any top-of-the-hour news report or front-page stories of the disproportionate number of black deaths. The politicians have not even used these numbers as part of the platforms for the upcoming elections.

Let us bring to life those lifeless names listed in the Houston Chronicle's Homicide report. Dmeryay Hogg, a 22-year old black man who died of multiple gunshots and was the first homicide of January 2019. The first five days of 2019, six black men were victims of homicide, and five of the six were from gunshots. Does the public know of 5-year old Samantha Bell, who died from multiple blunt force

trauma? Let's bring to life or light on Julez Lenett, another young homicide victim of 11-months old also of blunt force trauma. The list goes on from 2-weeks old to 68-year old homicides by gunshots, stabbing, or blunt trauma. Nevertheless, 256 black homicide victims in the county.

Only for a brief moment in 2019, there was a bit of rage and frustration for the cruel death of Maleah Davis. She was the 4-year old killed by her mother's boyfriend. Julian Gill. Houston Chronicle reported in June 2019, that Maleah's body was dumped as trash by the side of the road in Arkansas. Maleah's contagious smile coupled with the horrific manner of her death sparked embers of fire

against her mothers' boyfriend who mistreats the children. However, that small fire soon died with the rest of the other 255 black homicides in Harris County.

Lynn, of ABC News, reports the use of Black-on-Black is a weapon used by politicians. Yet the Chicago Suntimes and Chicago Tribune continue to report weekend gun violence in astronomical numbers. Memorial Day weekend 39 wounded and 10 dead, Fourth of July weekend – 70 gunshot victim and 10 fatalities, other weekends reported by the Chicago Tribune, 66 gunshot victims – 5 fatalities, 64 gunshots, and 4 fatalities. Then there was Labor Day weekend and was traumatized by 54 gunshot victims

and 10 fatalities.

The outspoken Milwaukee County Sheriff, David Clarke, who is also Black, states it as such, "Being on the streets in any American

ghetto where Black-on-Black crime is a bigger threat and bigger problem than the police use-of-force." Black-on-Black crime is a reality. From every major city in America to the small communities of black, the same music is playing. We must face this music. Too many critics, in an effort to deny it would like to focus on the fact there is also white-on-white crime. This is our backyard, and we must begin to clean it up. Bakari T. Sellers, a young black attorney and political commentator, was elected to the lower

House of the state legislature in South Carolina in 2006-2014. He recently spoke during the 2020 the Rockwell Lecture Series on Ethics and leadership, presented by the office of the Provost University of Houston, Hobby School of Public Affairs. He made some profound statements which were in relation to the racism crisis in America but must be learned for all aspect of our lives.

"Every journey has to have a destination," Sellers presented to the virtual audience with these two questions: "How far have we come?" and "Where do we go from here?"

These questions must be asked in relation to Black-on-Black crime. How

far have we come in acknowledging the serious issue of the deaths of young Black men at the hand of other young Black men? How far have we come with identifying it will not be a national front-page story other than a political debate? Then ask ourselves, "Where do we go from here to make a change in our own community?"

In another statement Sellers said, "Black Lives Matter was a movement and not a moment." Well, Black Lives Matter, the black community needs a move from you to change this reality of Black-on-Black crime.

"WAP" controversy illuminates misogynist culture

By Deniece Joseph

When Grammy Award winner, Cardi B, teased her latest single featuring Houston's own Megan Thee Stallion. The world had no idea what the now viral acronym – "WAP" – alluded to. The star-studded music video boasted a line-up of new generation female celebrities such as Kylie Jenner, Normani and Spanish-crossover popstar, Rosalia, to name a few. With a dedication to visual appeal, the video boasted extravagant sets coupled with large cats, snakes and, of course, elaborate fashion looksthat are

sure to set trends. Yet, this was only a small part of the conversation.

"WAP" soon became another in a long line of sexually explicit songs that were ridiculed by self-proclaimed "cultured" sections of society. Complaints of the song being "nasty," "inappropriate" and "unladylike" soon surfaced on social media and other media platforms. This spiraled into an attack on the character of the two female rappers. As with every other situation, the single became politicized with repeated attempts of unsuccessful

revisionist history.

It seems that every time a "scandal" like this occurs, the first form of action is to obliterate the characters of the women involved. It is one thing to claim discomfort with suggestive lyrics; it is another to participate in the public shaming of a woman in lieu of advocating for her humility and self-development.

Humiliation tactics have long been used to force women into subservient positions. In this case, such tactics are being used because, for many, it is unimaginable to be

a shameless woman, proud of the decisions she made with a body whose sole ownership belongs to her. To witness the degradation of two women, while the men who produce music with similar lyrics and characteristics remain untouched is simply baffling.

Men act like playboys who just need to meet the right girl and get the right amount of loving. They are scoffed at and may experience some form of public embarrassment. But soon it is followed by an eyeroll, a giggle, maybe a chortle, but definitely a solid

high five. They are proclaimed "A Casanova!" However, a women who acts the same is regarded as a slag unfit for parenthood and undeserving of basic humanity is what they consider a woman who acts the same. These perceptions are worlds apart in public opinion because "boys will be boys." But little girls must be seen and certainly not heard.

A society that cannot stomach the idea and reality of a woman releasing a song that dictates the role reversal of popularly held male expectations, is a society stunted by

self-inflicted disillusionment.

People attempt to rewrite history and act as if songs about sex never existed. Old school songs such as "Let's Get It On," "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe," etc. openly alluded to sex in their lyrics. Perhaps it is the difference in concealing as opposed to openly referring to the topic that is so unfathomable to many. The audiences targeted by Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion are clearly old enough to know the mechanisms of the subject matter.

Continued on the next page

“WAP” (continued)

By Deniece Joseph

The territory explored in “WAP” is not unfamiliar and never has been. In fact, it is a common theme in the lyrics of male artists of all genres. Male equivalents of “WAP,” whatever they may be, have never received such commotion and input from all walks of life, including conservative TV hosts.

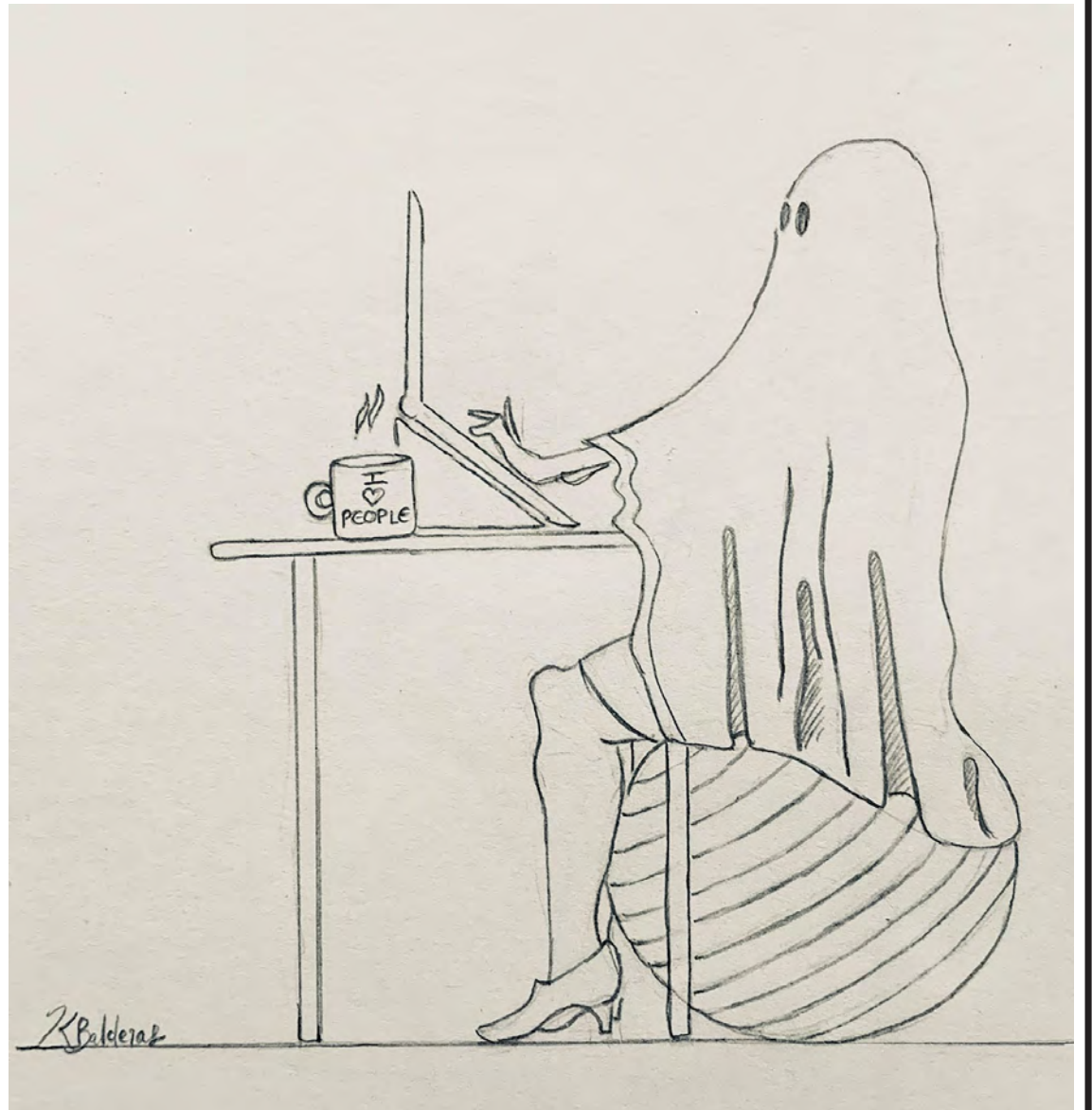
The difference in reception speaks true to one theory: society is still far behind where we need to be in tackling misogyny and patriarchy. Men get to have independent ownership over their bodies, words and actions. But everyone, except the woman herself, has a say in what vulgarities or perfectly normal sentiments she is allowed to express. “WAP” is a testament to the unrelenting grasp misogyny has on the societal perception of women. The constant

and ever-present disregard for a woman’s identity, regardless of its sexual nature or self-expression and ownership of her body, filters out into all aspects of daily life, especially in entertainment.

Misogyny is like a continuously escalating pyramid of actions reflecting Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. But instead of self-actualization at the summit, there lies the self-consuming desire to silence, control and oppress women, which sometimes leads to death or murder. The critical response to Cardi B’s “WAP” featuring Megan Thee Stallion may not rank that high on the hypothetical scale, but it still ranks and that is a problem in itself.

Good Hiring Practices

By Keven Balderas



The accomplished HR professional is not without a good bedsheet to ghost untalented candidates with.

“Mulan” (finally) released on Disney+

By Deniece Joseph

On Sept. 4, Disney released its remake of “Mulan” on streaming platform, Disney+.

When the live-action remake of “Mulan” was announced, many were ecstatic but skeptical. The animated film is a favorite among classic Disney movies and is widely considered one of the most prominent representations of East Asian culture, specifically Chinese, in western media. Famed for its

soundtrack, storytelling and riveting characters, the live action “Mulan” took up a heavy burden to do justice to the beloved 1998 original.

However, COVID-19 brought a new challenge to the cast and crew. With theaters closed, social distancing guidelines in place and an unforeseen worldwide economic standstill, the Walt Disney Company was left at a loss, as they considered the format, delay

and eventual release of live-action Mulan. The billion-dollar company soon came to the conclusion that “Mulan” was to be released on Disney+. This move was a hard pushback against the multitude of setbacks that took away any possibility of a theatrical release.

The film became available to Disney+ subscribers on Sept. 4. Yet, the controversy surrounding Disney’s announcement revolved

around one detail, wherein subscribers who wanted to see the film before the general release had to pay a one-time \$29.99 fee. This was coined “Premier Access.” Confusion and outrage rose as it was reported that this was only a rental fee for a stipulated time period. This is technically false. According to the Disney+ website, as long as the individual remains a Disney+ subscriber they “owned” the movie

for life.

Opponents of the decision argued that it cost more than the average movie ticket to see the film in theatres if it were released under normal circumstances. Others labelled Disney as a money-hungry corporation taking advantage of the limitations the pandemic. This prompted arguments between those who were for the move by Disney and those who were vehemently against it. In the end,

it boiled down to convenience and affordability. It was inevitable that whatever choice Disney made would ruffle feathers after months of delaying the release of a highly anticipated movie. Whether the cold reception was expected, righteous or harmful to the movie, remains up for debate.

“WAP” collaborator allegedly shot in the feet

By Lauren Anderson

Rapper, Megan Thee Stallion (real name, Megan Pete) told her Instagram followers that Tory Lanez, real name Daystar Peterson, is the one who had shot her in the feet on July 12 in Los Angeles after an argument they had. She also accused his team of spreading false information about what had occurred that night.

According to Stallion, she and Lanez attended a pool party before getting into a car with a friend and a security guard when the argument ensued. Stallion also claimed that she had gotten out of the vehicle, and when she began to walk away, shots were fired from the backseat, which is where she says Lanez was sitting.

After looking for more information from potential witnesses, Lanez was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon in a vehicle but was released after posting

a \$35,000 bail. He was not charged in connection with the shooting. The district attorney’s office is considering assault charges against Lanez for the shooting and wants the police department to investigate the issue further. Stallion was taken to a hospital where she had surgery to remove the bullets from her feet.

Los Angeles District Attorney’s office spokesman Ricardo Santiago said, “On July 24, our office asked law enforcement for further investigation before making a filing decision on a charge of felony assault with a semiautomatic firearm -- personal use of a firearm, against Daystar Peterson.”

Many individuals believed that Stallion was faking her injuries and rumors spread that their argument had been about Lanez and Kylie Jenner’s potential relationship. Stallion denied these rumors

and posted a graphic image of her injuries on social media as proof of the altercation. She also denied physically assaulting Lanez in the dispute and explained why she did not immediately go to the police.

“I didn’t tell the police what happened immediately right there because I didn’t want to die,” Stallion said. “The police come. I’m scared. All this s**t going on with the police. The police

is shooting motherf**kers for anything. The police was literally killing Black people for no motherf**king reason. You think I’m about to tell the police that we, n****s, us Black people, got a gun in the car? You want me to tell the law that we got a gun in the car so they can shoot all of us up?”

However, despite the rumors, fans and peers have been showing support to the rapper, includ-

ing Kehlani and JoJo, who said that they would be canceling collaborations with Lanez.

Kehlani explained her decision in an interview with the Chicago radio station, WGCI, saying, “As someone with a large platform, as someone that people look up to, as a woman that makes other women feel safe and empowered, people were asking me, ‘Are you gonna keep somebody on it

who doesn’t necessarily make us feel safe or empowered as a woman?”

Although Lanez has not made a statement on the situation and there are no current updates on the investigation, Stallion is staying positive as she continues to garner success for the single “WAP” with Cardi B and hopes to release her full length album by the end of the summer.



“WAP” collaborators, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion on the set of the music video. Image courtesy of Grammy Awards.

John Oliver takes on mayor, donates to charity

By Cameron Smith

John Oliver has a mess to clean with the city of Danbury, CT. after a few blows to the city’s pride

On Aug 30, host of “Last Week Tonight,” John Oliver, put out an episode that called out the city of Danbury, CT to “come get a thrashing” after calling out the town a few episodes prior.

In the episode, Oliver talks about the city’s response to his jests, one being a video of a child giving him a playful shouting at. Another video he responds to is the local hockey team that calls out his roles in the movies “The Smurfs,” “Wonder Park,” and his infamous role as the character, Dick Pants, in the “Love Guru.”

John Oliver loved these replies, but expressed his personal favorite was when the Mayor of Danbury, Mark Boughton, jokingly offered to put a “John Oliver Memorial” on their sewage plant. Oliver found this humorous and offered to spend money on a sign to make the idea to happen. This plant itself was recently up-

graded for \$103 million as Oliver himself points out and this caught his attention. To Oliver’s surprise, Mayor Boughton responded with a televised announcement that “we aren’t really going to name the sewer plant after John Oliver.”

Oliver proposed a deal that he would donate \$55,000 to charities

in the area of Danbury and include a pre-made sign that includes the “John Oliver Memorial” on it. All Danbury had to do was have the Mayor “make good on his promise, in one week.” If not, then those offers would have gone to the towns around Danbury.

On Sept. 6 however, Oliver

made his donation and Mayor Boughton agreed to the name change, but on one condition. Oliver had to attend the ribbon cutting event and if he does not show, then they will only name the port-a-potty after him.

Warner Bros. launches DC FanDome

By James Jurewicz

On Aug 22, Warner Brothers (WB) hosted a 24-hour immersive virtual fan experience dubbed the DC FanDome.

DC Comics is second only to Marvel when it comes to cinematic adaptations of famous comics. It has been this way ever since 2008 when the “Iron Man” film series got its start and rejuvenated Robert Downey Jr’s career. The shared Marvel universe was launched by Disney, becoming a worldwide sensation. DC comics tried and failed to play catch up

with Marvel. Though Marvel rules the comic-film industry, DC holds notable exceptions such as Christopher Nolan’s “Dark Knight” trilogy, which garnered commercial and critical success, along with the Gal Gadot helmed “Wonder Woman.”

In the comic book community, DC movie adaptations have become somewhat of a joke compared to the market created by Marvel. Comic book characters who were once obscure and irrelevant in popular culture, like Iron Man and Dr. Strange, have become

more recognizable than important politicians under Marvel’s plan. After the failure of 2017’s “Justice League,” DC changed its game plan with ascending results.

The DC FanDome was organized by Warner Brothers in order to showcase their new comic book adaptations. Hosted in a virtual format, multiple exciting announcements enticed comic book fans, giving them all some good news in uncertain times. The three biggest announcements made concerned upcoming films including re-

imagining of Gotham City’s protector “The Batman,” starring Robert Pattinson in the titular role. Exiled Disney director, James Gunn, teased his version of “The Suicide Squad.” Finally, fans were given what they have petitioned for years: director, Zach Snyder’s cut of “Justice League”.

Originally, the film “The Batman” was supposed to be written and directed by Ben Affleck, who was also set to reprise his role as the caped crusader. With a new script penned by “Batfleck” himself,

fans were going to see the continuation of Zach Snyder’s Batman face off against longtime Batman villain Deathstroke (played by Joe Manganiello of “Magic Mike”). Affleck stated that he decided to step away from the role due to a long battle with alcoholism - a battle which he is now winning.

Director Matt Reeves was tasked with coming up with a fresh take on the dark knight. Reeves decided youth was the way to go, with Robert Pattinson of the “Twilight” series to portray a younger

Bruce Wayne. After only a small amount of the movie was filmed, production was halted by the spread of COVID-19. The debut trailer showed a gritty, dark and violent take on the Batman mythos. Paul Dano of “There Will Be Blood” starred alongside Pattinson as the villain the Riddler and Colin Ferrell was unrecognizable as another Batman foe the Penguin. After production resumed, it was yet again shut down after Pattinson himself contracted COVID-19.

Joe Biden in “Animal Crossing: New Horizons”

By Aansa Usmani

Since its launch in late March, “Animal Crossing: New Horizons” has become a popular video game for the Nintendo Switch and Switch Lite. Its popularity led to Switches becoming a coveted item and harder to find in retail stores and online. The purpose of this game is to create a habitable, five-star island for both the in-game character and other “Animal Crossing” characters.

The game itself has no storyline and is open-ended; it can be stopped at any point, depending on a gamer’s mood. Although more options to “terraform” the island occur after K.K. Slider—a singing white dog who performs on your island—arrives, the

purpose of the game is to allow players to create an island of their dreams, whether it be following a specific theme or their imagination.

Since quarantine began, virtual measures have become a new reality. From education to recreation, these tools help maintain social distancing and slow the spread of COVID-19. As lockdown measures continue, more people have turned to video games as a form of socialization and relaxation from pandemic stressors. One game has become exceedingly popular among the youth, and the Biden campaign hopes to use this platform as a motivator for further civic participation.

Following the

Democratic National Convention (DNC), the Biden campaign noted the popularity of “Animal Crossing” and decided to release merchandise on its platform. It is available to anyone who has a paid membership with Nintendo, allowing them to utilize internet services when interacting with others or downloading patterns via Able’s Sisters Shop. Although the merchandise itself is a “pattern,” it can be used for signs, clothing, wallpaper, or other customizable items.

Since its announcement, the Biden campaign has been accused of politicizing a video game with criticism from both sides.

Zach Parkinson, the Trump

campaign’s Deputy Communications Director, noted how, “Joe Biden’s campaign has now spent more time in an alternate reality than they have in Wisconsin.”

In light of the pandemic, Biden has chosen to remain in Wilmington, DE, hoping to curb the further spread and reduce his own chances of contracting COVID-19, as he is in a high-risk category.

Additionally, The Hill’s Krystall Ball commented on how the Biden campaign was “exciting the youth” by having “Animal Crossing” signs and merch instead of implementing ideals such as the Green New Deal and Medicare for All. Although Biden is a relatively progressive candidate

when compared to the current president, more changes need to occur to ensure a better country and an overall planet.

The Biden campaign hopes to engage with voters by promoting its message on the video game platform in a highly contested election. Although “Animal Crossing” may be considered a child’s video game, its significance in 2020 is more prominent than ever before.

Similar to the popularity of “Pokémon Go” during the 2016 election, then-Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton remarked, “Pokémon Go to the polls.” Similarly, “Animal Crossing” is the height of youth culture and a perfect example of

how a video game can be a distraction from the pandemic and life’s stressors.

The simple platform adopted by “Animal Crossing” allows players to voice their opinions freely, sharing their views on the Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQIA+ acceptance, or other significant issues in the current climate. Additionally, unofficial Trump campaign merchandise is downloadable as well.

“Animal Crossing: New Horizons” has become the “it” game of 2020, entertaining users across the world virtually and safely. It is a welcome distraction in these tumultuous times and allows people to unite—even if it is in separate physical spaces.

Warner Bros. launches DC FanDome (continued)

By James Jurewicz

James Gunn is best known for delivering Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy" and its sequel. Both movies were wildly popular and single handedly changed the look and tone of the Marvel cinematic universe (MCU). It was this very reason that in 2016 many accused DC of copying Marvel with "Suicide Squad". Directed by David Ayer of "Training Day", "Suicide Squad" tried and failed to gain both ticket sales and critical acclaim. When Gunn was fired by Disney for illicit

tweets, Warner Brothers wasted no time in hiring the embattled film director to write and direct his own version of "Suicide Squad." Our first look was a teaser trailer of sorts, giving fans a roll call style showing of the unique character lineup. Idris Elba and John Cena will join with returning cast members Viola Davis and Margot Robbie from the original movie in a hybrid sequel/reboot. The first look at the film was enough to excite fans worldwide. A colorful, and zany story awaits moviegoers on Aug. 6, 2021.

Interestingly, after a vigorous "rehire James Gunn" campaign was launched, Disney asked Gunn to return for a third "Guardians" film.

After numerous petitions and constant fan campaigning, Zach Snyder's "Justice League" will finally debut on HBO Max in early 2021. Dubbed the father of the DC extended universe, Snyder is responsible for creating the current Batman and Superman screen iterations we know today. His films "Man of Steel" (2013) and "Batman vs Superman"

(2016) were supposed to be precursors to "Justice League". Unfortunately, just before post-production began, tragedy struck the Snyder family when Snyder's daughter committed suicide.

After Snyder stepped down to be with his family, Joss Whedon was brought on to finish Snyder's work. Whedon is known for the television series "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and Marvel's first two "Avengers" movies. WB thought that extensive reshoots were needed and the film was drastically

changed. After flopping at the box office, cast and crew stated that the movie was considerably different than what they'd shot. Whedon has subsequently been accused of creating a toxic work environment on set, clashing with Cyborg actor Ray Fisher and other cast and crew. It was rumored that Whedon had been trying to undo Snyder's vision completely. A four hour Snyder-cut of "Justice League" will now see the light of day, twice as long as the first. WB contributed more than \$30 million for the project.

The DC FanDome refreshed fan interest and hope that DC will come back strong in the next few years. Though there has been a learning curve at WB, the studio has seemingly worked out a winning formula for critics, fans and ticket sales. Even their streaming service will be given an infusion of subscribers when the Snyder-cut is released. WB has learned from their mistakes and will now do right by the fans, delivering quality content.

The life and legacy of Chadwick Boseman

By Alex Riley

On Tuesday, Aug. 28, actor Chadwick Boseman died of stage IV colon cancer. Boseman was the star of iconic films such as "Black Panther", "42", "The Jackie Robinson Story", and "Marshall" just to name a few. Boseman was a star in the eyes of many, but he shined particularly bright in the African American community. Boseman paid respect to legends of the past with his depictions of them and in many ways became a legend in his own right through his own portrayals.

When cast as the Black Panther, Boseman became more than just another Marvel superhero, but a real-life hero. For many Black children around the United States, this served

as the first time they truly felt like they could do anything. In 2018, Boseman revealed he and Marvel had disagreements about the use of genuine African accents in the film. Marvel felt the use of the accents would be too much for their audience, but Boseman felt the opposite and ultimately overruled the studio. He would go on to win both an NAACP Image Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award for his role in the film. Boseman's passing at the young age of 43 leaves us with him forever immortalized in our minds as a kind, decent, and above all else, a strong human being.

In passing, the world learned that Boseman had been battling stage

IV colon cancer for the last four years. This illuminates the fact that while he was fighting battles on screen, making the masterpieces we know today - "Black Panther," "Marshall," "Da 5 Bloods" and the last two "Avengers" films - he was also fighting a battle behind the scenes.

Ryan Coogler, the director of "Black Panther," penned an open letter conveying what Boseman meant to him. In his letter, he referred to Boseman as "an anomaly." When referencing Boseman's death, Coogler said, "Because he was a caretaker, a leader, and a man of faith, dignity and pride, he shielded his collaborators from his suffering."

Boseman was an example of what

can happen when older generations invest in those that follow. This was exemplified when Denzel Washington paid Boseman's tuition for a study abroad trip to attend the prestigious British American Drama Academy while enrolled at Howard University.

Many in Hollywood felt compelled to say a few words in respect of Boseman's passing, including Jada Pinkett Smith, who posted "Rest in Love" on her Instagram.

Ice Cube also took to Instagram to speak on the loss saying, "I'm floored by the news, Chadwick was one of the best and I really enjoyed watching him work."

Jay Pharoah added to the homage on Instagram with,

"Man, my heart hurts, he was a phenomenal talent but an even better person. Super humble, amicable, and always uplifting, can't believe this is the day we are saying bye to him. Rest in power my brother, thank you for your kind words and never letting this industry change your integrity despite your success YOU WERE A REAL ONE BIG BRO! RIP

CHADWICK BOSEMAN."

Even Terry Crews took to Twitter to speak on the passing, tweeting, "So stunned. Honored to have worked with [Boseman] early on. Truly an amazing man. God bless his wife and family in this difficult time. Rest In Peace, brother."



Image courtesy of Nikkolas Smith.

Movie theatres are open... but is it worth the risk?

By Laura Dunn

If you have yet to venture out to newly re-opened movie theatres because you are nervous or unsure of what it may look like, not to worry, I did it for you! On Aug. 21, only a few days after theatres' opening, my mom and I ventured to a suburb of Houston known as the Woodlands to

a theatre known as Cinépolis. Not only is this a movie theatre, but it is one that also serves food and drinks.

So, what was the experience like? First, you had to purchase your movie tickets online to ensure the reduced capacity of each theatre. A lot of movies are still holding off

on being released, so most of the available movies available were older releases. When we arrived, the door said you must have a mask on to be admitted, however, nobody took our temperature. There was a single usher that stood far away from us, somehow knowing which film we were there to see without looking at

my phone, the usher directed us to the correct number.

I am unsure as to whether it was because the opening of movie theatres was still new, or because of the film we chose to watch, but we were the only people in the room. At least that made the task of social distancing much easier.

The waitress came to take our orders before the film began. She wore a face mask and gloves and a new cup was brought for every drink refill we received.

Our experience felt relatively safe and at low risk for spread of infection as there were no other people viewing the

movie. We wore our masks any time we were not drinking or eating. If you decide to venture out for the next big film, make sure you are feeling healthy and remember to wear your mask! If you are at high risk of serious complications from COVID-19, I recommend you continue with home premieres.

Film review - "An American Pickle"

By James Jurewicz

Released on HBO Max on Aug 6, "An American Pickle" is a feature film based on the Simon Rich short story "Sell Out."

After numerous films with Seth Rogen, Brandon Trost has finally tried his hand at directing with his debut feature film. Trost has been an active cinematographer in Hollywood for many years with cinematography experience on over a dozen films since 2001.

In 1919, Seth Rogen's character, Hershel Green-

baum, is a struggling ditch-digger hopelessly in love with a woman named Sarah (played by Sarah Snook) in his Eastern European town. Upon winning her favor, both immigrate to America, specifically New York City, in order to escape persecution from violent Russian Cossacks. After an accident at the pickle factory where Hershel works, he is preserved in the pickle brine for 100 years. Upon waking, it is revealed that he has one great grandson, Ben, an app developer who

brings Hershel to his home. Ben is a lonely person, and they bond over their shared love of seltzer water, a luxury Hershel coveted in 1919.

Upon visiting Sarah's grave, Hershel's anger about a billboard and unkempt gravestones leads him to attack some of the cemetery workers. This leads to the arrest of both he and Ben.

The arrest seemingly ruins Ben's future as an app developer and creates a rift between the two family members. Hershel decides to make

a life for himself by selling pickles. The pickles are warmly received by the public as a viral sensation, much to the chagrin of his grandson. Ben does his best to complicate Hershel's situation.

This goofy comedy starts as a story of an American immigrant escaping religious oppression. It turns into a commentary on cancel culture versus free expression. The duality of the title becomes apparent as the pickles are not only an American product, but the pickles also

represent the conflict in the Greenbaum family, as well as the conflicts in a viral society. Hershel clashes with the Health Department and the public who cannot stand his unfiltered and dated views of daily life and social norms.

It was interesting to see Rogen in split-screen format acting alongside himself in the leading roles. Rogen nails the Eastern European accent; there is even a scene where Rogen, still donning his European accent, imitates an American

accent, complete with the European pronunciations lingering in the background. Rogen often shines with an onscreen comedic partner he can improvise and riff with. It would be interesting to see how he improvised with himself, or if he stuck to the script verbatim. The split screen process is known to be difficult.

This movie is entertaining and fun, and at a brisk 90 minutes, it is worth a watch. Make sure to stay tuned after the credits roll for a funny, but brief, mid-credits stinger.

The rise of Instagram hit, Versuz

By Deniece Joseph

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations it brought to the continuance of everyday life, producers Timbaland and Swizz Beatz, conceptualized Versuz, also known as Versuz TV. Initially presented as a live DJ battle, free of charge to the public via Instagram Live, the series has evolved

to feature battles between rappers, songwriters, producers, and singers.

The format of the battle is simple: two opponents play songs they sang, wrote or produced in alternating turns to see who has the better catalogue. The most successful installment featured Monica vs. Brandy,

two prominent figures in R&B who have been rumored to be in disagreement with each other for quite some time. This battle brought a whopping 1.2 million viewers to the platform, the most in Instagram history. However, the battle between the legendary Patti La Belle and the great Gladys Knight might change

that.

After much of the world was forced to social distance to curb the spread of COVID-19, the entertainment industry was one of the first to be hit with major repercussions. Much of entertainment requires live performances in close proximity with large audiences. It was one of the joys

of life. But as that has been taken away to preserve the health of the population, a safe alternative was needed. Thus, Versuz was born.

These high-profile musical battles speak true to the sentiment that music is essential to daily life. The return of live entertainment, something that was significantly underestimated pre-pandem-

ic, has brought many individuals something to look forward to. The roster of those who have participated in a Versuz battle encompasses many genres, demographics and target audiences. Versuz TV has provided a much needed escape for everyone in a world that continues to battle a seemingly unending tragedy-ridden reality.

“King of the Hill” represents Texas culture

By Anthony Raul Ramirez

When people outside of Texas are asked what comes to mind when they hear about the state, the stereotypical rodeo culture of cowboy hats, guns, livestock, and beefy food typically come to mind. However, when asked about television involving the state, two things come to mind: Walker, Texas Ranger and King of the Hill. I believe Mr. Norris gets enough love in pop culture, so we'll be talking about the latter and how it gets the feel of Texas just right.

King of the Hill takes place in the fictional town of Arlen, Texas, which most likely is from a combination of the cities Arlington and Allen in Texas. Mike Judge invented the show for Fox in 1997 immediately off his success with his previous MTV animated show Beavis and Butt-Head. The show aimed to make much more relatable characters in a unique environment that could detail the life of a modern family in Texas. King of the Hill centers around the nuclear family of propane (and propane accessories) salesman Hank Hill, his wife Peggy Hill who works as a Spanish teacher that speaks broken Spanish, and their son Bobby Hill. Hank's friends Dale Gribble, Bill Dauterive, and Boomhauer also join Hank or become the focus of misadventures

throughout the series.

The show covers much of its humor in political satire, as Hank is extremely conservative to the point that in season three's episode “And They Call It Bobby Love” he grabs tools to avoid holding his wife's hand in public. In “The Perils of Polling,” Hank is 100% devoted to voting for George Bush in the 2000 election until receiving a limp handshake from him. However, Hank does also support form Democrat President Lyndon B. Johnson as Johnson is from Texas. Hank names his dog “Lady Bird,” the nickname of LBJ's wife. It's also stated that Lady Bird's (the dog, not LBJ's wife) mom tracked down Martin Luther King, Jr.'s killer James Earl Ray. Dale Gribble represents political conspiracy theorists with one of his notable quotes being “Guns don't kill people, the government does.” Peggy Hill's niece Luanne Platter represents the gullibility of young voters also in “The Perils of Polling” and surprises her uncle with an enlistment into the communist party. Luanne's politics are only shown in that episode, but Hank being pro-American or a proud Texan is a center-point to conflict in episodes throughout the series.

(KOTH meme: a well-known meme from KOTH depicting Hank getting distracted by

propane when chasing Dale; courtesy of knowyourmeme.com)

Another thing that characterizes Hank and others are their perspectives on work. Hank takes great pride in his job at Strickland Propane where he's assistant manager and been employee-of-the-month 41 times. He loves his job so much to the point that he discourages his family from ever using charcoal to grill food. Peggy Hill has had several jobs throughout the series. She was a writer for the Arlen Bystander newspaper, a real-estate agent, a restaurant owner, a seller for a pyramid scheme, and her “expertise” in Spanish (look up her Spanish speaking to see why it's in quotations) gets her a job as a substitute Spanish teacher for a middle school, full-time Spanish teacher for a Catholic school, and a Spanish customer service employee for Alamo Beer. Peggy constantly taking new jobs is supposed to contrast with Hank's desire to have her be a stay-at-home wife as it would further complete the original idea of the nuclear family structure prominent in the 1950s.

Several of the characters obtain jobs in fields they enjoy being a part of. Dale is self-employed as an exterminator because of his distrust for others as bosses and his enjoyment in shooting, Bill works

as a military barber because of his skills and former enlistment, and Luanne works for a several seasons as a puppeteer that depicts Biblical stories with her puppets The Manger Babies. Her husband, Lucky, receives money from a \$53,000 financial settlement after “slipping on pee-pee” at a Costco, persuading him to not work. This lack of effort in working rubs the Hills the wrong way, especially Peggy who once purposefully taught Lucky the wrong answers for his GED test.

All of these different viewpoints are to contrast with Hank's “hard-working man” ideology that's common in Texas. Peggy's family in Montana also own a livestock ranch seen in “A Rover Runs Through It” where Hank is envious of the work mentality of the cowboy. Hank is nicknamed “Hollywood” by Peggy's brothers, showing that

the industrialization of Texas cities may have softened the image of it.

The entire town of Arlen is invested in football, similar to how Texas towns are to high school and college football teams. The town supports the Dallas Cowboys and even named the local middle school after Tom Landry, the Dallas Cowboys' first head coach. Dale Gribble's son Joseph is Tom Landry Middle School's quarterback, while Bobby has previously been the school's mascot. Hank, Dale, Bill, and Boomhauer were footballs players for Arlen High, with Hank and Bill having prominent roles on the team. The team reached the Texas State Championship in 1974, but ultimately lost after Hank injured his leg during the game.

Because of Hank's enjoyment of Strickland Propane, barbeque is constant-

ly shown. Hank's way of relaxing other than mowing his lawn is grilling, he teaches Bobby the different meat sections of a cow when he's a baby, and the series finale involves Hank and Bobby finding their fondness for cooking meat as something they can finally have in common. The Texas-only restaurant Luby's also has its own parody in Arlen called “Luly's.”

All of these little details as well as clothing, blending cultures, historical Texas icons like Big Tex, and modern family issues are what makes King of the Hill such a wonderful show. It promotes, as well as pokes fun at, Texas culture and the people within it. If you're a Texan and haven't seen this show, get yourself a Hulu subscription to watch the full series right now. This show alone is worth the price “I tell ya h'what.”

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