

# READER

You're going to be OK  
The Mental Health Issue



**MY STATE**  
**OF MIND** THE GUIDE BOOK

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Udon beef curry © COURTESY SHIN THOMPSON

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

### Bokuchan's ghost curry holds up in transit

By MIKE SULA

In early March, Shin Thompson's Furious Spoon ramen minichain was humming, with five locations in the city and Evanston, and a new one set to open in Indianapolis.

"And then all hell broke loose," says the chef who earned a Michelin star at Logan Square's Bonsoiree and went on to open the ambitious but short-lived Kabocha, before turning to noodles in 2015.

At first he took a stand against carryout. The idea was to get in, slurp furiously, and get out. But demand was so high he devised a way to package all the components of a bowl of ramen separately so they wouldn't suffer on the trip home before assembly.

It was a prescient adaptation, because even though he had to close three of his spots in March, the Lakeview and Logan Square Spoons are doing relatively well with carryout ramen, given the abhorrent circumstances

most restaurateurs find themselves in.

But contraction also presented him the opportunity to flex. As a kid, Thompson spent lots of time in Japan visiting family—he spent his first two years there. He grew up on the country's unique form of curry and rice, or *kare raisu*, thick and enveloping, mild, sweet, and warmly spiced, with fat chunks of meat, carrot, and potatoes, often topped with a thick, crispy, panko-breaded, deep-fried pork or chicken cutlet. It's among the first examples of *yoshoku*, or "Western food," adapted to Japanese tastes after Portuguese traders and English merchants were first allowed into the country in the late 1800s.

Kare is ubiquitous in Japan but rare in the midwest. A handful of Japanese restaurants around town serve it, notably Tokyo Shokudo at Mitsuwa Marketplace—but no one's a specialist. Thompson looked at dedicated curry

houses in New York and LA and figured he'd be the first to bring it home. "I knew it was kind of an obscure concept that not everyone would necessarily be into or understand right away," he says. "But I just didn't see it here. And that kind of motivated me."

Further, while you can buy blocks of additive-laden kare roux at Asian groceries and make it yourself (it is pretty irresistible), Thompson and his girlfriend and business partner, the chef Liga Sigal, wanted to make it from scratch with wholesome ingredients.

He'd been pondering the idea before the pandemic but wasn't sure it was a sustainable business on its own. In the spring, when most restaurants shut down, he began experimenting with curries and planning his next move.

Thompson and Sigal developed a base curry: vegetable stock thickened with blended caramelized onions, shredded carrots, apples, garlic, and ginger—no flour, unlike most kare—seasoned with 23 spices including cumin, coriander, turmeric, fenugreek, cloves, black cardamom, star anise, Sichuan peppercorns, and, of course, curry leaves.

Bokuchan's (which roughly means "mama's boy's,") opened for business in a former Eagle Insurance building next to the Avondale Jewel. The space, called Avondale Foods, is a two-floor, 42-kitchen shared space operated by Cloud Kitchens, a startup founded in part by ex-Uber CEO Travis Kalanick (who resigned in 2017 amid a storm of scandal and crises).


I ordered a couple curries online with some trepidation. Sure, curry will travel well, but I was worried about the bag life of the *tonkatsu* pork cutlet and the extra fried chicken cutlet I'd ordered as a side with the beef curry. I showed up a few minutes before the app said my order would be ready. Drivers toting

insulated delivery bags came in and out the front door, signing in on keypads. A flatscreen scrolled orders as they were ready, and a worker scrutinized each visitor's phone before handing bagged orders under a plexiglass shield. North Pond it ain't.

Once I reached the comfort of my own kitchen, I opened the bag and all the components of my order were packaged separately. The curries, speckled with add-ons, such as green peas, enoki mushrooms, or charred broccoli, were steaming hot in tightly sealed jewel boxes. Rice, shredded cabbage, and pickled cucumber salad had their own containers, while the cutlets remained hot and crispy, in ventilated packaging.

The Cheshire Pork tonkatsu kare is like a warm blanket, rich and gently spiced, while the beef curry is deepened and darkened by the deglazed fond from super tender chunks of Allen Brothers chuck roast. I didn't try the Chicken Kamikaze curry, loaded with habanero-cayenne—the menu actually warns "DO NOT ORDER"—but I did get some Kamizake paste on the side, which blew open my doors of perception when applied to the last few bites of the beef curry.

Apart from a matcha chocolate chip cookie, it's all curry, all the time at Bokuchan's. There's a vegan curry, a baseline chicken curry, curried udon noodles, and curried waffle fries. A few weeks ago there was a special squid curry, and last week there was a curry katsu burger.

That last item is a tell that Thompson isn't stopping at curry. He's planning a series of independent ghost restaurants, maybe a Japanese-style burger concept, or bento boxes. "It might take me a few months, but I definitely have some ideas," he says. "It's all experimental right now, which is the fun part for me." 

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Breakfast cereal with mealworms from *Comestible 7-Day Meal Plan* ■ COURTESY PAT BADANI

## FOOD FEATURE

# Fill up with the *Comestible 7-Day Meal Plan*

It's a manifesto of ecological cooking.

By **MIKE SULA**

Pat Badani's seven-day meal plan includes a recipe for greens that calls for "a measure of moral evaluation." She recommends that, on day two, readers serve a particular protein when "the wriggling stops." On Tuesday, when it's time for "Cultures and Ferments," the directions read:

"1. Forsake the moldy drama cultivating in the shower curtain.

2. Brine your sauerkraut on a sea voyage.

3. Consume with a glass of ocean."

Badani is an Argentinian-born artist who makes her home in Rogers Park, where her kitchen doesn't serve as her studio but it's certainly her muse. When I reached her by phone

she'd just been making a "huge" salad for lunch that she planned to eat with some lentils cooked in homemade vegetable stock.

"My kitchen is important," she says. "That is, in fact, where I get all my ideas." *Comestible 7-Day Meal Plan: Food as Text*, an "ecological manifesto" she published in July, is the latest permutation of a project she began 2010—in her kitchen.

She connects her attraction to the most popular room in the house to her childhood growing up in a large Italian family in Buenos Aires that gathered each Sunday after church when she and her two brothers helped their Nonna roll out and shape the gnocchi before

lunch. "We talked and talked, and drank and drank, and everything went on until very late, and everybody went home and started their Monday-to-Friday ritual."

At 15 when she left behind the similarly communal Argentine meatfests known as *asados* (and quit eating beef), her father was transferred to Peru. She studied art at the University of Alberta—lots of oil money allowed students to work with holograms in the 70s—and embarked upon a career that took her around the world during which her work frequently employed food as both subject and material.

She was down and out in Paris in the 90s

when inspiration struck for her best known work. "I was depressed, angry," she says. "I was an immigrant. I was feeding a child. She was going to school. I didn't know the language well. I couldn't help her. I was making a pizza one day and I don't know what took over me."

She draped the raw dough she'd been rolling over one of the wide bowls the French drink coffee from and put it in the oven on medium-high. "There was no explanation for it." But when she took it out, "the whole experience was sensual," she says. "The smell of it, holding this bowl in my hand. I compulsively started doing this every day."

Over a couple months she began stacking the bowls and photographing them, building towers until she could envision a cityscape of bread. Her tiny Parisian oven couldn't meet the demand, so she walked over to the neighborhood boulangerie and asked to use the oven.

The bakery, as it turned out, was the legendary Poilâne, then under its second-generation master baker Lionel Poilâne, who'd famously collaborated with Dalí to sculpt an entire bedroom suite out of sourdough. "He said, 'I love the idea. You have my bread. You have my ovens. You have my bakers. The only rule is you have to get along with my bakers.' He probably thought I would be there for what? A month?"

Over three years Badani and five of Poilâne's bakers created thousands of bread bowls, cups, and platters that she went on to exhibit in the form of sculptures of interlocking pieces, sprawling skylines, and notably, long snaking ropes placed as figurative borders in lonely outdoor landscapes that would eventually be eaten by animals and degraded in the elements.

Badani came to Chicago 20 years ago to earn her MFA at the School of the Art Institute, and she's been based here ever since. And it was here, in 2010, at the dawn of the Camera Eats First age, that she began posting photographs of her food to her year-old Facebook account.

She'd recently adopted a raw food diet to help tackle some health issues and began plating her meals in accordance with the freestyle method she prepared them with. "You put colors and textures together because intuitively you understand that these things are gonna be good for you. So it's not following a recipe. It's following what your body is telling you."

Vivid, meticulously composed arrange-

## FOOD & DRINK



Comestible: 7-Day Meal Plan began life as a series of popular social media posts. COURTESY PAT BADANI

ments of sprouted lentils, shredded carrots, and rice noodles, or stripes of mung bean jelly and vegetables sprinkled with baked green pepper seeds began to solicit recipe requests from her Facebook community and demands for a book.

She had no intention of writing a cookbook, but she did start thinking about the way artists have used food to promote political and social movements, particularly in the case of *The Manifesto of Futurist Cooking* by noted Italian protofascist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

“I wanted to go in another direction and say, “This is food. This is how it affects us socially, and this is what you can do through food to change the present and affect the future.”” The book took shape in a few iterations over the years, but eventually Badani wanted to produce something affordable (the paperback goes for \$24.99 on Amazon).

It's seven chapters over 86 pages in which her manipulated food photos take the form of celestial representatives of the days of the week. The aforementioned mung bean arrangement is Mercury—Thursday—which is titled “Liberalized Trade.” The dish's straight stripes of brightly colored vegetables also assume the form of an antiflag with “no recognized constitution” that is forbidden to be printed on the side of a coffee mug. At the end of the week a bloody smear of pomegranate

(Saturn, Saturday) stands in for every food neuroses humans have suffered since Adam choked on the apple Eve gave him.

A breakfast of crunchy mealworms with almonds, cherries, and pumpkin seeds (Moon, Monday) accompanies a list of insects eaten around the world, assigned to contemporary chefs who've dabbled in edible arthropods. “You have these new chefs creating these yummy looking recipes for the contemporary foodie, whereas in most cultures these ways of eating have been incorporated for millennia.”

Badani raises a lot of issues in the book: sustainability, accessibility, food safety and insecurity, and culture, but it's peppered with absurdities; a Marinetti for the natural world. Not to give too much away, but “Icky Miss Muffet” ends up eating the spider, and “lost lovers use rooftop-grown greens to detox their livers of failed relationships.”

“Most manifestos are dead serious,” she says. “Recipe books have a very authoritative tone, too. I'm not redoing Marinetti because I'm absolutely not promoting what he's promoting. But he was outrageous. They were all outrageous. They used humor to shock people into action. And that is something I really do enjoy.”

 @MikeSula

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Under Governor Pritzker's plan, gazillionaires would have a higher tax rate than poor journalists like yours truly. 📷 COURTESY PRITZKER CAMPAIGN

## POLITICS

# The argument for self interest

Vote yes on the Fair Tax to cut your taxes!

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

If Democrats only played the game of politics like Republicans, the Fair Tax Amendment would probably pass by an overwhelming majority.

Man, if Democrats played the game like Republicans, they wouldn't even call it the Fair Tax Amendment.

They'd call it the—Cut Your Taxes Amendment!

Alas, my beloved Democrats don't play the game like Republicans. Republicans play nasty, and Dems play nice. And that's why an amendment may be defeated by the very voters whose taxes it would cut.

OK, let's break it down...

Government's not free. It costs money to pave roads, put out fires, pay pensioners, run schools and hospitals, and so forth.

To raise that money, the state taxes your income. But we have law baked into our constitution mandating a flat tax.

That means broke-ass *Reader* writers—yours truly—pay at the same rate as gazillionaires like Ken “Kenny G” Griffin, the far-right hedge-fund operator who's the richest man in the state, with a fortune of roughly \$15 billion.

For years, lefties have argued that it's unfair to tax the Kenny Gs and Benny Js of the world

at the same rate. And that it's far more effective and socially equitable to create a higher rate that Kenny G can more than afford.

Governor Pritzker got the General Assembly to put on the ballot a referendum that, if approved by at least 60 percent of the voters, would raise the tax rates on people like Kenny G. And cut them on me!

The Democratic brain trust called it the Fair Tax—on the grounds that the way to move the masses is to appeal to fairness and decency. As though that's ever happened anywhere at any time.

If nothing else, they figured it would pass because it's an election year and, well—who's going to be paying attention to something as boring as the Fair Tax referendum when Donnie's on the ballot? Except for policy wonks like me and Eric Zorn.

And then two bad things happened. One—state treasurer Michael Frerichs opened his mouth and inserted his foot. And, two, Kenny G opened his wallet and doled out almost \$50 million to the Unfair Taxers, aka the anti-Fair Tax movement.

Let's deal with Frerichsgate first...

It was June. The Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce was having its monthly meeting,

featuring Frerichs. The conversation turned to the Fair Tax.

Apparently, trying to find some common ground with the Chamber crowd, Frerichs opined that the Fair Tax might move the state closer to slapping a graduated income tax on retirement income, like pensions. Currently, the state does not tax retirement income of any kind.

“One thing a progressive tax would do is make clear you can have graduated rates when you are taxing retirement income,” Frerichs said. “And, I think that's something that's worth discussion.”

Oops. This, my friends, is what people in sports call an unforced error. Like, to give you one recent example, when Markieff Morris threw the ball out of bounds in the closing seconds of last Friday's Lakers/Heat game for no apparent reason, other than—hey, let's throw the ball out of bounds and see what happens.

A mistake that would have been compounded if, in the postgame interviews, Morris felt compelled to weigh in on the need to tax retirement income in Illinois.

Anyway, Frerichs's comments were dutifully quoted in the *Daily Herald* newspaper. Then they were picked up by the Illinois Policy Institute—a right-wing outfit—under the headline: Be scared, geezers, be very scared!

That wasn't the real headline, but you get the idea.

And so, the matter sat, 'cause—it was the pandemic. We had other things on our minds. There were protests in the streets.

Then in September, Kenny G donated \$20 million to the Coalition to Stop the Proposed Tax Hike Amendment. A few weeks later he kicked in another \$26.7 million.

Suddenly, the Unfair Taxers had enough money to air a commercial featuring Phyllis, a senior citizen from Park Ridge who warns that the amendment might give “Springfield politicians” new “powers to increase income taxes on anyone, including retirees.”

None of which is true. The referendum has

nothing to do with taxing retirement income. It doesn't even mention retirement income.

The anti-referendum crowd sorta just, you know, made it up. Like Trump made it up when he said he had a cure for COVID-19 that he's going to give to everyone—for free.

'Cause that's how Republicans roll. They just make stuff up as they go along. On the grounds that—if the public's dumb enough to believe made-up stuff, why not just keep on making stuff up?

Now Fair Taxers are starting to panic—as in, holy shit, that dumbass Phyllis commercial may kill the Fair Tax by getting geezers to vote against their own self interests.

That brings us to the real diabolically evil part of this tale. If the Fair Tax goes down, Pritzker will have to raise taxes to pay our obligations for things like pensions. Only instead of having a higher rate for Kenny G, we'll all be hit at the same rate.

So instead of paying less, I'll be paying more. Thanks for nothing, Phyllis.

And Kenny G will be laughing all the way to the bank—'cause the \$47 million he donated to kill the Fair Tax will probably be offset by the money he saves by not paying a higher rate.

Hey, no one said Kenny G was dumb.

And then you watch—in a year or two, Kenny G and his rich right-wing pals will finance a campaign to cut pensions. 'Cause these guys hate pensions almost as much as they hate paying taxes.

And so, retirement incomes really will be affected. And the Unfair Taxers will have successfully scared pensioners into cutting their own throats.

So, Dems, my advice is to switch your message. Instead of appealing to fairness, appeal to self-interest.

Vote yes to cut your taxes!

Is the message accurate? It's a heluva lot more accurate than the Phyllis commercial. 📺

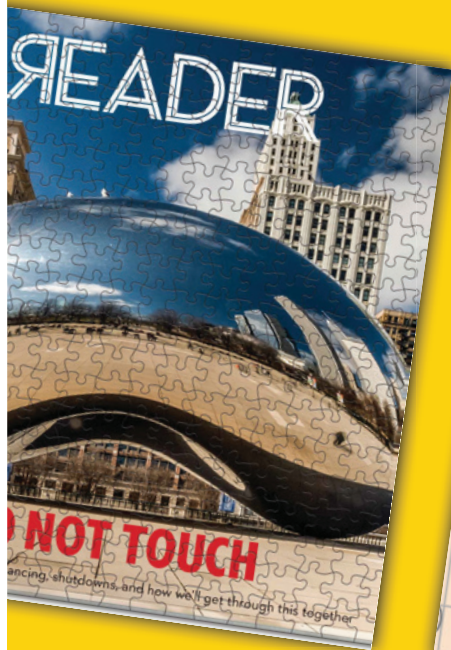
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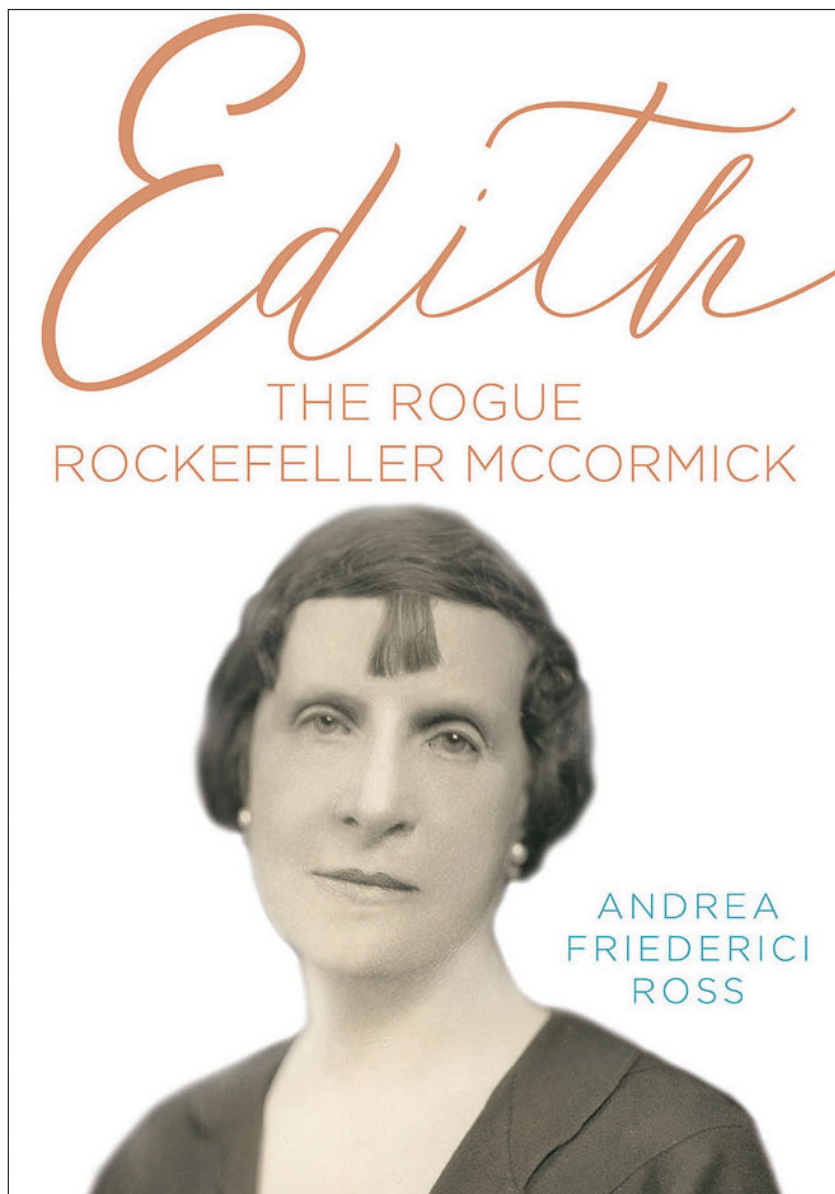


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CULTURE

## Poor little rich girl

A new biography takes a sympathetic look at Edith Rockefeller McCormick.

By DEANNA ISAACS

It's common knowledge, though not commonly admitted, that biographers tend to identify with their subjects. Local author Andrea Friederici Ross, who's written a deeply researched, briskly readable account of the life of Chicago grande dame

Edith Rockefeller McCormick, admits this to her readers right up front. During the decade of research and writing that went into *Edith: The Rogue Rockefeller McCormick* (Southern Illinois University Press), Ross says in her preface, Edith became an obsession, in part

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because her story “mirrored my own (minus the jewels, the collections, the millions).”

The common ground Ross found—with a character who'd be a great fit for Donald Trump's cabinet—is a personal evolution from the self-effacing supporting role of wife and mother to, in effect, becoming the star of one's own show. Edith, born to Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller and his wife, Cettie, in 1872, made this transition at a time when the demand for women to conform to their inequitable existence was rigid, and Ross admires her for it. “Her gradual awareness of the boundaries imposed upon her is a case study in women's rights,” she writes.

The result is an unsparing but sympathetic take on a woman previously best known for her extravagant wardrobe, palatial homes, imperial manner, and philanthropy, including support for James Joyce while he wrote *Ulysses*, and donation of the land on which Brookfield Zoo was built (to avoid paying taxes on it, but still).

Also, an eight-year sojourn with Carl Jung, and the widely publicized monkey-gland virility implant undergone by her (then-former) husband.

Edith was John D. Rockefeller's fourth daughter. (The son he was hoping for arrived two years later.) In spite of her father's enormous wealth, the children were raised—first in Cleveland, later in New York—in a strict, sober, and frugal Baptist environment. Edith, the smartest and most studious of her siblings, rejected both the religion as practiced and the frugality.

When she wed Harold McCormick in 1895, newspapers across the country trumpeted the merger between the “Prince of McCormick Reaper” (soon to become International Harvester) and the “Princess of Standard Oil.” Harold, never her intellectual equal, was a happy-go-lucky extrovert to Edith's deep thinker. Ross speculates that, for the bride, a major upside of the wedding was, at last, the freedom to spend.

And spend they did, buying a no-longer-extant 41-room mansion at 1000 Lake Shore Drive, close to the mansion of Harold's parents. (You can still visit the latter if you hurry—it houses the soon-to-close Lawry's restaurant.) They also built and furnished an even bigger summer home in Lake Forest, opting for an Italian-style villa after Edith lit-


erally turned her back on a plan submitted by Frank Lloyd Wright. Meanwhile Edith adorned herself with jewels that included Catherine the Great's emeralds and a \$2 million string of pearls, rationalizing her lifelong spending orgy as “the woman of wealth . . . only doing her duty” by putting her money into circulation. Ross, sympathies notwithstanding, nails this as “trickle-down economics at its finest.”

Edith promptly produced two sons, followed by three daughters. But two of the children died in childhood: firstborn son Jack at the age of three, and infant middle daughter, Editha. Ross writes that after these losses, Edith, “uncomfortable with emotion by nature,” drew “further back into her shell,” eventually suffering panic attacks in addition to an increasingly severe chronic agoraphobia. Harold, with two siblings diagnosed as schizophrenic (T. C. Boyle's *Riven Rock* is a fictional version of the life of Harold's younger brother, Stanley), checked himself into the Swiss psychiatric hospital that would soon be the home base for Carl Jung.

On April 1, 1913, Edith—two of her children, assorted staff members, and Jung himself in tow—sailed to Europe where she would embark on a lengthy course of treatment at his clinic. She would also pay for the translation of his work into other languages, underwrite the Zurich facility that's still a hub for his followers, and, eventually, be “anointed” (Ross's word) by Jung as an analyst herself.

When she returned to Chicago in 1921, she was in the midst of a divorce that turned out to be very expensive for her, in spite of the fact that it was her husband who wanted it, having abandoned her for an aspiring opera singer. (Did I mention that, in happier days, they'd given Chicago its first opera company?) His legal team included Clarence Darrow. She was accompanied on this return trip by a young male friend whom she would soon bankroll in a real estate development company that boomed and then went bust in the Great Depression, taking thousands of small investors down with it.

Edith died of cancer in the Drake Hotel in 1932, so broke and indebted her body laid in the vault at Graceland Cemetery for years before her surviving son arranged for her to be buried near the lake there—where she can still be found, flanked by her two dead babies.

This is fascinating, stranger-than-fiction Chicago history, and a page-turner. Can't wait for the miniseries it's sure to inspire. 

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## POETRY CORNER

### It was all a Dream / I Used to Read *Word Up!* Magazine

By Dan "Sully" Sullivan

On Friday night we hit up a house party & rapped  
in Sarah's finished basement. Mike didn't drink.  
When some kid fell off the stationary bike

I watched Mike lift him into a cab to get him  
home safe. Afterward, Dave said *we gotta get  
BG Fries* & we did. I screeched out the parking

lot at Sub Tender in my '93 Saturn SL2 like  
a jackass. The rubber burned the whiteness  
off pavement lines. That officer must have been

waiting for some after school special to do  
something because he followed us all the way  
to Noodles & Company before the lights lit

us up. I got off with a warning but I was salty  
all night—*Two black kids & a white kid driving.*  
*Of course he's gonna pull us over. Racist cop. Like,*

*I can't have Black friends in my car. Can't just  
let us live.* The word *us* floating from my tongue,  
easy. Mike & Dave stood in my parents' kitchen

when I said it. Said *I hate what cops think of Black  
folks. Black friends in a white suburb. I mean, what  
else could it be.* They stood patient in the alien

of kitchen halogen & took in my white-heat  
temper. The next night, we were driving around  
at 2 AM, bored & young, so I started snatching

up traffic cones & orange-rhythmed barricades,  
shoved them in my trunk, headed down Oak Park  
Avenue & rerouted the stoplight at Jackson

right near the Eisenhower. Dave said, *Nah* &  
stayed in the car the whole time. Mike laughed  
on beat & staccato, but he got leads in school

plays so knew when to act. I yelled *Wutang*  
into the still suburban streetlight & Dave just  
shook his head. I thought it was dope how he

would quote *Ghost Dog* & tell me to drink  
more tea. Mike rocked Raekwon on the tape  
deck in my car but I knew he knew all the words

to *Seasons of Love* from *Rent* too. I would say  
*listen to this Eyedea joint.* Like, I could see  
myself in the white rappers. They liked it. I think.

Dan "Sully" Sullivan holds an MFA/MA from Indiana University. His first book of poems, "The Blue Line Home" was published by EM-Press in 2014. "Respect the Mic: Celebrating 20 Years of Poetry from a Chicagoland High School" edited by Hanif Abdurraqib, Franny Choi, Dan "Sully" Sullivan, and Peter Kahn is forthcoming from Penguin Workshop.

A biweekly series curated by the *Chicago Reader* and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation. This week's poem is curated by poet Tara Betts. Tara Betts is the author of two poetry collections, *Break the Habit, Arc & Hue*, and the forthcoming *Refuse to Disappear*. She also co-edited *The Beiging of America* and edited a critical edition of Philippa Duke Schuyler's *Adventures in Black and White*. In addition to her work as a teaching artist and mentor for young poets, she's taught at prisons and several universities, including Rutgers University and University of Illinois-Chicago. In 2019, Tara published a poem celebrating Illinois' bicentennial with Candor Arts. Tara is the Poetry Editor at *The Langston Hughes Review* and the Lit Editor at *Newcity*. Betts is currently hard at work to establish The Whirlwind Center on Chicago's South Side.

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### Reading for Young People: Carson Ellis

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author and illustrator of the bestselling  
picture book *Du Iz Tak?*  
Saturday, October 31, 12:00 PM



## CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

# 'If they cannot hear you when you whisper, watch when you say a cuss word'

Black and trans activists build networks of support and mutual aid at Brave Space Alliance.

By **FRANCESCA MATHEWES**

**F**lood's Hall is a nondescript building in Hyde Park, next to the back patio of Mellow Yellow restaurant, that houses nonprofit offices. I visited on a hot day in August, sweating under my cloth mask. There was a sticky note plastered to the front door, instructing people to bring donations to the third floor.

I exited the elevator and was greeted by a vibrant office. A colorful mural of Sky Cubacub, a nonbinary, queer, disabled, Filipinx activist, organizer, and founder of Rebirth Garments, covered the wall. This was, without a doubt, the right place.

Brave Space Alliance (BSA) is the first and only Black- and trans-led community center on Chicago's south side. The organization, which was founded in 2017 by LaSaia Wade, an Afro-Puerto Rican Indigenous trans woman, has grown exponentially in the past year and expanded its food pantry program and mutual aid network to include thousands in the city, moved into a permanent office, launched an \$800,000 fundraising campaign, and hired two new full-time staffers.

BSA Office Manager Courtney McKinney, who connected with Wade through Chicago's ballroom scene, walked me from room to

room. The space felt comfortable and professional, an office environment with a warm hum of activity. I imagined that normally the halls would be bustling with employees and community members, arms full of groceries and clipboards keeping track of supplies. Instead, because of the pandemic, it's a little quiet—just a few employees keeping things running.

Bags of groceries, tampons, soap, hand sanitizer, baby supplies, and other essential items were stacked on shelves and floors. It was a full-blown mutual aid operation.

"When I first came? It was hectic," McKin-

ney told me. "We had a lot . . . a lot of donations everywhere. We had people coming in, going out, coming in, all with donations. And now, we're at the point we need to be."

I spoke to Wade over Zoom in August, shortly after she stepped back into her role as executive director after maternity leave. "I was talking to my partner while he was driving," Wade said. She was multitasking on our call. Her camera was off and I could hear her cooing to her crying baby between responses. "It was a few weeks before the [Trans Liberation March] happened, and I was like, 'I know for a fact that a collective cannot really hold a structural power complex, especially a nonprofit, accountable.' I thought, 'I need to create something different.'" Wade was inspired by a study on "brave spaces" that she had participated in during college. She dubbed the new nonprofit Brave Space Alliance. "It really hit the ground running," she said.

"For a long time, LaSaia had been talking about how there's so little space for trans people, especially Black trans people, in the world of LGBTQ centers," said Stephanie Skora, a white, Jewish, genderqueer lesbian trans woman, who is now BSA's associate executive director. Wade hired Skora shortly after founding the organization. She was the acting executive director when we spoke on Zoom in early August, when Wade was still on maternity leave. I paused for my next question while she took bites of her sandwich, in what I'm sure was a precious lunch break. "When it comes to organizations that are actually designed to serve trans folks and center the lives of Black trans people, there's nothing," Skora said. "LaSaia saw that gap. She saw that need."

For Wade, BSA has not only been a project to serve the needs of Black and trans folks, but to demonstrate what her communities are capable of when given opportunity and resources. "We're able to hire trans people to do this amazing work, where they have been displaced by other organizations and told they're not capable," Wade said.

Skora said BSA is an abolitionist organization that doesn't work with the police, "founded on the values of mutual aid and community good and collective liberation." BSA's vision is to empower Black and Brown trans folks with what they need to be brave, to carve their own spaces in a world where their safety is systemically compromised.

"BSA has meant turning the tables, it's

meant showing that we can be a model of change,” Wade said. “It’s meant showing that we can be the tip of the arrow while everyone else is behind it. The method of organizing and the way people have made systems has failed us. And they need to go back to the drawing board.”

Black and Brown trans folks “don’t need to rely on the charity or the benevolence of cis people,” said Skora. “We can have our own organizations; we should have our own organizations. When we’re given our due, when we’re given proper access to everything that trans people are owed . . . we can thrive.”

BSA has not been spared the systemic inequities and oppressions. The organization was forced out of multiple offices before landing in Hyde Park. “It’s about people trusting trans people and acknowledging that I’m a whole human. I’m a whole human with a master’s degree,” Wade said. “I’m not a child. And because they’re fascinated with my transition, and not my personhood, I become an object to fantasize over and not to trust in

leadership. That’s what I want to challenge.”


“But people saw us,” said Skora. “People saw the mission. Slowly but surely the money started to come in.” Skora said the organization launched with \$5,000 and ended the year with \$50,000. BSA has sought to not only be a center for resources like food or microgrants, but has manifested “a seat at the table of power in order to advocate for the needs of Black trans people.” Soon after moving into the Hyde Park office in October 2019, BSA was awarded a grant from Gilead Pharma to run their HIV prevention program, which is based on a mutual aid network. “Black and Brown trans people are systemically underhoused or unhoused people,” Skora said. “They have to worry about whether or not they have a roof over their head or whether they can feed themselves, rather than whether or not they have HIV.”

BSA’s existing foothold in the community and mutual aid network made it possible to pivot and expand programming during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which

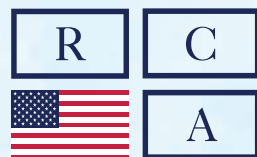
has disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx communities in Chicago. The organization launched the Trans Relief Fund, which mobilized to assist trans individuals with getting microgrants, food, and other essentials within days. By Skora’s count, BSA distributed over \$120,000 before becoming completely overwhelmed with requests. The Crisis Pantry had similar success, servicing 3,000 individuals in its first two months.

And in late May when protests erupted after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, BSA expanded the food pantry and aided demonstrators with necessary supplies. The organization has also assisted in jail support efforts alongside other activist organizations, like Black Lives Matter Chicago and the Black Abolitionist Network. BSA is also finalizing a telehealth service in which people will be able to remotely access therapists to receive referrals for hormone therapy, gender changes on forms of ID, and other services specific to the needs of trans people.

Wade said the way to keep expanding and accomplishing these goals is to “go in with guns blazing.” “What we’re seeing now is over 400-some years of demanding change and nothing happening,” she said. “So I have to change the strategy. We tell people—and this is so important, it’s imperative—if they cannot hear you when you whisper, watch when you say a cuss word, the whole conversation changes.” She continued. “It goes right into ‘Why are you being belligerent?’ ‘Why are you against us?’” she said. “Now you have become the enemy because you are demanding your life to be sustainable.”

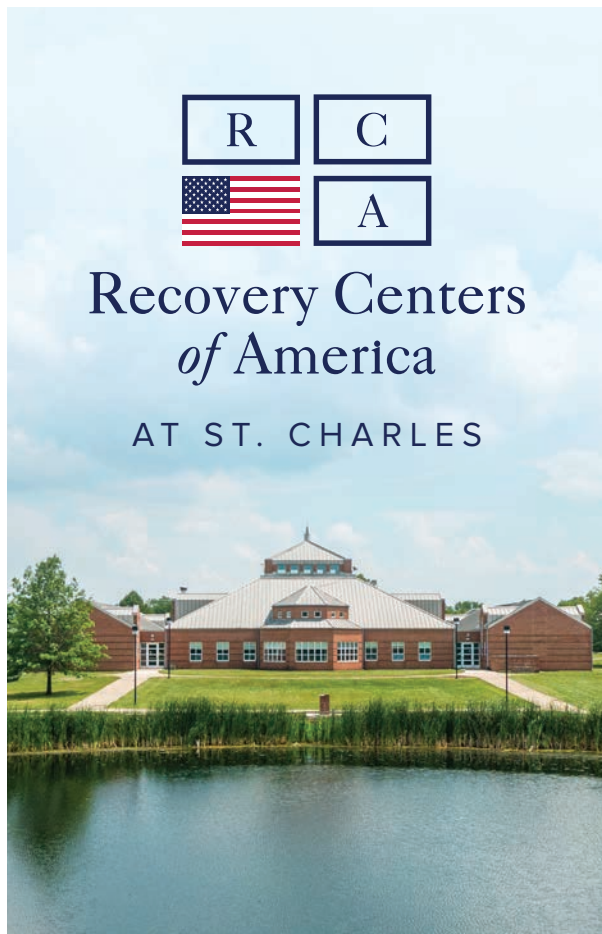
The vision for BSA’s future is about imparting, empowering, and uniting individuals to take on these challenges. “It’s the complete act of changing the narrative when we talk about the particular bravery you need when you step in particular spaces,” Wade said. She paused, took a breath. “It’s about, ‘How brave do I have to be to be in this space?’” 

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## MEDICAL PANIC

# You're going to be OK

Dealing with health anxiety during COVID and beyond

By RIMA PARIKH

Here is how you explain to a doctor that, despite the fact that you seem OK and are not visibly dying, you do have a rare illness that requires immediate medical attention. You do it calmly, because if you reveal that you're freaking out, then they'll know you're a lunatic. Panicking is intimate; it's meant for the close friends and family, if any, that you've been frenetically recounting your symptoms to as they talk you down. You explain your symptoms with detailed precision: when they started, which symptoms started on which day. You point to every inkling of a physical symptom: *Here's where the rash was. Here's where the swelling is a little bit right now, but when I'm home sometimes it's worse.*

*Here is where I'm feeling cold.* Then, before the doctor can tell you to wait a few days to see if it gets better, you slip in a few conjectures on what you think it is, based on your careful research. You throw in an "I think it could be . . ." or a "Maybe it's . . ." so that you don't sound too confident, and the doctor doesn't think you're crazy. The doctor explains why both of your self-prescribed diagnoses are unlikely or impossible, based on your symptoms. You protest, but not too much—panic is not for the doctor, and plus, the last time you panicked at the doctor, she got stressed out, prescribed you Xanax and left the room—but the doctor sees where you're going and lets you know, sometimes gently, that you're OK. This

reassurance should mean something, but it doesn't. You're back to googling, trying to find a workaround because even though you know in your head somewhere that you probably *are* OK, the louder part of your brain is scared of what happens if you're not.

I've experienced anxiety around my health for a long time. It was only within the last few years that I put a name to it. Whenever I'm worrying excessively about my health, being able to remind myself that my symptoms are of anxiety lets me acknowledge that there is something wrong, but also that there's a solution to the problem.

Health anxiety is not a categorized disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Rather, it's anxiety that's health related that can show up in different types of disorders, according to Dr. Shona Vas, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience at the University of Chicago. It can manifest in panic disorder (i.e., feeling physical symptoms of anxiety and believing that those are symptoms of an

illness), generalized anxiety disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, to name a few. With COVID, health anxiety can manifest in different ways. "People who have panic disorder are almost constantly scanning their bodies, looking for symptoms and then worrying if those are COVID symptoms," says Vas.

During the pandemic, health anxiety has been complicated by the fact that there is a legitimate threat of a scary illness, especially when factoring in one's personal level of risk. Many people are having COVID anxiety, but some people are experiencing it more severely in terms of worries over catching the virus. This worry leads to people taking extreme measures—for example, not leaving the house at all. "That baseline concern is pretty normative, but when we're thinking about health anxiety, we're thinking about something that really gets in the way of people being able to think or function. When you're taking measures that in your mind are safety precautions, but they're safety precautions that cause notable inconvenience or notable

✦ VALERIE VON RUBIO

disruption of your day-to-day activities, then that's when we would consider it to be excessive," says Dr. Inger Burnett-Zeigler, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University who practices through Northwestern Medicine. In her experience, individuals who are at higher risk experience COVID-related health anxiety the most aggressively. "There are people who are in circumstances where they have not been able to work from home, or they have preexisting health conditions," she says. "So when you take into account their personal circumstances, and consider that as their trigger for an increase in anxiety, I wouldn't necessarily consider that excessive."

**T**he first time I experienced health anxiety was in the third grade, when I told my pediatrician that I didn't feel like my head was connected to my body. She suggested that I eat more ice cream. There was a second time somewhere around then too, when I had what I described as an unending stomachache. The time after that was in the fifth grade, after a few stray headaches convinced me I had brain cancer. I remember drinking a tall styrofoam cup full of a thick, bland liquid to prep for a CT scan. The nurse comforted me, saying, "You're going to be OK." I felt guilty that she didn't know that this was just part of the rotation. She didn't know that I was in there because I had begged my mom to take me, that I had protested against my pediatrician's assessment that there was nothing wrong with me.

It would always start with something innocuous—a headache, a suspicious bruise, an especially visible vein. Then, the others would follow: dizziness, increased heart rate, feeling hot, feeling cold, my fingers and toes swelling and burning. I'd go to my campus health center; I'd text pictures of rashes to my cousins who were doctors; I'd spend hours worrying. I had a hard time believing that mental health was real then. I thought that anxiety was something that rich kids at my predominantly white university made up, and that I wasn't soft like them. If it were real, you could see it. When my fingers would swell up like little red blimps, a patchy rash spreading across my arm and chest, my head clouded with dizziness and my heart racing, I would take that as confirmation that I had a rare illness that was so rare, no doctor would think to diagnose it unless I did the research first. Even though I know now

that these are symptoms I have when I feel anxious, it's still hard to not imagine the worst case scenario.

A few weeks ago, I hit my head against a towel rack in my bathroom. I like to think it happened because I am a beautiful, leggy model who is too tall to keep from getting attacked by bathroom fixtures, even though it's actually because I do not watch where I'm going. After it happened, one side of my nose started dripping (hot, I know), and I self-diagnosed it using my degree from the WebMD School of Medicine. I called my cousins who are doctors, who asked: "Did you pass out?" "Do you have a headache?" "Do you have a fever?" The answer to all of them was "no," which meant they weren't worried. I imagined Technicolor liquids dripping and oozing and falling through my nasal passages, dripping down my throat and into my

**I'M AFRAID OF THE IDEA THAT ONE DAY, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN TO ME AND I WILL NOT BE PREPARED. IT WILL REAR ITS HEAD WHEN I'M NOT PAYING ATTENTION, WHICH IS WHY I ALWAYS NEED TO BE PAYING ATTENTION.**

stomach, infecting my intestines, colluding in my bowels. Weeks later, I couldn't stop googling cerebrospinal fluid—or, as I affectionately called it, brain juice—wondering if there was any chance that a head injury from three weeks ago could leave time for a brain leak, and if it had been happening the whole time, and that my brain was running out of stuff to slosh in, and that I was dying very, very slowly—despite my only symptom being a minor headache, and even though my cousins and the Internet told me this was impossible. For every forum full of people detailing their

weird medical emergencies, why isn't there another website where people share stories about times they felt normal after an Advil?

When I feel health anxiety, it's like I'm drowning in a swimming pool full of syrup, the viscous liquid oozing into my ears and nose and between my fingers, a warm familiar feeling that reminds me this has happened before—a strange comfort—yet still paralyzes me. I'm scared that I will die. I am convinced that it's happening. I imagine the ways the inside of my head is dripping, pieces of my brain getting ready to slither down to the inside of my nose. And the second part is vindication. I want to be right. I want something to be wrong so that I can prove that I wasn't out of my mind, and that what I was feeling was real, and that everyone was wrong to doubt me. Health anxiety can be all-consuming and simultaneously absurd. When I'm panicking about my health, it initially feels very scary, and then it feels both scary and normal. My inner monologue adjusts to what it thinks a woman who is about to die sounds like: *Oh, I'm so excited for my haircut! Would you be a little more gentle with my left temple? I bumped my head recently and now I'm going to die.*

Vas believes there are two main factors that pertain to health anxiety that are heightened with the threat of COVID. The first is uncertainty. "Uncertainty, in general, is not something that we like as human beings. We want to know. We want to be able to make a plan. And what we do know about it is that it is, for specific groups of people, a very dangerous and scary disease." The second is the lack of control we have over the situation. "Because we don't know how to manage this in general, and we also can't control other people's behavior, it makes us more anxious," she adds. Vas explains that taking precautions varies based on one's own individual risk, and the best thing to do is to follow public health guidelines.

It is the uncertainty that scares me, both with COVID and general health anxiety. I'm afraid of the idea that one day, something will happen to me and I will not be prepared. It will rear its head when I'm not paying attention, which is why I always need to be paying attention. When my brain tries to convince me that this is true, I try to take a step back. Like Vas and Burnett-Zeigler both say, assessing the likelihood of a risk is important. What are the chances that I have a rare illness? Not a ton. I reasoned with myself: what would a doctor do? A doctor would tell me to wait it out to see if it gets worse. What would the ER do? Ask me

why I don't have insurance and then charge me thousands of dollars to tell me to wait it out. I waited it out. Eventually, after a few days of certainty that my head wasn't getting worse, I relaxed. Finally, I could watch *90 Day Fiancé* without wondering whether my last words would be, "Oh my god, this bitch is making a huge mistake."

I am lucky. I have a boyfriend who will research WebMD for me when I don't trust myself to be alone with my brain, and talk me down when I feel myself getting dizzy and choking on air. I have cousins, who, even if they don't know exactly how to address the symptoms, can give me advice on what I should do next. I don't go to my cousins unless I really have to, because even though they are always there to help, I also know that you can only cry wolf so many times before you stop being taken seriously. Instead, I go to my checklist: Did you drink water? Did you get enough sleep? Did you take deep breaths? Is your nose stuffy because your brain's falling out of it, or do you have allergies? Are you drowsy because you're losing consciousness due to a parasitic worm squatting in your kidney, or because you drank a glass of wine immediately after taking an allergy pill? Your body is smart, and if there's something that's really, really wrong, you'll know. Sometimes it's easy to hyperventilate after reading the article about how you can die hours after a head injury; it's harder to focus on the fine print that says that you'd feel really, *really* bad before something like that would happen.

In therapy, Burnett-Zeigler works with patients to assess the risk involved in getting a rare illness, "helping someone to see that the likelihood of that outcome manifesting is rare and to reframe their worry, and then use that alternative thinking in the moment when that intense fear or worry turns up," she says. For people who don't have access to therapy, Burnett-Zeigler recommends mindfulness, which involves paying attention to how the body reacts to stress and figuring out what triggers it in order to better respond when that stressor comes up. "People with anxiety feel like they're worried all the time when in fact, there are specific peaks and valleys to that worry," she says. "If the person can identify those peaks and valleys, then in the moment when there's a peak, we can really dive into that and see and use those mindfulness tools, use those body relaxation tools, to really work with how anxiety manifests in the body." **✎**

**✈ @rimaparikh12**

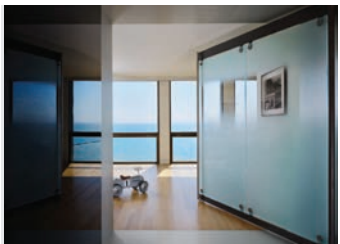
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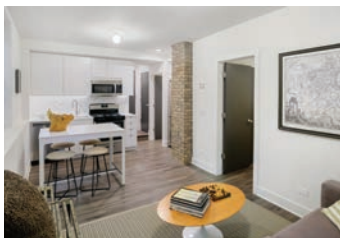
Super cool tri-level timber loft with 2 garage spaces.



123 S. Green St. #1206B  
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Dramatic designer penthouse with soaring ceilings and amazing views.



2750 N. Kenmore Ave. #GF  
Lincoln Park

\$209,000

Stylish and smart 1-bed in new conversion.



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bradlippitz.com  
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Vocalo 91!

# Vocalo Presents



## Sen Morimoto

Thu. October 22 | VOCALO FB Live | 7pm

Sen Morimoto joins Vocalo for an intimate virtual performance followed by a live Q&A with Jill Hopkins that will touch on the importance of civic engagement and voting.

Register at [vocalo.org/events](https://vocalo.org/events)



# PLAY WITH PURPOSE

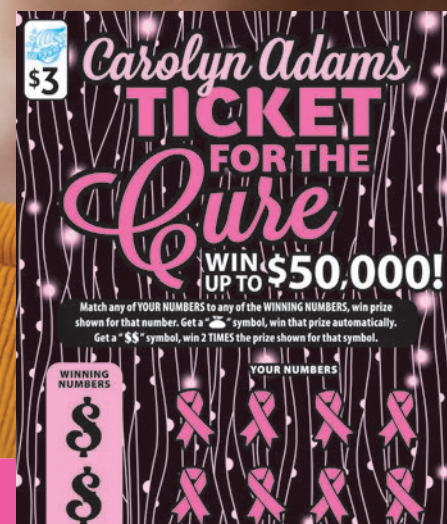
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# ARTS & CULTURE



Veronica Martinez EMILY BOYCE

in architecture. He then scored his first job at a firm.

Rodriguez suffers from the same genetic disorder his mother did. At the end of 2017, his kidneys failed.

"You're in a chair, you know, hooked up to machines for four hours, three days a week," Rolando says of his year and a half spent on dialysis for polycystic kidney disease. "That's kind of where I started sketching more often, to take my mind off of it."

He was lucky to obtain one organ from a donor and now lives a relatively normal (though quiet) life—but his health status prevents him from attending protests. When they started earlier this year in response to police brutality, he ached for a way to contribute, knowing that he would be out photographing if he felt safe to do so.

The first protest photo he sketched, of a riot in Minneapolis, didn't capture much attention. But soon enough, his sketches of Chicago photographs started spreading on social media. Assembling them into a zine seemed natural; he kept the cost low and gave free copies away to activists. "I consider myself more of a DJ," Rolando says. "I'm giving things a second life."

The response to his sketches has been overwhelmingly positive. Rather than considering him a copycat or a plagiarizer, photographers have been impressed by his interpretations of their work. At the beginning of October, he published his second zine, this time watercolor sketches of nature scenes. Money from each issue sold will be donated to Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, a group that has been organizing around environmental justice issues in La Villita, a neighborhood burdened by toxic industry since 1994.

## Veronica Martinez

The pandemic brought on a moment of reckoning for first-generation Mexican American and illustrator Veronica Martinez. She found a deep sense of community and hope in the protests this summer—one she hadn't felt working in retail, which used to be her full-time job. Once action hit the streets, she began capturing the tense moments of Cicero, where she grew up, which shook with violent unrest and clashes between Black and Brown neighbors. Pulling from her Latinx culture's roots of family and community, she felt compelled to do her part to heal and bring people together.

"Wanting to help each other out is at the

## PROTEST ART

### The movement will be beautified

In a show of racial unity, Latinx artists across Chicago have spent the summer contributing their talents to the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020.

By RAVEN GEARY AND ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

As we reflect on the year so far and think forward to November, political art has never been more important. The Latinx community, which has a long history of "artivism," has brought power to racial struggles for decades and helped unite Chicago and capture the fervent energy this summer. In a culturally rich and diverse but segregated city, Latinx artivism shows there is power in community, especially in the midst of a pandemic that disproportionately hits Black and Brown Chicagoans the worst.

To culminate the celebration of Latinx Heritage Month—also called Hispanic Heritage Month, though that is far less inclusive of what it means to be Latinx—which began September 15, we're highlighting five Latinx artists bringing voice to the social justice movements of our time and how identity blends with their work.

#### Rolando Rodriguez

Rolando Rodriguez gets his hands from his father. His padre was a sign painter. As a child

growing up in Bridgeport, he enjoyed sketching and had a deep attraction to the lines, light, and shapes cast by Chicago architecture. A first-generation Mexican American, he has always had a connection to the arts—but finding his path did not come easily. In 2014, his life was upended by a series of catastrophic personal events; all in one year, he lost his mother, he got salmonella, and he was fired from his retail job.

Unsatisfied with just about everything in his life, he went back to school, earning a degree

Fernando Delgado  ÓSCAR SÁNCHEZ



core of why I create art,” Martinez says. “Is it going to change the world? I don’t know, but if it can help somebody tell their story, then great.”

Martinez felt like gasoline was poured on Chicago this summer—a fuel to create, organize, and be heard. She demoted herself at work and started illustrating for Cicero Independiente, *South Side Weekly*, and now, Injustice Watch. She has made protest flyers and political art reflecting the upcoming election, police department corruption, and school board protests. She created three murals, in Berwyn, Pilsen, and Little Village, for Alivio Medical Center, showing Black and Brown hands clasped tight with the same message: “Las Vidas Negras Importan” (Black Lives Matter). She says it calls attention to the racism in Latinx culture and is important for the community to see during the pandemic.

“As Latinos, we have a lot of work to do,” she says. “I felt like our community kept hiding behind, ‘We are minorities too,’ but no, we can also be complicit in anti-Blackness. I felt this need to put it out on the wall.”

## Óscar Sánchez and Fernando Delgado

After losing his job at a call center due to the

pandemic, Fernando Delgado turned to art to contribute to the movements. The Mexican-American illustrator’s work was never political until now. He joined social justice groups to visually spread facts about Lori Lightfoot’s stance on the police and issues facing the Latinx community, such as immigration rights, environmental racism, and gentrification. His graphic calling to abolish ICE and defund the police is what really took off. “Sin justicia, no hay paz,” (without justice, there is no peace) and “La migra, la policia, la misma porqueria” (ICE officials, the police, both are good-for-nothing trash) is written on the design, which features a group of protesters and ears of corn. A delightful yet impactful parody of the El Milagro tortilla design, the image received an overwhelming response and resonated with the Latinx community.

“Art really came through for me, and not only art, but the people supporting it, and that’s most important to me,” Delgado says.

One of those people is Óscar Sánchez, a first-generation Mexican-American photographer and community organizer who saw the Abolish ICE work and knew its message needed to spread. Sánchez helped create T-shirts and tote bags for sale and helped with market-

ing and production. “I want to be known for serving people,” Sánchez says. “I want to know the right people that have a talent.”

His goal is always to connect with the community and create with intention. Delgado’s project does this by shining a light on the immigrant struggles and showing solidarity with Afro-Latinxs, Central American immigrants, and others who aren’t as tokenized in the immigrant narrative as Mexicans are.

“It’s powerful—it’s about understanding the institutions at hand meant to tear apart our communities,” he says. “You can’t spell police without ICE. When I smile, when I wear this shirt, it’s a middle finger to the oppressor.”

Delgado didn’t expect his work to be so well-received, but he sold out of the first batch of T-shirts in less than a month. Now, he’s working on production for the second batch and plans to donate proceeds to pro-immigration causes. “It makes me really proud to see people are wearing these shirts, the bags, and saying, ‘This is my message,’” he says.

## Rebel Betty

Amara “Rebel Betty” Martín is a lifelong Chicagoan and third-generation Puerto Rican. Growing up in Lakeview in the 90s, she found

refuge in after-school arts programs. She wanted to be an artist from a very young age and has explored all kinds of media, from collages and handmade items to DJing and video editing. The promotional video she mixed for July’s Black Indigenous Solidarity Rally made waves across social media and was one of the first pieces of hers that caught our eyes—and ears. But she has been a prolific artist for years.

“I feel like the older I’ve gotten, the more I’ve been able to explore my heritage, or where I come from, in my art,” Rebel Betty says. “I didn’t necessarily, as someone living in the diaspora, have a full understanding of what it meant to be Puerto Rican on the mainland.”

Like many others whose grandparents and parents migrated to the mainland U.S., Rebel Betty feels a sense of privilege in being able to spend her time making art. Her grandmother worked in a factory, and her mother had to put her own personal dreams on hold to raise a family. “I take it very seriously, and I honor that I have the opportunity to do it,” she says.

Rebel Betty’s art has strong feminist solidarity themes. She woke up one day compelled to make a collage for Oluwatoyin “Toyin” Salau, a Nigerian-American Black Lives Matter activist who was kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered in June. Toyin was only 17.

“For myself, being a survivor of patriarchal violence, and just violence from men, that really hit me,” Rebel Betty says. Her piece *Black and Brown Forever* shows two masked women, dressed with pink and purple accents, looking toward one another. Splashed across the top in a scrawling font is the phrase, “I got your back, and if we stick together they’re finished.” Between them is the hashtag #VivasNosQueremos (“We want us alive”). The hashtag originated as a reference to the ongoing epidemic of violence against women in Mexico—an infuriating crisis the president of the country has tried to minimize.

Rebel Betty says a summer of activism has definitely influenced the way she approaches her art. “A lot of artists, including myself, have stepped out of our little creative cocoons and gone out into the streets to see what’s happening, what people who organize every day are experiencing,” she says. “I know it will affect our work in the future. I know it definitely has affected my artwork.” 

 @dudgedudy  @arielparella

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## Graduated Income Tax Amendment

The Illinois Constitution currently mandates a flat income tax that taxes everyone at the same rate, regardless of income. The proposed amendment would change our tax system from a flat tax to a graduated tax, which would allow for the rate of taxation to depend on net income level.

### Flat Income Tax

Everyone is taxed at the same rate. In Illinois, that is **4.95% for everyone.**

8 of 41 States with income tax utilizes a flat tax system.

### Graduated Income Tax

The rate of your income tax depends on how much you make. **Only people making 250k or more will see their taxes go up and 97% of Illinoisans will get a tax cut.**

33 of 41 States with an income tax utilize a graduated income tax system.

## How will taxes change?

Tax Rates	Net Income Level	% of IL Taxpayers
<b>4.75%</b>	<b>\$0-10,000</b>	<b>27.2%</b>
<b>4.90%</b>	<b>\$10,001-100,000</b>	<b>58.9%</b>
<b>4.95%</b>	<b>\$100,001-250,000</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
<b>7.75%</b>	<b>\$250,001-500,000</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>7.85%</b>	<b>\$500,001-1,000,000</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>7.95%</b>	<b>Over \$1,000,000</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

\*These rates impact both single and joint filers!

***Paid for by Chicago Votes Action Fund (501c4)***


## What is a Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner?

The MWRD is governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners elected at large from throughout Cook County, Illinois for six-year terms. Terms are staggered so three commission chairs are open every two years. The MWRD treats waste water, provides stormwater management and protects homes and businesses from flooding, protects Lake Michigan, our main water source, and protects the health and safety of citizens and of area waterways.

This voter guide was populated with responses to the 2020 Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Questionnaire. Candidate's full responses can be viewed at [www.chicagovotes.com](http://www.chicagovotes.com).

SCAN ME 



 Identifies incumbents

## Meet the Candidates

### Commissioner Kimberly Neely DuBuclet

Democrat



"I am a mother, a wife, a public servant, a philanthropist and an environmentalist who cares about OUR great lakes, OUR fragile environment and most importantly, our most important resource, water. I was born and raised on the south side of Chicago."

### Troy Hernandez

Green Party



"I'm a 38-year old data scientist, activist, and Green Party MWRD candidate. I earned my PhD in statistics from UIC in 2013. I live in Pilsen and work for IBM. I'm a volunteer director of the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization. I served two 2-year terms as a community representative on the Pilsen Community Academy Local School Council. I'm an organizer for the Chicago R User Group."

### Rachel Wale

Green Party



"I'll bring a unique approach to this position, as I worked as a campaign field organizer for the Southwest side of Chicago, and am currently a Green Party Worth Township Committeewoman. I also have a master's degree in environmental studies, which I would use to implement a plan requiring all area water reclamation facilities to disinfect wastewater, in order to protect the health of families in Cook County."

Please Note: Rachel did NOT complete our questionnaire.

### Eira Corral Sepulveda

Democrat



"I am from a working-class immigrant family who have become entrepreneurs fulfilling the promise of the American Dream through perseverance, strong work ethic, dedication, and pride. I owe my commitment to serve my community with integrity and excellence to them."

### Tammie Vinson

Green Party



"I am a lifelong resident of Chicago running to become a member of the board of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District as a Green Party Candidate. I am a mother, grandmother, special education teacher and resident of the Austin Community. I decided to run as a Green Party candidate because I believe that the issues being promoted by my party are key to efficiently running the district."

Please Note: Tammie did NOT complete our questionnaire.

### Commissioner Cam Davis

Democrat



"Cam's extensive professional qualifications are matched only by his devotion to his family. Cam lives in Evanston with his wife, Dr. Katelyn Varhely, a child psychologist, and is the proud parent of two children. The family hits the beach on a regular basis, and lives in a house bought by Cam's great-grandparents in 1928. Cam grew up in Wilmette, Illinois, going to Gillson Park with his family."

**Paid for by Chicago Votes Action Fund (501c4)**

## Candidate Responses

1. What are your plans to institute stormwater management initiatives to save low-income communities, particularly homeowners, from flooding related damages?



"Stormwater management requires a multifaceted approach with both residents and local governments working together to address the challenges we face with the onslaught of climate change. MWRD must do more to prevent stormwater from entering our overburdened stormwater and sewer systems by promoting the expansion of green infrastructure across Cook County."



"Environmental justice is a top priority for me - and equitable investment and green infrastructure are critical components of achieving it. Climate disruption is causing more severe and frequent storm events, increasing flooding, and causing financial harm to working families."



"It appears as if the MWRD commissioners find it politically inconvenient to their campaign contributors to not have the solution to our flooding be a big engineering solution... so we get delays with pilots."



"As an MWRD commissioner, I've made it a priority to better protect disproportionately impacted communities. Because of this, we now have a Watershed Management Ordinance that recognizes that some communities flood more than others, and some communities need more help than others."

## Water Facts!

The MWRD is in charge of the Stickney Plant which is the largest water facility treatment center in the world. It controls 9,500 acres of land in Cook County, mostly alongside waterways and reservoirs.

The MWRD has the power to lease out a lot of that land and has leased to *polluters like oil refineries, asphalt plants, and antifreeze manufacturers.*

2. How do you see the MWRD's role in stormwater management evolving over the course of the next ten years as we deal with climate change?



"With climate change and increased frequency and intensity of rainfall, I believe the District needs to increase investment in water infrastructure and green infrastructure plans that would help store more water safely in our neighborhoods and communities during storm events."



"In my first term as Commissioner, I will focus on the following priorities: prioritizing equitable investment and environmental justice, collaborating with government offices and community stakeholders to create a comprehensive water resource management plan, uplifting and including community voices, making data publicly accessible, and engaging and educating the public."



"As an expert on data and artificial intelligence, I will bring my technical skills to bear on issues within the MWRD. As commissioner, I will connect the dots between flooding and necessary infrastructure improvements."



"I'm working to pivot MWRD toward more reliance on renewable (e.g., solar, wind) and recoverable (e.g., biogas from our waste streams) sources of energy. And that will bring our energy bills down in the long run, too."



"As an elected Commissioner for the MWRD, I have a responsibility to serve all its constituents, not just ones with money, power or access. If I see community involvement has been lacking, I ask my staff to properly engage with the impacted community before seeking Board approval."



"I would like the Board to revisit the MWRD's Comprehensive Land Use Policy, which was last updated over a decade ago. Through reviewing this policy, the MWRD can update its assessment of how to most productively use land and implement any new measures that more closely meet the needs of the present moment."



"I'm always happy to attempt the usual methods of outreach; e.g. public forums, community discussions, engaging with local non-profits/government officials, etc."



"I've advocated that we put public engagement requirements into our leases so that communities have an opportunity to weigh in on land uses. We did that recently with a proposed recycling plant on the Chicago River, working to make sure that the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) had the chance to have input on the proposed lease."

**Paid for by Chicago Votes Action Fund (501c4)**



## What is the State's Attorney?

The State's Attorney is the lawyer that represents the interests of the state in legal proceedings. They are the head law enforcement in Cook County that holds police accountable for their actions. They have the power to determine independent prosecutors and commend sentencing lengths.

This voter guide was populated with responses to the 2020 Chicago Votes Cook County State's Attorney Questionnaire. A candidate's full responses can be viewed at [www.chicagovotes.com](http://www.chicagovotes.com).

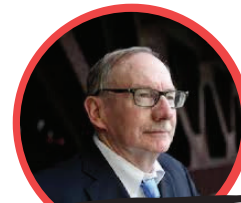
SCAN ME 



**State's Attorney  
Kim Foxx**

### State's Attorney Kim Foxx

State's Attorney Kim Foxx is the current Cook County State's Attorney. Before becoming Cook County's first Black woman to hold the office of State's Attorney, she was the Chief of Staff to the Cook County Board President. State's Attorney Foxx received both her Bachelor's and Law Degree from Southern Illinois University.



**Pat O'Brien**

### Pat O'Brien

Pat O'Brien is a former prosecutor and Cook County Circuit Court Judge. O'Brien is the Republican candidate. He received his bachelor's degree at Notre Dame University and law degree from DePaul University College of Law. He has been practicing law since 1975 in both the private and public sector. A Republican hasn't been elected to the seat since 1990. Please Note: **Pat O'Brien did NOT complete our questionnaire.** Direct quotes taken from the Daily Herald's Debate.

**INCUMBENT**



**State's Attorney  
Kim Foxx**

**CANDIDATE**



**Pat O'Brien**

## Do you support:

Stopping the prosecution of low level, non-violent drug offenses?



"We prioritize violent crime and keeping our communities safe, rather than using resources to prosecute non-violent, low-level offenders."



"The problem isn't ignoring nonviolent drug offenses; the problem is understanding that there are appropriate consequences... If they are charged, you can in fact get them through a program into treatment."

Closing Homan Square Detention Center?



"I don't believe that having facilities that deny the accused access to counsel, or engage in unconstitutional police practices should exist."



N/A

Bringing criminal charges against police officers who falsify or file misleading official reports?



"Yes, police officers should be investigated and prosecuted in the same way that all defendants are prosecuted."



"Any officer, when I'm State's Attorney, that commits any violation of crime, whether it's a financial crime or unlawful excessive force will be prosecuted. Good police will be supported, bad police will be prosecuted."

Reinstating a parole system for Illinois residents?



"I support reinstating parole time to allow an opportunity to assess inmates ability to re-enter the community and be released."



N/A

Ending the incarceration of youth (25 and under)?



"Incarceration should be used as a measure of last resort for 'youthful offenders' (under 25)."



N/A

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## HOW TO READ THE GUIDE:

1. A vacancy has to be filled, your options are listed in the order you will see them on the ballot
2. Listed is the % of bar associations finding the candidate to be at least **qualified** or **recommended**
3. Listed is names of bar associations finding the candidate to be **not qualified** or **flagged by Injustice Watch**.
4. Listed is names that had no further information other than the bar association evaluations in **Black**

THE VOTER GUIDE IS BASED ON EVALUATIONS FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

The Alliance of Bar Associations for Judicial Screening is comprised of the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Chicago Area (AABA), Black Women Lawyers Association of Greater Chicago (BWL), Chicago Council of Lawyers (CCL), Cook County Bar Association (CCBA), Decalogue Society of Lawyers (DSL), Hellenic Bar Association (HBA), Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI), Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA), Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago (LAGBAC), Puerto Rican Bar Association of Illinois (PRBA), and Women's Bar Association of Illinois (WBAI). Chicago Bar Association is denoted by CBA.

\*\*Data taken 10/6/2020 from www.VoteForJudges.org created by Chicago Applesseed www.chicagoapplesseed.org and Injustice Watch injusticewatch.org

### ILLINOIS APPELLATE COURT – First District

Aurelia Maria Pucinski 100%  
Mary Katherine Rochford 100%

### ILLINOIS APPELLATE COURT – NEVILLE VACANCY

Michael B. Hyman 100%

### ILLINOIS APPELLATE COURT – SIMON VACANCY

Sharon O. Johnson 100%

### Cook County Circuit Court Countywide Candidates

#### BELLOWS VACANCY

Tiesha L. Smith 0% Recommend

#### COGHLAN VACANCY

Kelly Marie McCarthy 100%

#### FORD VACANCY

Laura Ayala-Gonzalez 100%

#### FUNDERBURK VACANCY

Celestia L. Mays 100%

#### LARSEN VACANCY

Levander "Van" Smith, Jr. 100%

#### MASON VACANCY

Chris Stacey 100%

#### MCCARTHY VACANCY

Teresa Molina 100%

#### MURPHY GORMAN VACANCY

Sheree Desiree Henry 100%

#### O'BRIEN VACANCY

Elizabeth Anne Walsh 100%

#### PATTI VACANCY

Lynn Weaver Boyle 100%

#### ROTI VACANCY

Lorraine Mary Murphy 100%

#### C. SHEEHAN VACANCY

Maura McMahan Zeller 92% ISBA

#### K. SHEEHAN VACANCY

Jill Rose Quinn 100%

### Cook County Subcircuit Candidates

#### FIRST SUBCIRCUIT – BROOKS VACANCY

Krista D. Butler 0%

#### FIRST SUBCIRCUIT –CRAWFORD VACANCY

Tyria B. Walton 100%

#### SECOND SUBCIRCUIT –"A" VACANCY

Sondra Nicole Denmark 100%

#### THIRD SUBCIRCUIT –FILAN VACANCY

Daniel Edward Maloney 100%

#### THIRD SUBCIRCUIT –FLYNN VACANCY

Regina Ann Mescall 90% CCBA

#### THIRD SUBCIRCUIT –MURPHY VACANCY

Erin Haggerty Antonietti 100%

#### SIXTH SUBCIRCUIT –NEGA VACANCY

Jamie Guerra Dickler 100%

#### SIXTH SUBCIRCUIT –PANTLE VACANCY

Eileen Marie O'Connor 100%

#### SEVENTH SUBCIRCUIT –JACKSON VACANCY

Pamela Reaves-Harris 100%

#### EIGHTH SUBCIRCUIT –FLEMING VACANCY

Jonathan Clark Green 100%

#### EIGHTH SUBCIRCUIT –GUBIN VACANCY

Michael A. Forti 100%

#### NINTH SUBCIRCUIT –AXELROOD VACANCY

Thomas M. Cushing 100%

#### NINTH SUBCIRCUIT –LUCKMAN VACANCY

Julie Bess Aimen 100%

#### TENTH SUBCIRCUIT –ALLEN VACANCY

John G. Mulroe 100%

#### TENTH SUBCIRCUIT –McGING VACANCY

Maire Aileen Dempsey 100%

#### TENTH SUBCIRCUIT –O'BRIEN VACANCY

Mary Catherine Marubio 100%

#### TWELFTH SUBCIRCUIT –HANLON VACANCY

Patricia M. Fallon 100%  
Frank R. DiFranco 100%

#### THIRTEENTH SUBCIRCUIT –KULYS HOFFMAN VACANCY

Susanne Michelle Groebner 91% CCBA  
Gary William Seyring 100%

#### FOURTEENTH SUBCIRCUIT –BETUCCI VACANCY

Gerardo Triston, Jr. 100%

#### FOURTEENTH SUBCIRCUIT –LACY VACANCY

Perla Tirado 70% DSL, WBAI, ISBA

#### FIFTEENTH SUBCIRCUIT –GRIFFIN VACANCY

Nichole C. Patton 100%

### Cook County Circuit Court Candidates up for Retention.

Michael P. Toomin 100%

James Patrick Flannery, Jr. 100%

Mary Ellen Coghlan 100%

Shelley Lynn Sutker-Dermer 100%

Patricia Manila Martin (retiring) 100%

Kenneth J. Wadas 100%

Gregory Joseph Wojkowski 100%

Robert E. Gordon 100%

Lewis Nixon 100%

Margaret Ann Brennan 100%

Janet Adams Brosnahan 100%

Peter A. Felice 100%

Kerry M. Kennedy 100%

Casandra Lewis 100%

Laura Marie Sullivan 90% BWLA

Raul Vega 100%

Michael B. Hyman 100%

Joan E. Powell 100%

Patrick J. Sherlock 100%

Maureen Ward Kirby 100%

Edward A. Arce 100%

James N. O'Hara 100%

Mauricio Araujo 0% All Bars

Thomas J. Byrne 100%

Ann Collins-Dole 100%

Donna L. Cooper 100%

Anna Helen Democopoulos 100%

Diana L. Kenworthy 100%

Pamela Elizabeth Loza 100%

Jackie Marie Portman-Brown 36%  
AABAR, DSL, HBA, HLA, ISBA, LAGBAC, WBAI

Dominique C. Ross 100%

Kristyna Colleen Ryan 100%

Debra B. Walker 100%

Ursula Walowski 100%

Anthony C. "Tony" Kryriakopoulos  
100%

Caroline Kate Moreland 100%

Thomas J. Carroll 100%

Cynthia Y. Cobbs 100%

Daniel J. Kubasiak 90% BWLA

Andrea Michele Buford 100%

Pamela McLean Meyerson 100%

Chris Lawler 100%

John Michael Allegretti 100%

Kristal Rivers 100%

Steven G. Watkins 100%

Abbey Fishman Romanek 100%

William B. Raines 100%

Judith C. Rice 100%

Patrick Kevin Coughlin 100%

John Curry 100%

Megan Elizabeth Goldish 100%

Anjana Hansen 100%

Robert D. Kuzas 100%

John J. Mahoney 73% CCBA, ISBA,  
LAGBAC

Maritza Martinez 100%

Terrence J. McGuire 100%

Bridget Anne Mitchell 100%

James Paul Pieczonka 100%

Diana Rosario 82% ISBA and WBAI

Patricia O'Brien Sheahan 100%

## SCAN ME





Chicagoland's Mental Health Resource

# MY STATE

# OF MIND

THE  
GUIDE  
BOOK



# MENTAL WELLNESS

*just for you*

Hey, it's your friends at SocialWorks here!  
You know...Chance's non-profit with the mission to empower youth through the arts, education and civic engagement? It's us! And guess what? We teamed up with the Reader to present a fun look at our newest mental health initiative, My State of Mind, and it's incredible holistic support.

While the digital resource isn't available just yet (and honestly is too extensive to fit in this insert)we thought it was important to give you a sneak peak and share some of the services available via My State of Mind, Maybe these resources will spark you or your friends wellness journey!

We know this year has been challenging. We've all needed help. Rest assured, there are thousands of people who've dedicated their lives to helping you in a time of need. We say that because we know! They're all included with My State of Mind which aims to have different approaches, specialities, services, competencies, amenities and lots of love as it relates to mental wellness.

Expect My State of Mind to arrive in early 2021 with a wholly reimagined take on mental health access.



@msom4you

# MEET OUR WELLNESS MASCOTS



This squirrel uses a body-centered approach to connect their mind, body, spirit, and tail. When words don't do the trick and one has trouble communicating, the body is used to recharge, refocus, and even repattern the mind.



Mental health waits for no one, especially this cat. Phone, keys, wallet...mental health? Check! This feline connects to mental health through electronic devices. If a recharge is needed, one can simply log onto an app, call a hotline, video chat, or text someone for wellness.

The present of being present is a wonderful thing. When worried about the future or anxious of the past, this turtle focuses on mantras, breathing, and imagery to plant themselves in the present - recharging the body and mind.



Clinical wellness is a practice that has withstood the test of time. Dr. Giraffe dedicates their life to providing personalized services for you. Using assessments, medication and counseling, Dr. Giraffe works with people for the long-term and prepares treatment plans through careful consideration and study.



The arts heal and this sloth takes full advantage of the healing properties of the creative arts. Through the process of creation, peace is found. Sloth encourages tapping into one's imagination to examine their body, feelings, emotions, and thought processes.



The whole is greater than the sum of parts. The Koala believes wellness is a mix of social, financial, environmental, and cultural conditions. Access to the arts, parks, recreation, and safety are some components capable of unlocking one's full potential.

# AFFIRMATIONS

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IS A PRIORITY. YOUR HAPPINESS IS AN ESSENTIAL. YOUR SELF-CARE IS A NECESSITY.

- DR. CONSTANCE WILLIAMS

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF FIRST, EVERYONE ELSE CAN WAIT.

- AILEEN APULI

PRIORITIZE EASE AND PEACE.

- SOCIALWORKS

THE FACT THAT WE ARE HERE AND THAT I SPEAK THESE WORDS IS AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE SILENCE AND BRIDGE SOME OF THOSE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US. FOR IT IS NOT DIFFERENCE WHICH IMMOBILIZES US, BUT SILENCE. AND THERE ARE SO MANY SILENCES TO BE BROKEN.

- MICHELLE THOMPkins

I AM NOT WHERE I WANT TO BE TODAY, BUT I AM FURTHER THAN YESTERDAY. I AM GROWING EVERYDAY.

EACH AND EVERY DAY, I AM GAINING MORE AND MORE CLARITY ON MY PURPOSE AND PASSION.

- A GREATER GOOD FOUNDATION

# MADLIB

• I WOKE UP TODAY FEELING

-----

• I AM GOING TO ACCOMPLISH

-----

• I WON'T BE DEFINED BY

----- OR

STOPPED BY -----

WITH THIS, I WILL REDEFINE MY STATE OF MIND.

# BLACK WELLNESS



@sistaafya  
**Sista Afya**

(312) 880-9739  
[www.sistaafya.com](http://www.sistaafya.com)

Sustaining the mental wellness of Black women through building community, sharing information, and connecting Black women to quality mental wellness services.



@100bmc  
**100 Black Men**

(312) 372-1262  
[www.100bmc.org](http://www.100bmc.org)

100 Black Men of Chicago aims to improve the quality of life within our communities and enhance educational and economic opportunities of African-American males throughout the Greater Chicago area.



@bravespacealliance  
**Brave Space Alliance**

Brave Space Alliance is the first Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ Center located on the South Side of Chicago, dedicated to creating and providing affirming, culturally competent, for-us by-us resources, programming, and services for LGBTQ individuals.

(872) 333-5199  
[www.bravespacealliance.org](http://www.bravespacealliance.org)



FB: HealEmpowerLearn  
**Healing  
Empowering  
& Learning  
Professionals**

(773) 819-5504  
[www.help-llc.org](http://www.help-llc.org)

HELP LLC is a consulting company that provides culturally responsive counseling, psychological, case management and assessment services to children, youth, and adults at schools and social service agencies.



# LATINX WELLNESS



Pilsen Wellness Center  
Centro Bienestar Pilsen

## Pilsen Wellness Center

(773) 579-0832

[www.pilsenwellnesscenter.org](http://www.pilsenwellnesscenter.org)

The Pilsen Wellness Center, Inc. actively seeks to provide holistic human services to individuals and families through culturally sensitive education, prevention, treatment, and recovery interventions.



@eriefamily

## Erie Family Health Centers

Motivated by the belief that health-care is a human right, Erie Health provides high quality affordable care to support healthier people, families, and communities. Erie delivers holistic care to help every member of the family stay healthy and active from infancy through adulthood.

(312) 666-3494

[www.eriefamilyhealth.org](http://www.eriefamilyhealth.org)



@latinxtalktherapy

## Latinx Talk Therapy

(312) 620-7551

[www.latinxtalktherapy.com](http://www.latinxtalktherapy.com)

Latinx Talk Therapy is a counseling space created specifically to serve the Latinx community in the Chicagoland area.



@casacentral

## Casa Central

(773) 645-2300

[www.casacentral.org](http://www.casacentral.org)

Casa Central transforms lives and strengthens communities, with a special focus on Hispanics. Our network of social services propels a diverse population of all ages toward self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life.

# ASIAN WELLNESS



@advancingjusticechicago

## Asian Americans Advancing Justice

(773) 271-0899

[www.advancingjustice-chicago.org](http://www.advancingjustice-chicago.org)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice builds power through collective advocacy and organizing to achieve racial equity, bringing together the Asian American community, and empowering them to create change in their communities.



FB: Asian Health Coalition

## Asian Health Coalition

(312) 372-7070

[www.asianhealth.org](http://www.asianhealth.org)

The Asian Health Coalition has aimed to eliminate health disparities among Asian, Pacific Islander, African, and other communities of color by utilizing a collaborative partnership approach to support the development and implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate health programs and initiatives.



*Midwest Asian Health Association*

FB: MAHAhealth

## Midwest Asian Health Association

Midwest Asian Health Association (MAHA)'s mission is to reduce health disparities for medically underserved, low-income populations in the Midwest though providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services, which include linkage to mental health services, and research and policy advocacy.

(312) 225-8659 (English)  
(312) 225-6806 (Chinese)  
[www.maha-us.org](http://www.maha-us.org)



HEALTHY EDUCATED EMPLOYED

@ahs\_chicago

## Asian Human Services

(773) 293-8430

[www.ahschicago.org](http://www.ahschicago.org)

Since 1978, Asian Human Services has delivered on a singular purpose: to ensure that every immigrant and refugee across Chicagoland has access to personalized support and services necessary to become prosperous.

# LGBTQ+ WELLNESS



Howard Brown  
Health

@howardbrownhealth

## Howard Brown Health

At Howard Brown Health we provide care that respects and values you, just as you are. Our staff is dedicated to helping you live your best life. From pediatrics to geriatrics, we deliver expert care to the LGBTQ community and its allies. Regardless of your ability to pay. We get you.

(773) 388-1600

[www.howardbrown.org](http://www.howardbrown.org)



@translifeline

## Trans Lifeline

(877) 565-8860

[www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org)

Trans Lifeline is a trans-led organization that connects trans people to the community, support, and resources they need to survive and thrive.



@trevorproject

## The Trevor Project

(866) 488-7386

[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

The Trevor Project is an organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ people under 25. The Trevor Project is determined to provide life-saving and life affirming resources including our nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention lifeline, digital community and advocacy /educational programs.



@thenightministry

## The Night Ministry

(773) 784-9000

[www.thenightministry.org](http://www.thenightministry.org)

The Night Ministry compassionately provides housing, health care, outreach, spiritual care, and social services to adults and youth who struggle with homelessness, poverty, and loneliness. We accept individuals as they are and offer support as they seek to improve their lives.

# FAMILY WELLNESS



@stepupformentalhealth

## Step Up For Mental Health

(773) 273-9422

[www.stepupformentalhealth.org](http://www.stepupformentalhealth.org)

Step Up For Mental Health's mission is to support, educate and provide services to empower families living with the challenges of mental health disorders. We do this by providing a safe place to share stories and find support for others who are dealing with mental health disorders or caring for a family member with a mental illness.



@hartgrovebhs

## Chatham Family Counseling Center

Chatham Family Counseling Center provides a full range of behavioral health services, including individual therapy, couples and family therapy, group therapy, psychiatric evaluation and medication management. Community education and professional consultations are also provided.

(773) 413-1700

[www.hartgrovehospital.com](http://www.hartgrovehospital.com)

## NEW MOMS

HOMES · JOBS · STRONG FAMILIES

@newmomschicago

## New Moms

(773) 252-3253

[www.newmoms.org](http://www.newmoms.org)

We partner with families to construct the foundation of well-being by strengthening core life skills, incorporating early childhood development supports, building pathways to and preparation for education and employment, and expanding positive social networks and access to community resources.

Erikson  
Institute

@eriksoninstitute

## Center for Children and Families

(312) 709-0508

[www.erikson.edu](http://www.erikson.edu)

We offer mental health services for families with young children, with an exclusive focus on pre-natal to 5 years old and their parents. We offer Neurodevelopmental diagnostic evaluations for children from age 3 through age 8.

# MINDFULNESS

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A N Y W H E R E

@chill\_out\_chi

**Chill Chicago**

**(312) 222-1442**

**www.chillchicago.com**

Our Mission is to make it a little easier for people to live less stressed, more mindful lives.



MEDITATION CENTER  
OF CHICAGO

@meditationcenterofchicago

**Meditation Center  
of Chicago**

The Meditation Center of Chicago, provides weekly classes and seasonal retreats where they teach and practice different techniques of meditation in a quiet and comfortable group setting, guided by experienced instructors who specialize in meditation.

**(773) 732-4979**

**www.dmcchicago.org**



@roomtobreathechicago

**Room to  
Breathe**

**(414) 436-7244**

**www.roomtobreathechicago.com**

Room to Breathe is a part of Center, an integrative psychotherapy practice. Room to Breathe offers yoga classes, workshops, and other wellness services, empowering you to find the tools that help you thrive.



@lightoflovingkindness

**Light of  
Loving  
Kindness**

**(708) 663-5572**

**www.lightoflovingkindness.org**

Light of Loving Kindness is a non-profit organization, whose divine purpose is to promote Hope, Health, Healing, & Wholeness through hands-on workshops, resiliency services, and education.

MENTAL WELLNESS

JUST  
FOR  
YOU

Find Out More @  
[WWW.MSOM.ME](http://WWW.MSOM.ME)



## Stand for Social Justice and Make a Difference in the Community

At Adler University, we're passionate about creating a more just and equitable society. If you're committed to improving community well-being, we offer several graduate programs – both at our Chicago Campus and Online – in counseling, psychology, public policy and other related fields that can enhance your career and make a difference in the world.

**We stand for social justice. Will you stand with us?**

**Contact us today: 312.662.4100 | Connect with [admissions@adler.edu](mailto:admissions@adler.edu)**  
**Learn more at [adler.edu/Reader](http://adler.edu/Reader) | 17 North Dearborn Street Chicago, IL 60602**

# We all need mental health.

As one of the largest community mental health and substance use treatment providers in Illinois, Thresholds knows the power of recovery. We meet our clients where they are and help get them to where they want to be. Everyone deserves **home, health, hope.**



**THRESHOLDS**

4101 N Ravenswood Ave | Chicago, IL  
773.572.5500 | [www.thresholds.org](http://www.thresholds.org)



Howard Brown  
Health

# BIG ORANGE BALL



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

8 - 10 P.M.

7:30 PRE-SHOW

VIRTUAL EVENT

A SMASH HIT FOR FIVE YEARS, THE BIG ORANGE BALL IS SURE TO BE CHICAGO'S HOTTEST PARTY KICKING OFF THE 2020 HALLOWEEN SEASON!

HALLOWEEN-LOVING PARTYGOERS WILL VENTURE INTO A FRIGHT-FILLED VIRTUAL EVENT TO ENJOY HALLOWEEN-THEMED TREATS, A DEAD-SILENT AUCTION, DANCING TO THE MUSIC OF LOCAL DJs, AND OTHER SPOOKY SURPRISES!

TIX & INFO:

[HOWARDBROWN.ORG/BOB2020](http://HOWARDBROWN.ORG/BOB2020)

Chicago Run is a nonprofit organization that provides young people across Chicago with inclusive running and physical activity programs. Your support is crucial to ensuring that Chicago Run remains a steadfast resource for our communities during these challenging times.

Tune in for Chicago Run's 12th Annual, 1st Virtual

## Little Steps, Big Stars

October 25 - October 30, 2020

A week-long celebration featuring NPR's Peter Sagal

Visit [www.chicagorun.org/LSBS](http://www.chicagorun.org/LSBS) for more information on how you can support programs that provide equitable access to physical activity.

Reader Store  
Shop the Reader

[chicagoreader.com/store](http://chicagoreader.com/store)





# Mental Health is Essential



[www.chicagobehavioralhospital.com](http://www.chicagobehavioralhospital.com)

## Providing Hope for Chicagoland

At Chicago Behavioral Hospital, we believe in providing hope and helping people develop the necessary tools and support systems to achieve and maintain their recovery. Our team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help teens, adults and seniors in need of treatment for conditions related to their mental health, including depression, anxiety, substance use, or thoughts of suicide.

Assessments are free and confidential.

Call us at 844-756-8600.

**Recovery is possible.**



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Visit [jobcorps.gov](http://jobcorps.gov) or call  
(800) 733-JOBS [5627].



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# NEW TIMES REQUIRE NEW THINKING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

need to enjoy retirement.

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

For example, a lot of people mistakenly believe the home must be paid off in full in order to qualify for a HECM loan, which is not the case. In fact, one key advantage of a HECM is that the proceeds will first be used to pay off any existing liens on the property, which frees up cash flow, a huge blessing for seniors living on a fixed income. Unfortunately, many senior homeowners who might be better off with a HECM loan don't even

**Request a FREE Info Kit  
& DVD Today!**

**Call 800-840-8013 now.**

bother to get more information because of rumors they've heard.

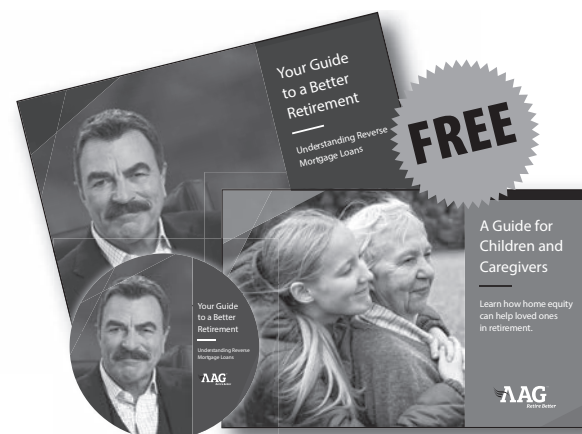
In fact, a recent survey by American Advisors Group (AAG), the nation's number one HECM lender, found that over 98% of their clients are satisfied with their loans. While these special loans are not for everyone, they can be a real lifesaver for senior homeowners - especially in times like these.

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

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

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

**We're here and ready to help.  
Homeowners who are interested in  
learning more can request a FREE  
Reverse Mortgage Information Kit  
and DVD by calling toll-free at  
800-840-8013**



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

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

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

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

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

AAG charges an origination fee, mortgage insurance premium (where required by HUD), closing costs and servicing fees, rolled into the balance of the loan. AAG charges interest on the balance, which grows over time. When the last borrower or eligible non-borrowing spouse dies, sells the home, permanently moves out, or fails to comply with the loan terms, the loan becomes due and payable (and the property may become subject to foreclosure). When this happens, some or all of the equity in the property no longer belongs to the borrowers, who may need to sell the home or otherwise repay the loan balance. V2020.06.30

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**AAG**  
Retire Better





# HELP TODAY HOPE TOMORROW

## SINAI PSYCHIATRY, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

We are pleased to provide comprehensive behavioral health services, including adult inpatient treatment, Bilingual (Spanish) outpatient psychiatric, and mental health services for children, adolescents, and adults, offered in American Sign Language and culturally sensitive manner with a trauma-informed lens. We believe that quality, accessible care is vital to the communities we serve. Behavioral health services are available through telehealth and in-person.

### **CHILDREN & ADOLESCENT PROGRAM, UNDER THE RAINBOW, SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- Individual, Family, and Group Therapy
- 24/7 Mobile Crisis Assessments for Youth
- Medication Management
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Advocacy through a Medical-Legal Partnership

### **INPATIENT SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- Psychiatric Crisis Screening
- Dedicated Adult Unit
- Substance Use Screening, Assessments, Brief Intervention, and Referrals
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Medical Detox, *starting Fall 2020*

### **OUTPATIENT SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- Therapy, including individual and group
- Psychiatric Assessment and Psychiatric Medication Management Clinic
- Substance Use Screen, Assessments, and Referrals
- Life Span Mobile Crisis Assessments
- Intensive Outpatient Program for Adults
- Free transportation services available for outpatient patients

Need help? Call 773-257-5300 to schedule a confidential assessment or receive more information. Our Crisis Workers are available 24/7 at Mount Sinai and Holy Cross Hospital for walk-ins.



[sinai.org](http://sinai.org)

## Understanding How Violence is Both a Consequence and a Cause of the Mental Health Crisis

For many people, life is terrifying right now



Donald J. Dew, MSW, ACSW

The pandemic, the recession, and general social instability is a crisis like we have never seen before. So many people in our society have a newfound sense of powerlessness against external forces that seem out of our control with no end in sight. Americans, in general, are experiencing symptoms of depression at a number three times higher than before the pandemic, according to a study published in August by JAMA Network Open.

But imagine living with this kind of ever-present insecurity, uncertainty and foreboding – not for mere months – but as a permanent state. What does that kind of sustained trauma do to a person's psychological wellbeing? How does it impact the way a person interacts with the world? That is exactly what many of Chicago's hardest hit communities and people face. Every day and night scores of our children and families exist in poverty-stricken conditions; traumatized and paralyzed in states of fear, desperation, and uncertainty. And many of them know no other reality.

The pandemic and its cascading consequences are making everything worse. A report released by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) shows a significant increase in opioid overdoses and opioid-related deaths in 2020, many on Chicago's West Side. In Cook County, there have been 71 suicides in the Black community so far in 2020, compared to 56 in 2019. The Cook County Medical Examiner's Office says 2020 is on pace to be the worst year for suicides in the Black community in a decade.

**The Ongoing Cycle of Violence and Trauma**  
Violence is, by far, the number one scourge in Chicago. Those who have lost their lives or have sustained catastrophic injuries are the first – but not only – victims. The families of the direct victims are very much victims themselves. This includes children at the most vulnerable age who are not well-

equipped to process information, emotions and grief. It includes adolescent youth who are just starting out in life; their behaviors, attitudes and habits forming to last a lifetime. When a person is shot, there are hundreds of people who are impacted.

Ask our children and they will tell you of someone they know who has been shot or killed. Some express their experiences with great empathy and emotions. Others seem numb and desensitized, like they've watched a movie or video game. The violence in some neighborhoods is so prevalent that residents, especially young men, see it as normal.

And when the violence is at the hands of the police – the consequences become even greater. When a child does not (or cannot) trust those in uniform who are ostensibly there to protect, it creates deep wounds that are difficult to heal.

### Violence as a cause of trauma

We have all become familiar with the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. But for many in our society, there is nothing "Post" about the trauma they are facing. It is ongoing. If some are asking about the year 2020 "when will this madness end – it's already been seven months", imagine someone who has faced a worse kind of instability for as long as they can remember. This kind of trauma changes people in many different but always destructive ways.

What's more, there is a growing body of research that severe trauma can cross generations in a family. Generational trauma, first recognized in the descendants of Holocaust victims, is the concept that severe trauma experienced by parents can be unintentionally and subconsciously transferred to their children.

Trauma manifests in a variety of ways. The emotions can include anger and a desire for revenge for the loss of a loved. The emotions can include hopelessness and depression, which can create a downward spiral of behaviors such as self-medicating drug addiction, lethargy or even suicide.

### Violence as a consequence of trauma

The reverse is also true. A great deal of the violence can also be the result of mental illness; if not acutely in a specific diagnosis, then over the longer term in the numbing of one's outlook on life. While it is true that most individuals suffering from mental illness are NOT violent, we can say that most perpetrators of violence do indeed have some underlying

mental health issue. Whether it is domestic violence, street violence or violence by police, trauma in an individual is a contributing factor to how they might act, think, and perceive their life circumstances.

### A Way Forward

Chicago has a mental health crisis. In 2012, six of the City's 12 public mental health clinics were closed. This was already reduced from the 19 clinics that were once in place. This was drastically inadequate before 2020 ushered in a whole new host of problems.

There is a growing movement in Chicago and the nation to move some resources from police to mental health professionals. This is long overdue. Many circumstances that today are handled by police would be more effectively handled by mental health professionals.

Nationally, at least 1 in 4 people killed by police have a severe mental illness, according to the Treatment Advocacy Center's 2015 report "Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters."

This disconnect is funneling people into the justice system when they don't belong there. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, about 2 million people with serious mental health illnesses are booked into jails throughout the country. As a general principle, we have failed people when they have their first experience of mental health services within the justice system. We have failed people when they have their first experience of mental health services within an emergency room.

Specifically, there is a proposal in Chicago to develop a publicly funded and operated 24-hour crisis hotline through the Office of Emergency Management and Communications. This would include vans dispatched from a network of public mental health clinics covering the full City of Chicago. One of the plan's short-term initiatives is to create a co-responder pilot program, in which a mental health professional would respond to a mental health situation with a Chicago police officer. The mental health professional would then work to connect the person in crisis with additional resources outside of the criminal justice apparatus. This would be an enormous step in the right direction.

Yes, this will require public investment. But can we afford not to? Two municipalities in Oregon were able to divert as much as 20 percent of calls from the Police department to mental health providers, say nothing for the savings on other areas of government support when a person is helped rather than jailed. Two and a half years ago, the Cook County Health and Hospitals System funded Habilitative Systems, Inc. to work in partnership with the Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive Behav-

ioral Health Center to establish the Westside Community Triage and Wellness Center to address this issue; thereby reducing unnecessary incarceration, institutionalization and emergency room visits.

Beyond individual programs, we need to keep up our work on removing the stigma around mental health. How is it that an eight year old boy will tell an adult about a knee injury from falling off a bike but will not tell an adult about alarming emotions he is having after a friend of his is killed. In Chicago's African-American communities, admitting the need for mental health care remains one of the biggest challenges.

Most broadly, we need to commit to greater investments in human services generally. The ecosystem of well-being is an interconnected web of education, employment, food security, physical safety, housing, and yes, mental health. It is counter-productive to treat just one area and ignore the others.

The social fabric of our society must be repaired for normal development to occur and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's).

We should all commit ourselves to doing what we can to make this decade of the "20's", which has started off so poorly, the decade when this country and this city finally got on top of the ills which have dogged us for so long. In 2020, let's have a clearer vision and plan for an effective path forward.

We have it within our power to create change if only we have it within our will.



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Ex-Offender Re-Entry Services  
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Persons with Mental Illness

www.habilitative.org  
415 S. Kilpatrick Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60644  
773-261-2252



Helping adults with severe and persistent mental health challenges live productive, enriching and more independent lives within the Metro Detroit community.

### Community Housing

Services range from 24-hour awake staff care to independent living with minor supports — and many options in between.

### Counseling Services and Groups

Therapeutic services address the multi-layered complexities of mental illness.

### Enrichment Programs

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PAIGE VICKERS

## ONLINE CARE

# Therapy patients go digital

COVID-19 is changing how we handle our mental health.

By EMMA OXNEVAD

In an age where one's apartment doubles as an office, therapy patients throughout the city have similarly brought treatment into the home via virtual counseling.

Albany Park resident Frankie Pedersen began seeing a therapist for the first time since college earlier this year due to stress from the pandemic. She says that the process of getting comfortable with a new therapist in a virtual setting didn't happen overnight.

"That was the biggest challenge, just getting comfortable meeting someone for the first time on FaceTime," she says. "I feel like

getting used to a therapist, even in person, it takes time and it's harder. But I feel like there was such a disconnect at first because I think meeting people through a virtual setting, especially someone who you're going to be very honest with, I think it's hard to do online. I feel like [it's] such a different energy when you meet someone in person."

For Madi Ellis of Logan Square, transitioning from the more neutral setting of her therapist's office to her home has proved the most difficult.

"I've been living in my tiny apartment

and it's just pure chaos," she says. "So I sort of have to try to block out everything that's happening. And I see my clothes on the floor, I see pictures of friends on the wall, and these are things I have to really try to block out and focus on what I'm feeling . . . but definitely for me, it's [a] distraction. And I have two cats and I love them, but they're idiots and they meow and they fight."

Despite the challenges associated with adapting to virtual counseling, some have remarked that this new model is far more convenient than commuting to an office. AJ Abelman of Avondale says that getting ready for in-person sessions can take between two and three hours, with driving and finding parking taking up much of her time.

"Instead [at home], ten minutes beforehand, I stop doing whatever I'm working [on] so I can get myself in a clear headspace and

then I log on, and then when it's over I go back to work," she says. "So, I think that that's been hugely beneficial. It's not as much of a time commitment."

Leo Loukas, owner of Chicago Therapy Solutions, is of the belief that in-person therapy is the "pinnacle" of treatment in terms of establishing a connection. However, he finds that virtual counseling can be comparable in terms of quality.

"Because of where technology is today, I would say we are in a really good position to maintain something very close to the in-person experience," he says. "So the technology piece of being able to connect with your client works so well, whether it's Zoom or FaceTime, whatever your mode is, even over the phone, it still works."

In addition to formal counseling, patients throughout the city have prioritized different methods of self-care to combat the stress of an ever-turbulent time. Kat Sullivan of Wicker Park has utilized cooking and exercise as a means of unplugging from constant Zoom meetings.

"It gets a little, not just physically exhausting, but I think it can be emotionally taxing to just be sitting in the same place for hours if you have back-to-back meetings," she says. "So I make sure that I step away for at least an hour, collectively, every day. Maybe it's a walk, maybe it's, you know, I call friends on the phone a lot, or, you know, maybe it's just like sneaking in like a 20- to 30-minute workout."

For Pedersen, self-care includes "taking time for [herself]" and sorting through issues previously left "on the backburner."

"We have a lot of time to work on ourselves right now," she says. "And I think it can be incredibly grounding because things are crazy right now."

Despite the adjustments needed to adapt to virtual counseling, they are ultimately necessary for an increasingly digital age.

"I also think that it's good that we kind of pushed a lot of counselors into the modern age," Loukas says. "Because I think so often counselors are kind of wired so rigid in some of their beliefs about the way we have to provide services. And I think being adaptive about it is really important and incredibly useful to our clients." **■**

[@emmaoxnevad](#)



## DANCE

# Planting seeds, finding joy

At 25, Deeply Rooted still celebrates community.

By **IRENE HSIAO**

**D**eeply Rooted Dance Theater (DRDT), founded in 1995, has been transitioning for over a year. In September 2019, founding artistic director Kevin Iega Jeff passed the baton to longtime DRDT educational director Nicole Clarke-Springer, and a new artistic team, all with long ties to the company, stepped into formation. In his new role as creative director, Jeff absorbed himself with

the task of finding and founding a new institutional home for the company on the south side of Chicago and developing an initiative for interdisciplinary works.

Then 2020. Through the year's challenges, DRDT's principal values have continued to guide its actions: "We believe art is fundamental in forming community . . . We recognize the relationship between the aesthetic and the

political . . . We find joy."

COVID-19 caught DRDT on the verge of premiering *Goshen*, a contemporary rendition of the story of Exodus created in collaboration with gospel artist Donald Lawrence. "Exodus deals with governments gone awry," says Jeff. "People are challenged to free themselves. It's about oppression, connection, and freedom." While they anticipate resuming the project post-pandemic, *Deeply 25*, which launches their 25th anniversary season on October 17, is no less in tune with our present moment, with a mixed bill of works that consider individual relationships to America, the lives of Black men, and possibilities for renewal. "The program was originally called *The Art of Creative Healing*, in response to our times and societal issues, George Floyd, COVID," says

Clarke-Springer. "What do we need to heal ourselves?"

Reflecting on the past 25 years, Jeff describes the work of building a company as a process of building a community, lessons he learned during another pandemic with Jubilation Dance Company, the company he founded at the age of 21 in New York. "We had just met with [editor-in-chief William Como] about positioning Jubilation on the cover of *Dance Magazine*. We were at this incredibly exciting point when we ran smack into the AIDS epidemic," he recalls. "We lost Bill Como, our booking agent, our board chair, [dancer] Aaron Dugger. It was really apparent our infrastructure is the human beings that drive it. I couldn't go on with the work without this team. I dismantled the company and



## Heaven, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater

by MICHELLE REID

focused on a community outreach project. My sister called the recital for that outreach project 'Deeply Rooted.' It came from a poem that Malcolm X wrote about how the arts are deeply rooted in community."

A year directing Chicago's Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre reinforced the need to start from the community up. Jeff began the process of cofounding a new dance company when he stumbled across the old recital program. The name fit their purpose. "We thought it expressed what we wanted to do and the accountability we needed to have. As the company grows, we need to stay nice and plain and simple and humble and understand where we're rooted and what makes all that other stuff possible. So we chose the name Deeply Rooted."

Of their mission, Jeff says, "We weren't

just interested in dance excellence that would speak from an African American perspective aesthetically. We were also interested in African American consciousness, what it meant, and how it needed to be supported. So there were two objectives, an artistic objective and a spiritual objective. Deeply Rooted needed to build a community that would support us with the right challenge, confidence, and humility."

"When we talk about the African American aesthetic, it's not monolithic," he points out. "We're all African if we talk about where humanity had its origins. The human diaspora spread onto the planet and became this incredibly diverse human race. There's an African American Black experience shaped by the way America was founded, but the human experience is where we're all interconnected."

Of the company's continuing work, Clarke-Springer says, "We come with our authentic voices and create space for everyone to have a voice. When the work is created through that process, by bringing who you really are, discovering more about yourself, and putting that onstage, you create community

by allowing others to see themselves inside of it. I think I'm coming to see dance, but I see myself: the best of myself, the worst of myself, the possibilities I could become."

Now, as the world faces a host of challenges, Jeff takes an expansive and optimistic perspective. "I feel prepared because of my experience with AIDS. It doesn't mean it doesn't impact you emotionally, but you know how to unpack the emotion. It's common sense in terms of cause and effect. I attribute that to my mentor Lee Aca Thompson at the Bernice Johnson Dance Studio. We would talk for hours about the cycles of time in creation, how civilizations ebb and flow, the cause and effect of oppression and power. If you notice, many cultures talk about this time in similar ways: things will end for new to begin. Humanity is asking more from us spiritually. There's a consciousness that's awakening. It could be scary, or it could be a really beautiful possibility. I live in the space where it's a beautiful possibility that we have to go through this to get to the other side."

That lesson in faith came at a crucial

moment for DRDT 22 years ago, when Clarke-Springer, then a dancer in the company, gave Jeff a jar of mustard seeds he still keeps on his desk. "I was thinking I couldn't continue to do this work. That's where family comes in. Nobody does this alone. She gave me these mustard seeds, and it touched my heart so deeply. It ignited my accountability to my mentor, my teachers, my family, all the people who helped make me possible. I needed somebody to believe it was worth it and say it to me. She said it to me. Who knew she would be the one that would be the artistic director now?"

"We're going to make it as a community," he says, speaking of DRDT but also, perhaps, of life. "People are going to make mistakes, and people are going to make incredible achievements. It's going to level out as people mature into their leadership. Whatever the company's future is, it's already successful because we planted seeds, and they will take it and do what they need to do. That's what the mission is all about." ■

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The 2016 production of *It Can't Happen Here* at Berkeley Rep. © COURTESY BERKELEY REP

## AIR PLAYS

# It's happening here

Radio plays resurrect old stories to shed new light on dystopia.

By **KAYLEN RALPH**

Is life on Earth doomed?

That's the question at the heart of H.G. Wells's science fiction novel, *The War of the Worlds*, originally published in 1898, and then adapted for radio by Orson Welles in 1938. When Welles's version originally hit the airwaves, listeners who unwittingly tuned into the broadcast were convinced Earth was actually being invaded by Martians.

It wasn't, of course, but the dark allure of such a possibility remains. Beginning October 15, Theatre in the Dark will premiere its own live 21st-century iteration of the sci-fi classic, one with a modern-day twist for a Chicago (still) in quarantine.

The company is one of a handful of Chicago-area theaters paying homage to the golden age of radio drama this fall, both as a necessary adaptation to the restrictions of COVID-19, as well as an exploration of subject matter

applicable to these "uncertain times."

Beginning October 19, Steppenwolf for Young Adults is presenting *Animal Farm* as a radio play (a first for the program) as part of the 2020/21 season, adapted by Steve Pickering for radio from Althos Low's original stage adaptation and directed by Lili-Anne Brown. On October 13, Northlight Theatre took part in a nationwide, simultaneous broadcast of Berkeley Rep's radio play adaptation of Sinclair Lewis's novel *It Can't Happen Here*. (The production is available on demand through November 8; Goodman, Berwyn's 16th Street Theater, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, and the Columbia College Chicago theater department are also local broadcast partners.)

In the 82 years that have passed since the initial radio broadcast of Welles's *The War of the Worlds*, Martians have yet to invade Earth, and the planet has somehow managed

to remain intact, at least in form (if not function). As the threat of COVID-19 persists, and theaters plan for the reality of no-audience productions through the 2021 season, the resurgence of radio plays are an experiment in form meeting function. In step with the Great Depression, radio plays achieved widespread popularity during the 1920s and 1930s as a way for families to entertain themselves cheaply in between bouts of news about the weather and the economy. The genre remained the leading form of entertainment through World War II.

In Theatre in the Dark's *A War of the Worlds*, adapted from H.G. Wells's original by artistic producer Mack Gordon and producing artistic director Corey Bradberry, H.G. Wells (played by Gordon) is recast as a Chicagoland science journalist covering an attack from Mars at the turn of the 21st century. Gordon and Bradberry began working on the script at the end of last year, but the events of 2020 have certainly given new significance to the themes of colonialism H.G. Wells was exploring as far back as 1898.

"Having gone now through the pandemic, the quarantine, the protests over the summer that are still continuing—it's been a very reflective time for us (as artists)," Bradberry said. "All of the sociopolitical themes [in *The War of the Worlds*] have become increasingly more and more relevant. What I'm hoping people walk away with is a story that is not about our times, but that is a metaphor for our times, that resonates past just October or November of 2020. This stretches back to 1898, and beforehand, and I think these are going to be things that we're going to continue to grapple with nationally, culturally, locally. And so it's very interesting for Mack and I as playwrights to try and figure out how Chicago would deal with this insurmountable obstacle."

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an allegory about revolutionizing in the face of unchecked, consolidated power. When Steppenwolf for Young Adults produced *Animal Farm* as a stage production in 2014, the accompanying educational programming for students centered around the idea of historical revolution, challenging them to think about important uprisings they'd potentially heard about or learned about in school. But now, the idea of revolution is much more immediate.

"When we were doing *Animal Farm* [in 2014], it felt like we were asking young people


. . . to think about the historical implications of, for example, the civil rights era," said Megan Shuchman, Steppenwolf's director of education. "And now . . . there might be young people that will say, 'I was just out marching last week about the unjust murder of Breonna Taylor and the implications that came down from the grand jury.'"

The scale of revolution doesn't feel strictly historical anymore.

"I think the idea of reaching back for examples is potentially three days ago, and so I imagine that that will feel really immediate in a way that isn't about just pulling from history," Shuchman said. "And I hope what we can do is still have that conversation about the micro, because I think there are young people who do see that action happening, and they take part in it, and then I think there are young people who see that action, and they're not quite sure where their role is. Something that the arts offers is a way to be like, actually, we can all participate in a way that's meaningful to us. And how do we use the arts as the entry-way for that?"

The political, cultural, and social landscape we as a society are navigating now is just as (if not more) terrifying than either of the eras in which radio plays and the content they championed first flourished. There's a reason a resurgence in radio theater has arrived in step with these stories, specifically.

Berkeley Rep first performed *It Can't Happen Here* in 2016. The last performance of the show—adapted from Sinclair Lewis's novel about an idiot elected to be America's president amidst the rise of European fascism—was one week before the election in which Donald Trump became president. Berkeley Rep's associate director, Lisa Peterson, who directed the 2016 production, collaborated with Berkeley Rep's former artistic director Tony Taccone to devise their original production for radio (Taccone and Bennett S. Cohen did the adaptation).

"Right now, things are so crazy that it's hard to know how to make art out of it yet," Peterson said. "And so I think that both audiences and artists may be looking back to reflect on the way that artists 100 years ago in this country were thinking about the dangers of fascism. It's uncanny with *It Can't Happen Here*, how much the character of Buzz Windrip, who is this idiot that runs for president . . . The comparisons between him and our current president are so unbelievable." 

 @kaylenralph



*That's Weird, Grandma: House Par-Tay!* © COURTESY PLAYMAKERS LABORATORY

## GHOST STORIES

# Every day is Halloween

Theater artists create weird tales for our times.

By CATEY SULLIVAN

Elxal Iraheta grew up listening to tales from Central American mythology. “The stories, kind of like Grimms’ fairy tales did in Europe, didn’t shy away from real danger,” the playwright, screenwriter, and School of the Art Institute alum recalled. “For me, I’ve always thought of horror and scary stories as a way of releasing something, or experiencing life from a different perspective.”

A different perspective is precisely what theater artists looking to stage seasonally spooky shows are getting this Halloween. In this Our Year of WTF-Even-Is-This-Anymore Conflagration of Terrestrial Hellscape, the theatrical offerings leading up to Halloween/Samhain/Day of the Dead are a regular night gallery of creature features gamely determined to send the good kind of creepy shiver down your spine. But in a year when terror is rather the norm or at least increasingly normalized—be it the relentless edge-of-a-cliff anxiety of being unemployed or the constant awareness that one sneeze from a stranger could literally kill you—Halloween shows are

hitting a bit different.

For artists like Iraheta, crafting seasonal shows in a climate already steeped in fear is about dealing with both the fictitious terror and the IRL context it’s playing to. His short play *Date From Hell* takes the stage in Random Acts Chicago’s *Scary Stories: Dark Web*. The on-demand stream plays October 16-31. Random Acts’ short film series, *Random Acts of Horror*, gets an encore livestream October 21 at 8 PM, with other content (including their variety show, *Freak Show Cabaret*) streaming October 26, also at 8 PM. (All Random Acts programs are available through the company’s YouTube and Facebook pages for a \$5 suggested donation.)

“My story is about a person trying to meet someone online. I think it speaks to loneliness we’re all experiencing in quarantine—I’m so lucky I’m quarantining with my husband, but I see that loneliness everywhere. There’s like this hovering need to connect, you’re left asking so much sometimes: Who are we really meeting and talking to on the other side of

that screen? How is this changing how we see relationships in general?” Iraheta said.

“My (lead) character gets the chance to do a video date—which turns out not to be the best idea,” Iraheta said.

Other Chicago artists are leaning into the gothic. Among the best eerie podcasts ripe for consumption, there’s HartLife’s *Unwell*, which plays like a cross between *Dark Shadows* and *A Prairie Home Companion*, without the soap-opera cheese of the former or the treacly folksiness of the latter.

The Ohio-set story of a prodigal daughter who returns to a hometown that’s decidedly creepier than she remembers stars Chicago’s Shariba Rivers and features a writing crew that includes Bilal Dardai, Jessica Wright, Jessica Best, and story director Jim McDoniel. Two dozen episodes comprise the first two seasons, with a third slated to drop in January.

“We found ourselves being careful about how dark we wanted to go. We don’t shy away from the possibilities of death and murder, but we never wanted to do bleak,” Dardai said. “There’s a certain brightness to *Unwell*. There’s the gothic parts which are eerie and macabre and occasionally full of horror. But there’s also the—for lack of a better word—kind of the midwestern part, which is down to earth and all about human connections. I feel like part of the reason our audience is so devoted is because they get the thrills and chills, but they are also able to be completely invested in the characters and their relationships.”

Investment is also the nexus of the Play-Makers Laboratory ensemble (formerly Barrel of Monkeys). For 23 years, the company has coached generations of Chicago’s schoolchildren to craft short stories, poems, songs, and plays that Lab teaching artists then perform and produce professionally. This year, the Lab teaching artists have been working remotely, guiding roughly 20 third-to-fifth graders toward creating the tales of *That’s Weird, Grandma: House Par-Tay!* (streaming Monday nights at 8 PM through [playmakerslab.org](http://playmakerslab.org)). Even under the challenging circumstances of working remotely, the Lab remains true to its guiding principle: “No idea is a bad idea,” said artistic director and teaching artist Brandon Cloyd. “If we’re talking about serious characters and somebody starts joking around about Poops McGee, we won’t tell them to be quiet. We’ll ask about who Poops is.”

“*Agatha’s Eggsitential Conundrum* is one of my favorites,” he added. “It’s about a witch having trouble making an egg salad sandwich. And then a dog steals the sandwich.” Literally, the skit is (obviously) objectively hilarious. Metaphorically, it’s the kind of universal experience kids give voice to so plainly, this year above all perhaps. We’ve surely all been there: wrestling something into compliance, only to see it fall into oblivion.

“The trends we tend to see with our scary stories typically deal with the police and gun violence,” Cloyd said. The students also have an ear toward pop culture, particularly when it comes to Jordan Peele and Nia DaCosta’s twice-delayed-because-COVID reboot of *Candyman*. The urban legend about a supernatural slasher ghost who haunts the Cabrini-Green housing projects was initially made into a movie in 1992. The remake is slated for release in 2021. “*Candyman* still feels relevant to these kids, even though most of them weren’t even born when it first came out,” Cloyd said.

But there’s more on their minds than urban legends, he added. “The most common theme I’ve seen in my 15 years is plays about recycling and climate change. They’re acutely aware of that. We had a dance routine with a voice-over of Greta Thunberg. But honestly our biggest hope right now is just to have a fun, exciting distraction.”

🐦 @CateySullivan



Mama Gloria

## SCREEN IN PLACE

# Highlights of the Chicago International Film Fest

What to stream as part of the 56th annual CIFF

By KATHLEEN SACHS

I suffer from completist tendencies, which made it difficult to select ten films to preview from this year's Chicago International Film Festival. Unable to watch every film due to time and availability, I can't say that these are the best films of the festival, but they're ten that caught my fancy, either through an affinity for their directors or curiosity about filmmakers and subjects unknown to me.

Some titles I look forward to watching that weren't available for preview, were made available too late to watch for this piece, or which I simply didn't have time to screen are Philippe Lacôte's *Night of the Kings*, Steve

James's *City So Real*, Christos Nikou's *Apples*, Sam Pollard's *MLK/FBI*, Regina King's *One Night in Miami*, François Ozon's *Summer of 85*, and Shahram Mokri's *Careless Crime*, as well as many of the shorts programs.

I can say with some certainty that Tsai Ming-liang's *Days* and Hong Sang-soo's *The Woman Who Ran* are among my favorites of the year, one which nearly eliminated my moviegoing altogether but not my movie watching. I can only imagine how stunning Tsai's film, or the last shot of Gianfranco Rosi's *Notturmo*, would be in the theater. And who else but Mama Gloria was made for the big

screen? Being at home allowed me to watch more films than I may have been able to otherwise, but it's not the same as the real moviegoing experience. I'm hopeful that next year will find us back in theaters. *All films are streaming at [chicagofilmfestival.com](http://chicagofilmfestival.com) throughout the U.S. from 10/14-10/25 unless otherwise noted.*

## *And Tomorrow the Entire World*

The Beatles posited that we all want to change the world, which isn't universally true but currently applies to a great swath of young people eager to upend the system. These aims can be as knotty as they are noble—some want to disrupt, others to destroy—which forms the tension in this compelling drama from German director Julia von Heinz (*Hanna's Journey*). Luisa (Mala Emde) is an affluent, early 20-something law student who joins an antifa co-op in Mannheim, where the group organizes peaceful protests against the country's rising conservative faction. A contingent of the co-op, including the dashing Alfa (Noah Saavedra) and the reclusive Lenor (Tonio Schneider), want to take violent action, and they find an opportunity to do so when Luisa grabs a cell phone belonging to an alt-right goon. The situation escalates into a series of tense stand-offs between left and right, forcing Luisa to confront how far she's willing to go in her beliefs. Von Heinz's subtle direction employs realistic widescreen compositions that envelop both Luisa's world and her inner conflict. In German with subtitles. *111 min.*

## *Days*

A spiritual sequel of sorts to his 1997 masterpiece *The River*, Tsai Ming-liang's first narrative feature since *Stray Dogs* (2013) returns to the real-life health problems of the director's recurring star and collaborator Lee Kang-sheng. The film burrows into the lives of Lee and costar Anong Hounghuangs, a young Laotian immigrant who recalls Lee from decades ago. In long sequences Lee sits ruminatively in the spartan mountaintop locale that he and Tsai share in real life, seeks medical treatment for his ailment, and wanders the streets in a neck brace; similarly languorous sequences show Anong cooking in his threadbare apartment. (Tsai didn't shoot most of the material with a narrative in mind, instead filming his actors' real lives and then conceiving a story out of the footage.) About halfway into the film, the two men cross paths at a hotel where they engage in sexual activity; one gleans that Anong is a sex worker and Lee his client. After their encounter, Lee gives Anong a music box that plays the theme from Chaplin's *Limelight*, and the two share a meal. Like all of Tsai's films, this communicates feelings of loneliness and alienation inherent to the human condition; but perhaps more than any other, it revels in the corporeality of Tsai's performers, finding delicate mystery in even the most banal actions. Per an opening disclaimer, the film is intentionally unsubtitled. *127 min. Streaming only in the midwestern U.S.*

## *Finding Yingying*

In June 2017, 26-year-old Yingying Zhang, a visiting scholar at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, went missing. In the weeks that followed, investigators discovered that a male student at the university was responsible for her disappearance; later, he would be charged with her murder. Jiayan "Jenny" Shi's heartrending debut feature documentary, produced by Kartemquin Films, explores the case from a decidedly personal perspective, as Shi and Zhang attended the same university in China (but never met) and came to the U.S. to study at different Illinois colleges. Shi also accompanied Zhang's family and boyfriend when they arrived in the U.S. to search for Yingying, recording their efforts along the way. The footage, combined with readings from Yingying's diary and sequences in which Shi ruminates on her own experiences as a Chinese student in the U.S., coalesces into a doleful elegy for Yingying and the person she could have become. Shi also focuses on the crime's impact on Yingying's family and friends,

## FILM

who are forever changed by what happened. In English and Chinese with subtitles. [96 min.](#)

### *Mama Gloria*

Luchina Fisher's debut documentary feature about Chicago legend Gloria Allen, a septuagenarian Black transgender woman called Mama Gloria by her devotees, is a love letter to the charismatic activist. For those unfamiliar with Allen, it's an excellent primer; Fisher spans Allen's entire life, from her childhood when she first contended with her identity, to her years spent around the ballroom scene on Chicago's south and west sides, to the period when she founded and ran a charm school at the Center on Halsted for homeless trans youth (which inspired Philip Dawkins's play *Charm*), to her current status as an LGBTQ icon. Allen lived most of her life out of the closet, with family and friends who embraced her even at times when it may have been socially unacceptable to do so. Some of the most affecting scenes are those of Allen with these people and those in which she recounts her mother's unwavering support, specifically during her transition surgery. Fisher notes that the film is a story of mothers' love: Allen's mother for her and Fisher's for her own trans daughter. At a time when the trans community is maligned, often to violent ends, it's refreshing to watch something about love within this community—especially Allen's love for herself. [76 min.](#)

### *Memory House*

Writer-director João Paulo Miranda Maria's debut feature is an audacious examination of racism, xenophobia, and colonialism in his native Brazil. It centers on an Afro-Brazilian man, Cristovam (Antônio Pitanga, an actor known for his work in Brazil's Cinema Novo movement of the 1960s), who's journeyed south for a job at a milk factory owned by a European company. There he resides in a town where Austrian colonizers dominate, resulting in a strange dissonance with the local population that reflects southern Brazil's cultural makeup on the whole. Cristovam finds refuge in the titular memory house, an abandoned shack in the woods that's full of indigenous artifacts and which the white townsfolk routinely desecrate. Soon Cristovam begins to use the house's objects to reconnect with his heritage and eventually strike back at the European interlopers. Rife with magical realist elements, the film is a visual and auditory treasure trove; the production design, music, and cinematography are inspired. It meanders at points, but all this combined with Miranda Maria's provocative themes and Pitanga's compelling performance make it worthwhile. In Portuguese and German with subtitles. [93 min.](#) [Streaming only in the midwestern U.S.](#)

### *Notturmo*

Shot over three years along the tormented borders of Iraq, Kurdistan, Syria, and Lebanon, this documentary by Italian filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi (*Fire at Sea*) employs

an observational approach to the ongoing warfare and related atrocities in the Levant. Rosi is resoundingly patient as he hones in on various subjects, such as a Kurdish woman whose son was killed in a Turkish prison and refugee children from Raqqa who work through their trauma with art therapy. The film proceeds in a nonlinear fashion, with Rosi developing concurrent narrative threads and sporadically working in unattached vignettes that provide further insight. One particularly interesting thread looks at a psychiatric hospital where patients practice for a play in which they ruminate on the barbarity wrought by al-Qaeda and ISIS and recite lines such as, "The Americans destroyed every beautiful thing." Another poignant throughline involves a young boy who goes to work to help provide for his mother and siblings; his is a face of suffering and endurance. The cinematography is sublime, but the beautiful imagery doesn't mask the terror of Rosi's subject matter. In Arabic and Kurdish with subtitles. [100 min.](#) [Streaming 10/19-10/25](#)

### *There Is No Evil*

After he released *A Man of Integrity* in 2017, Iranian writer-director Mohammad Rasoulof was banned from filmmaking (which he defied to make this film) and sentenced to a year in prison; his follow-up feature considers Iran's death penalty, focusing on those tasked with carrying it out. The film is divided into four sections, each a fable that approaches the subject from a different angle. The first and most provocative vignette follows a seemingly normal Iranian man as he goes about his day, engaging in such mundane activities as grocery shopping and helping his wife dye her hair. Rasoulof generates a certain tension in the story, which erupts in a shocking scene at the end and which sets a tone for the next three sections. These parts focus on conscripted soldiers compelled to carry out executions, and the storytelling becomes more cloying as the film progresses. It's all very impactful, and Rasoulof elevates the moral tales to the stuff of cinema through allegorical visual compositions and reflective long takes. The content may be a bit heavy-handed at times, but Rasoulof's style infuses the subject matter with a sense of poetry and moral reckoning that invokes age-old Persian literary traditions. In Farsi with subtitles. [150 min.](#) [Streaming only in the midwestern U.S.](#)

### *Transoceánicas*

In this experimental epistolary documentary, Spanish director Meritxell Colell (*Con el viento*) and Argentine director Lucía Vassallo (*Línea 137*) use filmmaking to chart their friendship as well as their separate lives in different countries. At the beginning, Vassallo (often called Lu) moves back to Argentina after living in Barcelona near Colell (who's often called Meri). They enter into long-distance communication with each other through handwritten letters, then e-mail; the text of their correspondence appears in subtitles overlaid on



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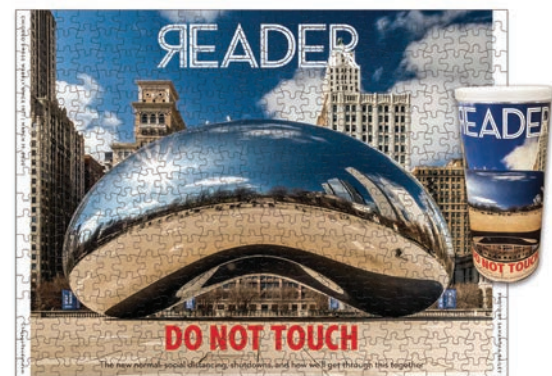
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## FILM



Days


footage by each filmmaker that correlates to the content of her dispatches. The women write about their personal lives, their work, and sometimes nothing and everything in general. Occasionally months go by between letters, and subsequent messages are prefaced with apologies. Even though the film grew out of an ongoing project, it nevertheless feels natural—not realistic, as much of the footage is ornamented with experimental flourishes, but real, the sentiments and the friendship represented nearly as tangible as whatever's appearing on screen. The concept is elegantly realized, the presentation assured, and the emotional impact enormous. In Spanish with subtitles. *116 min.*

### *Undine*

Again starring actors Franz Rogowski and Paula Beer, Berlin school master Christian Petzold's follow-up to *Transit* (2018)—one of the best films of the last decade, which stars Rogowski and Beer—nakedly merges the director's deep introspection into Germany's ongoing identity struggle with his abiding love of prevalent mythology (which usually manifests as references to popular cinema, but here finds inspiration in mermaids; undines are water nymphs that originated in the work of the 16th-century alchemist Paracelsus). Beer plays the title character, a historian who gives tours at the Berlin City Museum. The film begins with her getting dumped; she then meets Christoph (Rogowski), a handsome industrial diver, in a decidedly bizarre fashion that sets the stage for what follows. It appears they've both found love, though the unusual circumstances intensify (most of which revolve around water), resulting in an ambiguous conclusion that satisfies the Undine myth but not necessarily expectations for a modern drama. Petzold works in hyper-specific details about Berlin's postwar development that at first seem out of place in a contem-

porary fairy tale; however, the political insights tend to be more interesting than the narrative machinations. In German with subtitles. *92 min. Streaming only in the midwestern U.S.*

### *The Woman Who Ran*

South Korean writer-director Hong Sang-soo makes deceptively simple films that become more complicated upon consideration, and no less is the case with his 24th feature. Kim Min-hee, Hong's now-frequent collaborator as well as his onetime, real-life romantic partner (it's indeterminate whether they're still together), stars as Gamhee, a woman who sees three friends while her husband is out of town. The first friend is a timid divorcee living in a rural area outside Seoul; the second is a self-reliant pilates instructor and dancer who lives in the city; and the third is an estranged friend working at an arts organization who is now married to Gamhee's ex-boyfriend. As in many of Hong's films, the episodic narrative contains a series of pointed repetitions: here, each visit gets interrupted by a man whose face never appears onscreen in full, and during two of the three visits, Gamhee observes her friends via closed-circuit television systems. (Less meaningfully, two of the three also feature characters peeling and slicing apples.) This is one of Hong's only films centered almost exclusively on women; it also lacks the efficient symmetry of his other episodic films, which usually unfold in two parts. Gamhee's disquietude feels more pronounced as the film progresses, culminating in the final section. Kim, more than other frequent Hong collaborators, continues to feel as crucial to Hong's vision as the director himself, representing an important piece of a cinematic puzzle from which pieces are always missing. In Korean with subtitles. *77 min. Streaming only in the midwestern U.S.* 

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## Mikki Kendall

*Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women That a Movement Forgot*

### Book Club Month:

October 20

### Author Talk:

10/22/2020

## Sonali Dev

*Recipe for Persuasion*  
November 20  
11/19/2020

## Riva Lehrer

*Golem Girl*  
December 20  
12/17/2020

## Emil Ferris

*My Favorite Thing Is Monsters*  
January 21  
1/28/2021

## Eve Ewing

1919  
February 21  
2/25/2021

## Nnedi Okorafor

*Remote Control*  
March 21  
3/25/2021

## Natalie Moore

*The South Side*  
April 21  
4/22/2021

## Rebecca Makkai

*The Great Believers*  
May 21  
5/27/2021

## Fatimah Asghar

*If They Come for Us*  
June 21  
6/24/2021

## Kayla Ancrum

*Darling*  
July 21  
7/22/2021

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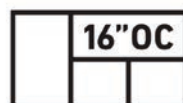
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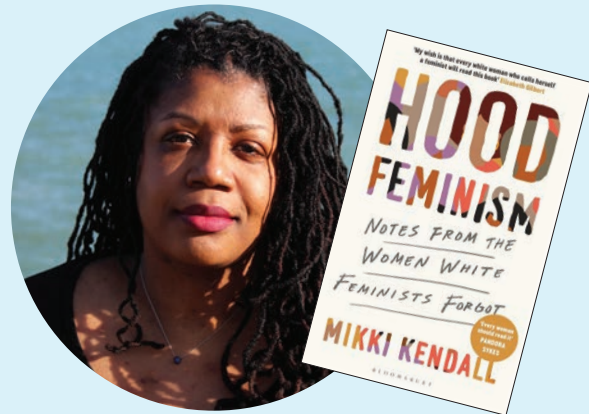
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## Mikki Kendall with moderator Janaya Greene



Mikki Kendall is a writer, diversity consultant, and occasional feminist who talks a lot about intersectionality, policing, gender, sexual assault, and other current events. Her essays can be found at *TIME*, the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Salon*, *The Boston Globe*, *NBC*, *Bustle*, *Islamic Monthly*, and a host of other sites. Her media appearances include BBC, NPR, *The Daily Show*, PBS, *Good Morning America*, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, WVON, WBEZ, and Showtime. She has discussed race, feminism, education, food politics, police violence, tech, and pop culture at institutions and universities across the country. She is the author of *Amazons*, *Abolitionists*, and *Activists* (illustrated by A. D'Amico), and *Hood Feminism*, both from Penguin Random House.

**Book Club Month:** Oct. 20 **Author Talk:** 10/22/2020

## Sonali Dev with moderator Brianna Wellen



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**Book Club Month:** Nov. 20 **Author Talk:** 11/19/2020

# MUSIC





# Fraxiom jigsaws pop into a new frame

In the high-speed world of hyperpop, they became a star in months—and their joyfully messy style could propel them beyond that tiny scene.

By LEOR GALIL

**O**n Saturday, September 12, six days before London experimental-pop artist A.G. Cook released his album *Apple*, the founder of label and collective PC Music assembled more than 20 like-minded acts for a livestream festival called Appleville. Hosted by a custom website with an embedded Twitch stream, this self-described “tribute to live computer music” starred Cook, kaleidoscopic indie trio Kero Kero Bonito, bedroom-pop phenom Clairo, irreverent dance duo 100 Geecs, and bona fide pop star Charli XCX (who’d hired Cook to be her creative director in 2016). They represented a cross-section of a largely online underground scene with an international audience that skews heavily Gen Z. And if you clicked in during the first hour, you got to see one of that scene’s newest darlings: Chicago-based artist Fraxiom, singing to an audience for just the second time ever while they swayed from foot to foot in front of a crude green screen made by hanging up a tablecloth from Party City.

Wearing a slim, square-neckline dress covered in a pastel collage of pixelated faces, Fraxiom stood in their Humboldt Park apartment and sang into a microphone run through the Auto-Tune function of Ableton Live. They performed four songs, three of them still unreleased at the time, that demonstrated the joyful, messy, smart-assed sound that’s earned the 21-year-old a cult following: unpredictable pileups of synths that juxtapose chromium gloss and digitally destroyed crunch; cartoonish percussion that sometimes feels like a joke about trap, gabber, or house; and light-switch jumps between hyperactive rapping and tender, earnest singing that share an almost inhumanly intense euphoria.

“I did it all on my first take,” Fraxiom says. “I didn’t mess up, like, too badly—I only missed

one line, but I was like, ‘OK, let’s just keep going.’ Actual shows are one take, so I was like, ‘OK, if I don’t collapse and die, it has to be one take.’”

Fraxiom prerecorded their performance and used the tablecloth green screen to add a video background. When they opened with the collision of 2000s emo and oddball dance music called “This Guitar” (released the following day on the EP *Feeling Cool and Normal*), an innocuous YouTube ad for an acoustic guitar from Musician’s Friend played behind them. And Fraxiom backed closing number “Ride” with sped-up footage from the music video for a different song: “Thos Moser,” their breakout collaboration with producer Gupi, aka Spencer Hawk (son of skateboard legend Tony).

Since it came out in February, the cheeky, mercurial single has made Fraxiom and Gupi stars in the admittedly tiny hyperpop universe. Atop a driving house beat accented with blown-out hi-hats, Gupi rotates through a whimsical menu of squelching synths, changing the track’s mood so often that it’s impossible to get comfortable with any one of them. Fraxiom matches the shifts in the instrumental with a saucy performance full of deadpan raps and frazzled Auto-Tune outbursts; they name-check Caroline Polachek, reference a crazed 100 Geecs show at New York University, and tell off Elon Musk, DJ Zedd, and *Minecraft* creator Markus “Notch” Persson. “Thos Moser” has racked up respectable numbers, considering the size of its niche—just shy of 350,000 YouTube views and more than a million Spotify streams.

Artists in this Web-centric, queer-friendly scene draw on dance music and hip-hop, but the results are usually strange enough that few fans of commercial radio would call them pop music. PC Music and 100 Geecs (aka Laura Les and Dylan Brady) are pillars in this communi-

ty, but it makes room for such a hodgepodge of styles and approaches that no one word could encompass them all. “Hyperpop” has become the de facto label, partly because Spotify uses the term for an increasingly popular in-house playlist (which of course features “Thos Moser”).

“We just knew we had something crazy,” Fraxiom says of the track. “Once Dylan Brady loved it, we were like, ‘Yeah, Dylan Brady likes it.’ I’ve always stanned Dylan—him and Laura have been my favorite musicians since high school.” Brady released “Thos Moser” on his label, Dog Show Records (an imprint of Mad Decent). Gupi also included the single on his debut album, *None*, which came out on Dog Show at the end of February—he says he wanted to give Fraxiom a bigger spotlight.

“Dog Show, it sort of let them know, like, ‘Oh, these two can deliver a song,’” Gupi says. “It established some trust as an artist, in that sense, which was cool, ‘cause now we get to do the album with them.”

“We” refers to Gupi and Fraxiom’s new duo, Food House, whose self-titled debut full-length comes out on Dog Show next month. They dropped their first single, “Ride,” in late September, but hyperpop superfans had already heard the sugary club cut in Fraxiom’s Appleville set—and in April, when the duo DJed 100 Geecs’ *Minecraft* festival, Square Garden, they played an early version. They followed it with a remix of “Thos Moser,” which Fraxiom interrupted to declare, “My life has not known peace since this song came out.”

**F**raxiom grew up in Kingston, Massachusetts, just outside Plymouth and less than an hour south of Boston. In high school they sought out outre pop, video-game music, and similar sounds through Soundcloud and Datafruits.fm, a U.S.-based Internet radio

station specializing in Japanese indie music. Fraxiom was particularly drawn to nightcore, an electronic subgenre that “remixes” recognizable pop songs by slightly speeding them up (and often not much more).

“I love pop music, and it was faster, better, and higher pitched—it was awesome,” Fraxiom says. “I was also coming to terms with my sexuality and my gender identity and shit, sort of through nightcore.” In 2016, Fraxiom began to experiment with recording vocals and pitching up their voice. They wouldn’t publicly release any vocal music till 2019, but these early sessions—and the influence of nightcore—helped them figure out their style. “Nightcore is canon to a new universe, where society is awesome, and there’s lots of vivid colors everywhere, nothing is gentrified,” Fraxiom says. “Nightcore is literally the soundtrack to a different universe, which I would rather be a part of, and that’s why I used it as a soundtrack to my exploration.”

Soundcloud nightcore communities introduced Fraxiom to 100 Geecs three years before the duo dropped the 2019 crossover album *1000 Geecs*. “100 Geecs had their first EP out at the time—that was super popular in that circle, and everyone was fucking with it super hard,” Fraxiom says. “It was the music I would cry to before school started.” And nightcore provided the score as Fraxiom started meeting their Soundcloud and Twitter friends in person.

**I**n the first half of 2017, Fraxiom released two vivid instrumental tracks reminiscent of nightcore and another electronic subgenre called future bass, which tamps down the overdriven dick-swinging of mainstream dubstep with cute synthetic flourishes. “Grand Prix” and “Dream Colors” came out on a small electronic label inspired by PC Music, fittingly



Fraxiom moved to Chicago in January. “There’s so much music happening all the time,” they say. “I just wanted to be around it.” JAMES BAROZ

enough called Hyperpop. Fraxiom had gained enough of a foothold in this small scene by August to get booked at an Orlando rave called Play It Loud! that month. That’s where they met Gupi.

At that point Gupi had already released an EP (through a friend’s label, Rora Team) and was preparing to drop another one in fall 2017. At the end of August he started his first semester at Berklee College of Music in Boston, which put him closer to Fraxiom. “We were like, ‘Well, I guess we should probably hang out,’” Gupi says. “We did, and it worked out. But it was definitely an obligation at first.” Gupi realized he’d found a good friend the first day they met up in Boston. At a Newberry Comics store, an employee pulled a “How do you do, fellow kids?” by attempting to compliment Fraxiom’s “vaporwave aesthetic,” and Frax bolted out the door. “As the day went on we were both like, ‘Oh, we’re fuckin’ weird, OK,’” Gupi says.

They didn’t collaborate on music at first. Gupi had a couple roommates his freshman year, and he felt self-conscious about working on bizarre pop music around them. “I just felt like a nuisance, making music with another person in there, even though it would have been fine,” he says. “But imagine the music we’re making and then imagine, like, Berklee

students in the same room.”

Instead, the two of them mostly goofed around and bonded. “I got him to listen to 100 Geecs for the first time and smoke weed for the first time,” Fraxiom says.

Fraxiom and Gupi would also DJ from time to time. For a couple years running, they’d spin at parties during the Music and Gaming Festival at a suburban D.C. convention center and hotel. Other producers from their Internet community—including Pooldad and Ricco Harver from Canada and NYC-based PC Music artist Umru—would also spin at a MAGFest side stage in the hotel’s Pose Nightclub. “It’s the one big hub where we all meet up,” Ricco Harver says.

Fraxiom and friends threw their own unofficial MAGFest gatherings too. “We had a Pepsi party, like a party in the drink-machine room,” Fraxiom says. “We just did the craziest not-real things at MAGFest, like parties in places that are generally uncomfortable and boring—which I think is cool.”

**O**n April 1, 2018, Umru tweeted photos of a new book, *Thank God Umru Chimed In*, along with a Big Cartel link for an indie publisher called Swess Press. The back cover included blurbs from several of his friends, including Pooldad and Fraxiom,

both of whom also tweeted about it. But anyone who tried to buy the book encountered a listing saying it was sold out. It wasn’t—neither it nor Swess Press had ever existed, just like lots of things announced on April Fools’ Day.

The artists in Fraxiom’s circle share the kind of offbeat sense of humor you’d expect from people who make pop music so deliberately askew. “I think that’s sort of why we became friends,” Pooldad says. “We just want to make jokes really hard.”

Those jokes sometimes manifest as something more earnest. The highest-profile example is a group of friends who operate as Open Pit Presents to host music festivals in *Minecraft*. Founder Max Schramp had thrown a *Minecraft* fest for his birthday in 2018, and the following year Open Pit grew out of that. Pooldad has helped design character skins for some of the performers, and Umru helps book acts. “We just think, ‘Who could we get to play? Who does everyone in this group know? Do you know someone who knows someone?’ And so on,” Umru says.

Open Pit is a pragmatic response to the performers’ circumstances. Musicians in the hyperpop scene are spread out across different time zones, if not different continents, and they don’t necessarily have travel budgets.

Some were already familiar with *Minecraft*—Pooldad started playing it nearly a decade ago—and the video game gave the musicians an interactive gathering place that’s easy to access. For a typical *Minecraft* show, the artists’ blocky characters congregate on a stage while their prerecorded, edited-together set plays back. In this context “performing” often just means making your character jump up and down, since it’s tough to mime any more accurately without hands, elbows, or a mouth you can control.

What began as an inside joke became a cross-genre phenomenon after the pandemic obliterated live music, and Open Pit has been able to book bigger artists, including some from outside the organizers’ social circles. In April, second-wave emo legends American Football headlined Nether Meant, an Open Pit festival named after the band’s best-known song.

Fraxiom has appeared at a few *Minecraft* festivals during the pandemic, mostly with friends. Fraxiom and Umru DJed together at Mine Gala in 2019—they even made some *Minecraft*-themed covers of 100 Geecs songs—so when the two of them booked another joint set at Lavapalooza in August 2020, they decided to collaborate on new material for it. “I was like, ‘Hey, these are actually good outside of *Minecraft*—can we make it into an EP?’ And Umru said yes,” Fraxiom says. “And that’s why *Feeling Cool and Normal* exists.”

By the time Lavapalooza arrived, Fraxiom had also spent five hours creating two buildings in *Minecraft*. They built an IHOP, and their partner helped construct a house with lyrics to Frax’s songs inside. Both buildings remained undiscovered throughout Lavapalooza. “I’m honestly sort of pissed that no one found the lyrics,” Fraxiom says. “We made, like, Spencer’s room too—it was this shitty little room under the stairs, and Spencer was a llama. It was awesome.”

**G**upi and Fraxiom didn’t collaborate on any music till “Thos Moser,” which they finished together on Halloween 2019. Gupi didn’t think it would reach beyond their friends. “It was gonna be an inside-joke song,” he says. “We literally were releasing it or making it with the intention of, like, ‘Oh ha ha, so and so’s gonna get a kick out of this’ or whatever, like our group chat. We were very

## MUSIC

pleasantly surprised, but yeah, good first song to do.”

That fall was the tail end of an aimless period for Fraxiom, during which they’d worked on what became their debut EP, *Music*. “I was making *Music* when I was in my parents’ house, working a really shitty job, depressed as fuck—wearing a name tag with my deadname on it,” Fraxiom says. “My only escape being hanging out with Spencer in Boston on the weekends, writing really sad music in my dad’s garage all the time, and just smoking a bunch of weed.”

One of the things that put Fraxiom back on the rails was getting accepted to the School of the Art Institute to study in the sound department. They moved to Chicago in January 2020 to begin classes. Fraxiom’s partner also lives here (they met at MAGFest), as do lots of their music-scene friends and acquaintances (though 100 Gecs’ Laura Les has since moved to Los Angeles). Chicago also had more to offer than Boston. “There’s so much music happening all the time,” Fraxiom says. “I just wanted to be around it.”

Fraxiom had already shared “Thos Moser” privately with friends, who’d responded so strongly that Frax hurried to put out *Music*. “I wanted to have one more thing out before ‘Thos Moser’ raised the bar and made me scared to release things,” they say. *Music* came out February 15, three days before Dog Show released “Thos Moser.” And on Friday, February 21, Fraxiom sang the song live for the first and so far only time at Subterranean, when Gupi came to town as part of a tour with Dorian Electra.

“I had not Auto-Tune live sung before, ever—that was literally my first time in front of all of those people,” Fraxiom says. “Everyone knew the words, and it was so crazy ‘cause the song had been out for three days. That was like, ‘Quick, become a pop star! No time to explain! Grab this, go!’”

Almost immediately upon arriving in Chicago, Fraxiom heard from Reset Presents, a local production company founded in 2018 by Loyola graduate Camden Stacey. Stacey had a lot of friends who made music but weren’t getting booked much in the city. “I wasn’t really seeing us represented in the live-music scene—especially in the live hip-hop world and live electronic world—in Chicago,” Stacey says. “So we just kind of started taking it upon ourselves to book such shows.”


Umru had played a Reset Presents show in March 2019, and he suggested that Stacey book Fraxiom. Frax performed at a Reset

Presents aftershow on February 6. “The kid is a really inspiring performer and goes about making their music in such a genuine and organic way,” Stacey says. He’s since befriended Fraxiom and spent some time watching them work. “They’re a joy to be around, beyond a creative level and a professional level,” Stacey says. “They’re by far one of the funniest people I’ve ever met.”

Fraxiom took maximum advantage of Chicago’s underground nightlife scene almost immediately, even though they couldn’t know they’d only have the chance for two months. Near the end of March, their SAIC dorm was evacuated due to the pandemic. “I had to go back to Massachusetts,” Fraxiom says. “I was like, ‘OK, well, if I’m already going back to Massachusetts, and Spencer’s still gonna be in Boston the whole time, we might as well just stay with each other—quarantine with each other—and try to make an album.’ And then we did.”

**F**raxiom crashed in Boston with Gupi most of the spring, working on *Food House*. “Being removed from my partner and all of my friends with literally no warning was super fucking me up,” Fraxiom says. “I was going through it as hell. I didn’t want to be back in Massachusetts around a bunch of stuff that I don’t like, and seeing my family and stuff—I feel like a lot of that came out in the album.”

In June, Fraxiom moved into a Humboldt Park apartment, returning to Chicago in time to participate in some of the first wave of protests. Their community here continues to expand despite the pandemic. At the end of the summer, Dog Show artist Folie, a friend of Gupi’s from when they both put out music through Rora, moved to town from New York. “We’d actually not hung out a ton, like, just us, until I moved here to Chicago,” Folie says. “We hang out tons since I’ve been here—we just had a session with Alice Longyu Gao, and that was really incredible too, to see Frax actually work in person.”

Gupi has decamped to Orlando for the moment—his partner, who booked the 2017 Play It Loud! event, lives there—but he’s considering moving to Chicago too. “I’m probably just gonna end up wherever Frax is, to be honest,” Gupi says. “Which I hope is Chicago, ‘cause Chicago seems cool in general too. Just cold—that’s the only thing. Cold and police officers.” 

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PICK OF THE WEEK

## With *Swirling* the Sun Ra Arkestra wills a better world into existence



© ALEXIS MARYON

**SUN RA ARKESTRA, *SWIRLING***

Strut  
[sunrastrut.bandcamp.com/album/swirling](http://sunrastrut.bandcamp.com/album/swirling)

“THE SATTELITES ARE SPINNING / A better day is breaking / Great happiness is pending / The planet Earth’s awakening.” The first lyrics on the Sun Ra Arkestra’s long-awaited *Swirling* (Strut), sung by Tara Middleton, sound like a dispatch from a world infinitely more promising than our own. That dogged optimism carries the entire studio album, the free-jazz institution’s first since 1999’s *Song of the Sun*. Founded in Chicago by the late Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount), the Arkestra remains as timeless and resplendently garbed as when it first touched down on stages more than 60 years ago; the only difference, really, are the new faces cropping up alongside the veteran players. *Swirling* breathes new life into more than a dozen Arkestra standards: Some are buffed up with new orchestrations (“Rocket No. 9,” “Sunology”), but most are total reinventions rather than reduxes. “The Sky Is a Sea of Darkness” is transfigured from its riotous original version into an unaccompanied, anthemic prelude, morphing into Ra’s hitherto unrecorded “Darkness,” a gently loping jaunt in triple time. Written by 96-year-old bandleader Marshall Allen, the title track breezily evokes big-band sensibilities, and “Queer Notions” (on the vinyl release only) gets a reading that sounds as euphoric and far-sighted now as Coleman Hawkins’s harmonically inventive proto-bebop performance for Fletcher Henderson’s band did in 1933. The passage of time, it seems, is of no consequence to Ra’s cosmic band. But it is an inevitability: On *Swirling*, you’ll hear the ghosts of recently departed conguero Atakature and saxophonist and erstwhile band manager Danny Ray Thompson, who died after *Swirling* was wrapped up. They both make themselves heard, thunderously, on “Seductive Fantasy.” Middleton’s singing (a divine echo of long-gone Arkestra vocalist June Tyson) rises through the din eight minutes in, her voice hazy, enticing, inevitable. It’s as though the entire band has been holding its breath for her. Bracing and all-embracing, *Swirling*, like so much of the Arkestra’s output, sometimes defies easy description. Middleton, singing on opening track “The Satellites Are Spinning / Lights on a Satellite,” gets closest: “We sing this song to / A great tomorrow / We sing this song to / A balanced soul.” Listen, and so it may be. —HANNAH EDGAR



Jim Baker, Keefe Jackson, and Julian Kirshner © ANNE HA

**JIM BAKER, KEEFE JACKSON, AND JULIAN KIRSHNER, *SO GLOSSY AND SO THIN***

Astral Spirits  
[jacksonbakerkirshner.bandcamp.com/album/so-glossy-and-so-thin](http://jacksonbakerkirshner.bandcamp.com/album/so-glossy-and-so-thin)

Chicago’s improvisational music community has launched plenty of transformational figures over the decades. But while iconic individuals such as Sun Ra, Roscoe Mitchell, and Henry Threadgill have all changed the way people around the world approach music, a thriving scene also needs players who keep the fires burning every week in local clubs. Keefe Jackson (tenor and soprano saxophone), Jim Baker (piano and synthesizer), and Julian Kirshner (drums) have spent most of their careers playing regularly in Chicago. While they’re from different musical generations (Baker was born in 1950, Jackson in 1979, and Kirshner in 1990), in their improvising trio no one pulls rank or dominates; even when the music sounds like it might burst from the pressure of their interactions, they’re clearly realizing a collective sound. This cassette’s two side-length performances, recorded in concert at the Hungry Brain a year apart, sound quite different from each other, but they’re similarly collaborative. On “Then,” swirling piano, surging cymbals, and squalling tenor sax flow together like converging river currents. The other side, “And Again,” is more episodic, with passages of muscular tumult giving way to muted exchanges rendered alien by the eldritch pitches of Jackson’s soprano and the outer-space sounds of Baker’s old ARP synthesizer. Heard together, these performances reveal the potential for surprise that’s brought these three musicians and their audiences together night after night. —BILL MEYER

**BBSITTERS CLUB, *BBSITTERS CLUB & PARTY***

Hausu Mountain  
[bbsittersclub.bandcamp.com/album/bbsitters-club-party](http://bbsittersclub.bandcamp.com/album/bbsitters-club-party)

In 2012, Chicago musicians Max Allison and Doug Kaplan launched the eclectic label Hausu Mountain, which has grown into one of the city’s best indies. It also acts as an umbrella for many of its founders’ projects: Hausu Mountain has released the ambient-adjacent sounds Allison and Kaplan have made with Natalie Chami (aka TALSounds) as Good Willsmith, as well as Allison’s hard-to-pin-down experimental solo material as Mukqs and Kaplan’s as MrDougDoug. Last year the label dropped an irreverent, discombobulating, and occasionally terrifying yuletide sound collage called *It’s Christmas Time!*, by Allison and Kaplan’s duo Pepper Mill Rondo. They have a playful willingness to throw themselves into goofy experiments with an openhearted enthusiasm that helps you feel like you’re in on their jokes.

Allison and Kaplan’s latest collaborative project, BBSitters Club, began in jam sessions five years ago with drummer Paul Birhanu (of the Earth Is a Man) and guitarist-vocalist Charlie Olvera. They became a regular four-piece, with Allison on bass and Kaplan on guitar and vocals, and their freewheeling new studio debut, *BBSitters Club & Party* (Hausu Mountain), balances their deep knowledge of jam bands and classic rock with their absurd humor. The ragged ripper “Cutie Girls,” whose looseness could charm Ween, lovingly sends up raunchy ZZ Top-style swagger with inane references to their own unglamorous, pre-pandemic underground-rock lifestyle (weekday sets at Quenchers, communicating over Facebook). On a sweeping song packed with huge postrock climaxes, BBSitters Club shout out their friend, engineer Joel Berk—and they apparently

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## MUSIC

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like him so much they come back to it twice (as “Joel Reprise” and “Joel Reprise Reprise”). Berk recorded a few tracks on the band’s live album, *Joel’s Picks Vol. 1*, which came out in September and is thus their actual debut. If you’re asking why BBsitters Club would make a live album their first release, well, maybe this band isn’t for you. —LEOR GALIL

### VERBAL KENT & THE OTHER GUYS, *THE BLADE OF THE SHORT CUT*

Hipnott  
[otherguysmusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-blade-of-the-short-cut](http://otherguysmusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-blade-of-the-short-cut)

Veteran underground Chicago rapper Dan Weiss (aka Verbal Kent) sculpts his syllables to display their contours or even give them jagged edges, but at the same time his flow lends his words a wiggle like Jell-O. He’s found a great partnership with D.C. production duo the Other Guys, who understand how to augment the swing in his performances. On their first collaborative full-length, *The Blade of the Short Cut* (Hipnott), the Other Guys provide Weiss with understated, soul-inflected samples that befit his transparently soul-baring verses. Atop the dreamy, twinkling instrumental of “The Waiting Room,” he raps about trying to balance fatherhood with work (he’s the founder of Chicago coffee company Dollop), and his clenched-jaw delivery dramatizes all the stress and sweat he’s put into providing for his family—and how much harder he’ll work to spend more time with his kids. —LEOR GALIL

### LORAIN JAMES, *NOTHING*

Hyperdub  
[lorainjames.bandcamp.com/album/nothing-ep](http://lorainjames.bandcamp.com/album/nothing-ep)

Loraine James makes kaleidoscopic music defined by frenetic, glitched-out beats. Despite its restless sense of perpetual movement, the London producer’s music is transparently emotive; every turbulent arrangement allows for a narrative that conveys anxiety, anger, and giddiness, even as the sound and aesthetic of a track is often icy and austere. After breaking through with the 2019 LP *For You and I*, James has released a string of EPs, and the latest, *Nothing* (Hyperdub), is her most exciting yet: a lean collection of four songs that expands the scope of her capabilities as a producer and features an eccentric cast of guest vocalists. She imparts a sense of numbness to the title track with a lurching beat that recalls the sound of feet dragging across the floor, while Uruguayan singer Lila Tirando a Violeta repeatedly, dejectedly declares, “We don’t feel nothing.” As ghostly synths wriggle in the mix and reverb-drenched coos swallow any silence, the only feeling left is helplessness. “Marg” is even more despondent; a forbidding verse by Iranian-English rapper Tardast rubs up against synth pads that creepingly swell in intensity to heighten feelings of dread. Jonnine Standish of Australian electronic indie-rock duo HTRK appears on *Nothing*’s glumly sensual highlight, “Don’t You See It.” If any song perfectly captures the quarantine-fueled desire



Sumac © REID HAITHCOCK

for intimacy, this is it; it’s frazzled and fractured, desperate yet listless. The EP ends with an instrumental track that’s as dazzling as the others, but if *Nothing* confirms anything, it’s that James can make the most of any vocalist. —JOSHUA MINSOO KIM

### SPIRIT ADRIFT, *ENLIGHTENED IN ETERNITY*

20 Buck Spin  
[listen.20buckspin.com/album/enlightened-in-eternity](http://listen.20buckspin.com/album/enlightened-in-eternity)

Listening to modern traditional metal can sometimes be a little like meeting up with a special old flame. It’s a blast until you’re eventually reminded why it didn’t work out for the long haul—you moved on with your life while they seemed to stay suspended in time, and the little things you once adored now feel stale or ridiculously corny. But every so often, a band knock it out of the park so hard that they prove 70s-90s metal sounds to be every bit as timeless and cool as James Dean in a pair of Levis (or insert your own iconic imagery here) even as they expand its language. Which brings us to *Enlightened in Eternity*, the new fourth album from Spirit Adrift. Launched in Arizona as the solo project of multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Nate Garrett in 2015, Spirit Adrift expanded into a full band for a couple of records (including 2017’s *Curse of Conception*) before paring down to a duo of Garrett and drummer Marcus Bryant. Though much of their early material was soaked in somber, bludgeoning doom, they’ve gradually added influences from throughout metal and rock history, most notably on last year’s *Divided by Darkness*. But that trajectory couldn’t prepare audiences for *Enlightened in Eternity*: it arrives like a bolt of lightning in an otherwise clear sky. From triumphant opener “Ride Into the Light” onward, virtually every one of the album’s eight tracks is an impeccable stand-alone banger with swagger for days. I can’t believe it’s possible to sit still through them all without being strapped

down or sedated.

Earlier this month, Garrett told Heavy Blog Is Heavy that he wrote these songs during a good place in his life, but his world came crashing down around the time he went into the studio, which made for a more emotional recording process. You don’t have to know the details to feel the urgency that pervades the riotous single “Harmony of Spheres,” and his crushing vocal performance on “Screaming From Beyond” makes him sound like a man exquisitely exorcising some personal demons. Spirit Adrift embrace their doomy roots on album closer “Reunited in the Void,” where Garrett pours his heart and soul into bittersweet lyrics about suffering, loss, and eternal love. But rather than end on a downcast note, Spirit Adrift build to a steadfast rock beat and guitar solo in the outro, with the sounds of rattling chains and a slight western twang lending the dusky ambience of cowboys riding off into the sunset. That’s all to say: You want to slay a dragon? You want to muster up the strength to make it through another day of the most batshit year we’ve collectively experienced as a society? *Enlightened in Eternity* might just light the fire that’ll power you through the fight. —JAMIE LUDWIG

### SUMAC, *MAY YOU BE HELD*

Thrill Jockey  
[sumac.bandcamp.com/album/may-you-be-held](http://sumac.bandcamp.com/album/may-you-be-held)

There’s a lot of room in the vast and aesthetically diverse landscape of metal, but one powerhouse trio occupies its own sound-deconstructing universe: Sumac. The heady metal-centric music that guitarist and vocalist Aaron Turner (Isis, Old Man Gloom), bassist Brian Cook (Russian Circles), and drummer Nick Yacyshyn (Baptists) churn out is such a left-field beast that it smashes any and all classification. Their vision has gloriously mutated with each sprawling slab of heaviosity: on their 2015 debut, *The Deal*, 2016’s *What One*



The Twilite Tone ©CHRISTINE CISZCZON

Becomes, and 2018's *Love in Shadow*, Turner, Cook, and Yacyshyn have delved deeper each time into uncharted realms where the calculated brutality of metal and the mind-bending spirituality of free jazz meet. Now, galvanized by a pair of collaborations between Sumac and Japanese titan Keiji Haino (and by the influence of sound explorers such as noise artist Daniel Menche and guitarist Tashi Dorji, both of whom have releases on Sige, the label Turner runs with his partner and Mamiffer bandmate Faith Coloccia), these deep-thinking brothers in arms sail further beyond the boundaries of extreme music with forward-looking abandon. *May You Be Held* is the sublime and deafening amalgam of Sumac's guiding forces. Its five marathon tracks manifest the band's omnivorous breadth in feasts of drone, doom, and sludge laced with free improv and noise freak-outs that channel the aforementioned Haino and Menche. Striking the perfect balance of cutthroat precision and spontaneous fire breathing, Sumac embrace the wild-eyed ecstasy of free jazz and come out with their own sonic language. Like the cosmic jazz of John and Alice Coltrane, the ghostly, hypnotic soundscapes of *May You Be Held*, such as feedback-belching opener "A Prayer for your Path" and the organ-driven "Laughter and Silence" (with guest keys by Coloccia), create a ritualistic atmosphere of spiritual uplift despite their dark overtones. Then there are the epic shredders. The 20-minute title track tops stadium-ready buzz-sawing riffs with Turner's bloody-throated wails, while the 17-minute blitz of "Consumed" shape-shifts through batshit-crazy time signatures, hardcore-level fury, and lumbering doom and gloom. You might be tempted to call *May You Be Held* cosmic metal, if anything, but ultimately Sumac are a genre unto themselves. —BRAD COHAN

**THE TWILITE TONE, *THE CLEARING***  
Stones Throw  
[thetwilitetone.bandcamp.com/album/the-clearing](http://thetwilitetone.bandcamp.com/album/the-clearing)

In Brian Coleman's liner notes for the 2010 *Get On Down* reissue of Common's *Resurrection*, producer No I.D. (aka Dion Wilson) talked about his early collaborator, the Twilite Tone, who was also Common's DJ. Specifically he credited Tone, born Anthony Khan, for helping catalyze the growth of Chicago's hip-hop community in the late 80s and early 90s: "Tone was a house DJ, too, and he took what he got from the house scene and started his own hip-hop scene," No I.D. said. Some of Tone's creative partners from those days have since become household names: No I.D. is an executive vice president for the Capitol Music Group, where he gave Jay-Z's career a kick in the pants by serving as an executive producer on 2017's *4:44*, while Common is the only Oscar winner to perform at the 2020 Democratic National Convention and play a critical role in *John Wick 2*. Tone's influence on pop culture has been a little more under the radar: in 2017, for instance, he coproduced *Humanz*, the first album in seven years from animated pop supergroup Gorillaz.

The Twilite Tone's diverse contributions to that polymorphous record foreshadow the genre-crossing fluidity of his new solo debut, *The Clearing* (Stones Throw). In a recent interview for Gary Suarez's hip-hop newsletter, Cabbages, he explained that he prefers to say his music "transcends genre." Tone's approach dovetails with that of Chicago's beat scene, whose adherents refract sounds from across pop history through a hip-hop lens. Before the pandemic, Tone regularly spun records around Chicago with other open-minded, omnivorous DJs, including local nightlife leader and DJ Dave Mata, who connected him to Stones Throw founder Peanut Butter Wolf. Tone's even-keeled but animated production work on *The Clearing* enlivens its most relaxed moments and smooths the edges of its loudest passages. He delicately transforms the sparse adult-contemporary piano melody at the heart of "Baby Steps" by layering on rococo percussion and funk bass, and his restraint makes the song's florid awakening arrive with a euphoric kick. —LEOR GALILFI

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## CHICAGOANS OF NOTE

## Jumaane Taylor, tap dancer

"I've been on this journey to be able to present within the jazz community... To be a union of creative beauty."

### As told to PHILIP MONTORO

Tap dancer Jumaane Taylor, 34, made his professional debut in 2001 with the company *M.A.D.D. Rhythms*, where he now serves on the board of directors. He teaches at the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, and Roosevelt University. He debuted the John Coltrane interpretation *Supreme Love* in 2015, and as a 2017 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist he assembled the *Jazz Hoofing Quartet*. His current work in progress, *Ugly Flavors*, uses the music of Ornette Coleman and Igor Stravinsky.

Before my mom had kids, she'd already decided that her children were gonna be going to dance school. A six-year-old hearing "tap dancing," what is tap dancing? I had no knowledge of what that is. You'd say, "No, I don't wanna do tap dance. I wanna go outside," or "I wanna roller skate." But my sister joined this school and took ballet, and when I saw the show and actually saw the tap dancing, I was immediately hooked—just could not look away from what I was witnessing. And my mom signed me up. I have not stopped since.

by KRISTIE KAHNS

Where I come from, the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, they've been around for 80-plus years—the directors and the founders have a legacy in show business. Walking into the building that they first had when I was seven years old, there was a huge door-size poster of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and he's the reason we have National Tap Dance Day. Then when you walked into the lobby area, you'd see a picture of the Nicholas Brothers—but still not as big as Bill Robinson! The creators of the form were just plastered all over the building.

At that time there was Bril Barrett teaching at the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, who was the founder of *M.A.D.D. Rhythms*. And one of his teachers was Ted Levy—and Ted Levy was one of the guys who helped Savion Glover choreograph *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk* that was on Broadway. Folks were just handing down information, whoever wanted it the most, or whoever needed it or seemed like they were hungry for it. At the beginning, we were looking at *Stormy Weather*, with Bill Robinson and Lena Horne, and the Nicholas Brothers, of course, with—some people call it one of the best dance clips of all time, when they're doing the splits down the large stairs. That's what we were watching at seven!

Every now and then, Savion Glover, when he would come in for a show, he would come to the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre and teach a workshop, and have whoever was in his cast also come teach—so Dianne Walker, Jimmy Slyde. A lot of great, masterful dancers were able to come through that school.

It feels comfortable saying tap dancing was birthed in America, with the birth of jazz music. With the African way versus the Irish way or the two coming together, it's really tricky because sometimes it feels like folks just want their credit. "I'm part *this*, and I want my credit here." All we have are these folktales, or a couple of books here and there, or the conversations we've had with some of the men and women who were actually there, before they transitioned. Some of the dancers just really want what's good for the dance, period. If the Irish is gonna get some, cool, as long as we get to dance and we respect the tap dancers. The Africans get some, cool, as long as we get to tap dance. But dang, we can't even get respect within the jazz community. And

that's where I feel we really start off.

When we think about tap dancing now, as far as tap dancers, I think they all relate more to its evolution period in America, with the birth of bebop. My statuses on most of my social media handles are "What I do comes from the bebop era," and that's just a quote from my favorite tap dancer, Baby Laurence.

The Chicago Dancemakers Forum awarded me a grant for \$15,000, and I used that to investigate improvisation with musicians. I put together a band—I called it the Jazz Hoofing Quartet. It was Makaya McCraven on drums, Justin Dillard on keys, and Marlene Rosenberg on bass. I loved it! It was heaven, because Makaya was so hot at the time, and anything he played was just *on*. And then Justin—I had known Justin since the Fred Anderson days at the Velvet Lounge, just years of jam sessions. And then Marlene, she has a history of playing with tap dancers—she knew and had met a lot of the masters that I would be mentioning in the post-talk, after we would play. I would show footage of Jimmy Slyde, and she would *listen* and be like, "Oh, that must be Jimmy Slyde!" Just by listening! It was this magical group.

We did some things at a couple of Rebuild spaces, and we were able to record at the Museum of Contemporary Art. I was making an argument about tap dance and jazz music, and those two cultures being able to create and invite each other regularly.

The tap-dancing guy engineered this through Rebuild Foundation—not, like, the AACM. I wish I could be down with them. I'm the black sheep, brother. Even Ernest Dawkins, he's all up in that organization—before I did *Supreme Love*, I was in a trio band with that guy. It would be myself, Ernest, and a vibe player. We would be playing sets! Before I had the quartet with the guys and Marlene, before I did any shows, I was literally with these guys. Corey Wilkes—I was in a band with Corey Wilkes!

It's no drama, no beef. If I see anybody from the Jazz Institute, from back in the day, it's so much love, it's so much happiness. But there's no work! Unless I have another musician leading the project. When I first did *Supreme Love*, a great saxophonist, Rajiv Halim, he was leading the musicians. We were getting different gigs through the Jazz Institute, through the Hyde Park Jazz Fest.

When I'm by myself somewhere, doing some solo performing, it's all about improvisation—that free form of expression with the tap. That's really why I wanted to put some-





Jumaane Taylor taps at Rebuild Foundation's Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative in 2018 with Justin Dillard, Junius Paul, Isaiah Spencer, and Greg Ward. KRISTIE KAHNS

thing together like the Jazz Hoofing Quartet, to always have a way to explore that improvisational aspect—outside of doing class after class after class of choreography or what's necessary for the musical-theater students or for the seven-year-olds.

Bebop is always at a fast tempo. Usually I feel like musicians hear the rhythm of the tap to up-tempo songs. I was talking to another tap dancer about this, one of my teachers almost, coming up in Chicago—Jay Fagan, who has a school in the west burbs. He was asking me if I ever heard of the tap dancers being responsible for the bebop sound. They used to say that the tap dancers started bebop, because the drummers weren't hitting certain rhythms that the tap dancers were.

When I really listen to tap dancers dance improvisationally, with or without music, versus when I'm listening to jazz drummers play improvisation, sometimes the jazz drummers are playing things—even during the Charlie Parker era—that I'm still working on, let alone have ever heard any tap dancers playing. So within my study, I feel like the musicians may have started that bebop thing!

In the 30s the tap dancers just had their routine. "We're gonna go out here, do the show, do these steps, we're gonna do a flip, split, maybe sing a song—boom-bam, keep it moving. An-

other show!" But Baby Laurence really talked about the influence of Charlie Parker. He is the only tap dancer to my knowledge who has a record tap dancing with musicians. I think the album is called *Dancemaster*. It's on CD, on vinyl—tap dancers these days, because that's the only one, they just frame that vinyl and have it as an art piece.

There's a famous piece that Duke Ellington did with a tap dancer, Bunny Briggs—it's called "David Danced Before the Lord." There's very few archival videos of these tap dancers dancing with musicians, even Cab Calloway and the Nicholas Brothers. A lot of tap dancers throughout time just adapted this way of dancing with musicians—"All right, we're gonna do a song with the musicians, it's gonna be 'Take the A Train.' Gimme some stop time so I can tap, and then I'm gonna be outta there in two or three minutes."

I wanna be into playing sets with these musicians—45 minutes, and then another 45 minutes. That just means more exploring. The stuff that I'm trying to get into, the improvisational stuff, is really studying the music on my own, studying the John Coltrane albums, the Miles Davis albums, the Charles Mingus albums, even going back to the way Ella Fitzgerald would scat.

I've been on this back-and-forth with trying

to represent tap within the jazz scene, and get people to just hear the natural sound of the metal on the wood. When I connect with musicians, it's still a learning thing going on. In the past, I would mess with two different types of wood—maybe the first wood would rise a little bit, so I'd have a little bit more air underneath, and maybe the second floor would be straight flat on the surface. And then I would maybe change shoes, just because some of the shoes built these days, you can add another sole which would make it a little louder or a little deeper.

I'm very careful, man—I don't wanna be too loud, I don't want to overpower any musician. I just want to be right *with* them.

I've been on this journey to be able to present within the jazz community, to be able to play at the Jazz Showcase. There's always been this little thing where folks may say, if you have another type of attraction there, the tap dancer could take the focus away from the music. I don't want to take any focus away! I want to be playing *with* you all. To be a union of creative beauty.

Thinking about Fred Anderson, and even thinking about Von Freeman—they used to have the sessions at the Apartment Lounge. Von Freeman would yell out "Baby Laurence!" Yell out names of the masters. Yell at certain

young musicians if they were playing too loud over the tap. I feel like if the Fred Andersons and the Von Freemans were here, it would be more extensive than me just trying it out here and there when I can.

Now I'm in this studio at the Dance Center at Columbia, figuring out this next new show that I'm working on, with Ornette Coleman's music and Igor Stravinsky's compositions. I'm calling it *Ugly Flavors*.

I've been listening to the music heavy, and the history behind *The Rite of Spring* just puts me in the mind of "ugly flavors," with the riots and all that. And Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come* is what I'm trying to choreograph to. I just don't know how the jazz community might have received *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, with him even using that word "jazz." Calling my group the Jazz Hoofing Quartet, I don't think the jazz community received that well.

I'm just excited to do something that has no musicians but deals with some of the most legendary music that I could find. *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, I want that as the first half of the show, just because I know the ballet lovers are gonna be amped, and I don't want them to leave after *The Rite of Spring* if that was the first half. I know they're gonna be ready to criticize, ready to ridicule—I don't even know, but I'm ready for it all.

Hearing about that premiere happening in Paris, and how the people received it—sometimes I feel that's how the jazz community receives me! Just cussing out the performers in the middle of a ballet. I feel like, under their breath, the jazz directors are cussing me out: "What is this! This isn't jazz music! And he's calling himself the Jazz Hoofing Quartet?"

Chicago Dancemakers Forum are allowing me to do a streamed work in progress November 7, at the Dance Center at Columbia. They're allowing me to just have a theater to work with, and they've got some mikes set up and some different floor options so we can get the proper sound. I'm using that to invite certain presenters, invite certain institutions—and maybe the Dance Center will want me to premiere the full work later next year.

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# READER

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**Dec. 10, 2020** ..... **Cannabis Conversations  
Insert**

Dec. 24, 2020

Jan. 7, 2021

Jan. 21, 2021 ..... **Indoor Delights**

Feb. 4, 2021 ..... **Love Issue**

Feb. 18, 2021 ..... **Health & Wellness Issue**

March 4, 2021 ..... **Home Issue**

March 18, 2021 ..... **Best of Chicago**

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## GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

**DRUMMER BILL RIEFLIN** lived in Seattle, but he made an indelible mark on Chicago industrial music as a founder of **Pigface** and longtime member of **Ministry** and **Revoluting Cocks**. (He'd go on to play with many other notable bands, including **King Crimson**, **Swans**, and **R.E.M.**) Rieflin died in March after a long battle with cancer, and on September 30—which would've been his 60th birthday—his friend and collaborator **Chris Connolly** released a tribute single, "Prayer," with harpist and certified music practitioner **Jessica Gallo**. Based on an instrumental from Connolly and Rieflin's 2000 album *Largo*, its otherworldly ambience melds Connolly's lovely, wavering vocal melodies and Gallo's sparse clusters of twinkling notes. Proceeds from the single benefit the **Floyd & Delores Jones Cancer Institute** at the Virginia Mason Foundation, where Rieflin received care—and where Gallo played for him as a CMP.

Chicago rapper and activist **Mohawk Johnson** has been under house arrest for months—he was arrested at the Loop protests August 15, and this month the state's attorney's office indicted him on felony battery charges for allegedly hitting a cop. He returned to court Wednesday, October 14, and he's set up a Linktree that includes ways to support him—such as streaming or buying his intense, incisive new album, **Fire-Type**. Johnson flits between vulnerable humor and triumphant gravitas, and his ironclad verses stand tall against his blustery instrumentals. Details at [linktree.com/FreeMohawk](http://linktree.com/FreeMohawk).

Early this month, Chicago rap duo **Angry Blackmen** released the album **Headshots!** via Los Angeles indie **Deathbomb Arc**. It fits right in with the label's many other noisy hybrids of pop and experimental music: on "Dance!," for instance, **Brian Warren** and **Quentin Branch** trade staccato verses atop a low hum that sounds like a slowed-down siren. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip\_Wolf or e-mail [gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com](mailto:gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com).

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

AA ALL AGES Free



Beach Bunny @ BRANDON HOEG/EVERYBODY'S BABY

### NEW

**Afro Fusion: Halloween in Hyde Park with DJ Dee Money, DJ Three K** 10/30, 6:30 and 10 PM, the Promontory

**Beach Bunny** 10/30, 7:30 PM, Schaumburg Boomers Stadium, Schaumburg AA

**Alec Benjamin, Harry Hudson** 9/25/2021, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre AA

**Boogaris** 10/30, 7 PM, livestream at [events.seated.com/sleeping-village](http://events.seated.com/sleeping-village)

**Born of Osiris, Dogma, Mantis** 10/28, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**British Buddy Alumni Quartet** 10/25, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE AA

**Califone & Robyn Mineko Williams and more** 10/27, 8 PM, livestream at [audiotree.tv/staged-show](http://audiotree.tv/staged-show) AA

**Cannonball** 10/30, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

**Chicago Soul Spectacular presents Bird at 100! A Tribute to Charlie Parker & Dizzy Gillespie** 10/31, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery AA

**Joanna Connor** 10/30, 4:30 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, 7 PM sold out AA

**David Byrne's American Utopia** 10/17, 7 PM, broadcast on HBO as well as on demand (starting 10/18) AA

**Dial-Up Stepmom** 10/25, 11 AM, SPACE, Evanston AA

**Billie Eilish** 10/24, 5 PM, livestream at [billieeilish.com](http://billieeilish.com) AA

**50-50 All Souls to the Polls featuring Linda Ronstadt, Los Lobos, Fantastic Negrito, and more** 10/17-10/18, 7 PM, livestream at [twitch.tv/5050gotv](http://twitch.tv/5050gotv) FREE AA

**Four C Notes (Frankie Valli tribute)** 12/31, 6 and 8:30 PM,

Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire  
**Neal Francis (solo)** 10/31, 4:30 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston AA

**Girls Love R&B Paint & Drank featuring DJ Unstable** 11/1, 6 PM, the Promontory

**Got 'Em Sip-n-Paint featuring DJ Gemini Jones, K-Moon** 11/29, 4 and 7:30 PM, the Promontory

**Nathan Graham** 10/31, 1 PM, SPACE, Evanston AA

**R.B. Green** 11/13, 7 PM, Banana's Comedy Shack at Reggie's AA

**Terisa Griffin** 11/6, 8 PM; 11/7, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery AA

**The Groove Project featuring Isaiah Sharkey, Al Willis, School of Rock teaching artists** 10/23, 6 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn AA

**Halloween Powerfest featuring Gucci Mane and more** 10/30, 7 PM, Genesis Convention Center, Gary AA

**Emmylou Harris, Red Dirt Boys** 11/9-11/10, 7 PM, livestream at [citywinery.com](http://citywinery.com) AA

**Lilly Hiatt** 10/26, 7 PM, livestream at [citywinery.com](http://citywinery.com) AA

**Jayhawks** 1/10/2021, 3 PM, livestream at [mandolin.com](http://mandolin.com) AA

**Johnny V's Wildflowers (Tom Petty tribute)** 11/1, 4 and 7 PM, City Winery, 7 PM sold out AA

**Kindo, Milquetoast & Co.** 4/27/2021, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

**Emily Kuhn** 10/30, 8:30 PM, livestream at [youtube.com/user/constellationchicago](http://youtube.com/user/constellationchicago) FREE AA

**Los Gallos** 10/29, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Lu's Jukebox with Lucinda Williams**, 10/22, 7 PM, livestream at [mandolin.com](http://mandolin.com) AA

**Maceo Plex, DJ Pierre** 10/30, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Park-

ing Lot, 17+  
**Magicks** 10/31, 3 PM, Reggie's Roof Deck AA

**Pat Mallingier** 10/25, 1 PM, SPACE, Evanston AA

**Manic Focus, Mersiv** 10/29, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**Leslie Mendelson** 10/29, 6 PM, livestream at [citywinery.com](http://citywinery.com) AA

**Merry Christmas Darling: Heidi Kettenring sings Karen Carpenter** 12/14, 7:30 PM; 12/15, 1 PM, Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire AA

**Cat Mullins & Themboys** 10/25, 1 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Jon Nadel Trio** 10/16, 5 PM, Reggie's Music Joint FREE

**No Limit Reunion Tour featuring Master P, Mystikal, Silkk the Shocker, Mia X, Fiend** 11/27, 7:30 PM, Genesis Convention Center, Gary AA

**North 41** 10/29-10/30, 7:30 PM, City Winery, 10/30 sold out AA

**Option series presents Steve Baczkowski** 10/19, 8 PM, solo performance followed by discussion with Tim Daisy; livestream at [ess.org](http://ess.org) FREE AA

**DJ Lawrence Peters** 10/25, 3 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**School of Rock Chicago Livestream** 10/24, noon, livestream at [reggieslive.com](http://reggieslive.com) FREE AA

**#SOSFest featuring Foo Fighters, Brittany Howard, Dave Matthews, Rise Against, Dillon Francis, the Roots, Marshmello & Demi Lovato, Miley Cyrus, Monica, Reba McEntire, YG, Adam Melchor, and more** 10/16-10/18, 7 PM, fundraiser for the National Independent Venue Association hosted by Reggie Watts, livestream at [youtube.com/c/NIVA](http://youtube.com/c/NIVA) FREE AA

**6:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn**

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**6:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn**

**6:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn**

**6:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn**

# EARLY WARNINGS

Never miss a show again. Sign up for the newsletter at [chicagoreader.com/early](http://chicagoreader.com/early)

**Ralph Stanley II & the Clinch Mountain Boys** 11/1, 4 PM, livestream at [citywinery.com](http://citywinery.com) AA

**Subtronics, Al Ross, Level Up** 10/25, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**Subtronics, Bommer, Level Up** 10/23, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**Subtronics, Vampa, Level Up** 10/24, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**Subtronics, Zia, Level Up** 10/22, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium Parking Lot, 17+

**Terrapin Flyer featuring Josh Olken, Kara Cavanaugh, Wavy Dave Burlingame, Janis Wallin, Mike Cole, and more** 10/24, 7:30 PM, Schaumburg Boomers Stadium, Schaumburg AA

**T.G.I.S. (Thank God It's Saturday) featuring DJ Mile High** 10/17, 6 and 10 PM, the Promontory

**3XDope honoring Kwest On featuring Jay Illa, Joe Kollege** 10/23, 6 and 9:30 PM, the Promontory

**Trippin Billies (Dave Matthews Band tribute)** 10/25, 4 PM, Schaumburg Boomers Stadium, Schaumburg AA

**Tony Trischka** 6/6/2021, 3 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music AA

**Ugly Flavors: A work-in-progress presentation by Jumaane Taylor** 11/7, 7 PM, livestream at [dance.colum.edu](http://dance.colum.edu) AA

**Vibes & Tingz featuring Mike Abrantie, DJ Matrix** 11/14, 6 and 10 PM, the Promontory

**Crystal Waters** 10/31, 7 PM, Brauerhouse, Lombard

**Whitney livestream screening and benefit auction** 11/1, 5 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, benefit for the National Independent Venue Association and Assata's Daughters AA

**Windy City Gospel Celebration featuring Marvin Sapp, Donnie McClurkin, Ricky Dillard, Le'Andria Johnson, Jekalyn Carr** 11/21, 7 PM, House of Hope AA

**Windy City Gospel Celebration featuring Marvin Sapp, Donnie McClurkin, Ricky Dillard, Le'Andria Johnson, Jekalyn Carr** 11/21, 7 PM, House of Hope AA

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**Windy City Gospel Celebration featuring Marvin Sapp, Donnie McClurkin, Ricky Dillard, Le'Andria Johnson, Jekalyn Carr** 11/21, 7 PM, House of Hope AA

**Azizi Gibson** 12/13, 7 PM, Subterranean, canceled  
**Harley Poe, Homeless Gospel Choir** 11/5, 8 PM, Wire, Berwyn, canceled  
**Wynonna Judd & Cactus Moser** 11/10-11/11, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, postponed AA

**Robert Earl Keen** 12/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, canceled

**Neck Deep, Nothing Nowhere, Heart Attack Man** 11/23/2021, 6 PM, Radius Chicago, rescheduled AA

**New Orleans Cocktail Party featuring Jon Cleary** 10/29, 7 PM, Charles Gates Dawes House, Evanston, canceled

**New Orleans Suspects** 10/30, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, canceled

**Red Wanting Blue** 11/12, 7:30 PM, City Winery, postponed AA

**Ike Reilly** 11/28, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, postponed AA

**Todd Rundgren** 1/26/2021, 12/27/2021, 8 PM, House of Blues, canceled

**Rina Sawayama** 10/16/2021, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, rescheduled AA

**Swans, Anna Von Hausswloff** 2/10/2021, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, canceled

**Susan Werner** 10/22/2021, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled AA

**David Wilcox** 10/15/2021, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled AA

**Zachary Williams** 10/23-10/24, 4:30 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, shows added; both 7 PM shows are sold out AA

**Wood Brothers** 11/6/2021, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, rescheduled, 18+

### UPDATED

**NOTE: Contact point of purchase for information about ticket exchange or refunds**

**JC Brooks** 10/24, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery, early show added, 8 PM sold out AA

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

**Combichrist, King 810, Killer Confession** 10/22, 6:30 PM, Cubby Bear, canceled

**Marshall Crenshaw & the Bottle Rockets** 11/21, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, postponed AA

### UPCOMING

**Cosmic Country Showcase featuring Evil, Ana Fabrega, Nick Shoulders, Andrew Sa, Ben LaMar Gay, Hawk, and more** 10/30, 8 PM, livestream at [noonchorus.com](http://noonchorus.com)

**Riot Fest Halloween Special featuring New Found Glory** 10/30, 8 PM, Chicago Drive-In Bridgeview, Bridgeview AA

**Thaddeus Tukes** 10/29-10/31, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club

**Terry White & the Loaded Dice** 10/24, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

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## OPINION

### SAVAGE LOVE

## My dead husband's DMs are stuffed with his dick pics

Maybe he flirted on Instagram so he could stay faithful IRL.

By DAN SAVAGE

**Q:** My husband recently passed away. He was a wonderful person and we had 12 great years together. He was also very, very organized. His death was an accident but everything was in order. He even left a note in a sealed envelope for his lawyer to present to me. It was one last love letter, Dan. Our relationship wasn't perfect, no relationship is, but that's who he was. Or that's who I thought he was.

My husband was a very good-looking man who took meticulous care of his body. We actually met in a gym at a hotel. He wasn't conceited, which I think may be because he didn't come into his looks until he was in his 20s, but he enjoyed the effect his appearance had on others. In addition to his last love letter and other documents, I was given a list with the passwords to my husband's social media accounts. I made the mistake of looking at his messages on Instagram. He exchanged private images with hundreds of women and gay men all over the world. Not just photos of him shirtless. Photos of him fully nude from the front and back, images of his genitals, even video clips of him masturbating with his face clearly visible.

I knew he had exhibitionistic tendencies. Years before we met he got in legal trouble for exposing himself in a public place. He sought

help for impulse control and never did something like that again. But he always had a very high libido, much higher than mine, and he masturbated frequently, and public sex remained his biggest fantasy. I didn't judge or shame him for any of that. We jokingly called masturbation "his thang" and sex, which we had roughly once a week, "our thang," and one time, when it seemed safe, we did manage to have sex in public. He expressed an interest in opening up our relationship years ago but I am monogamous by nature and he agreed to keep our relationship closed. And I believe he did: I've read through all his messages with these strangers and there are no mentions of any meetings. I've seen dozens of messages from people who wanted to meet in person and he always turned them down. But he never turned down a request for more photos.

Help me understand this. I can't tell anyone else about this and I hate sitting here feeling like my marriage was a lie. —**WISHING INSTAGRAM DIDN'T OPEN WINDOW**  
P.S. Also, men? My husband was straight. Why was he sending photos to gay men?

**A:** I am so sorry for your loss, WIDOW, and I'm so sorry your grief has been complicated by what you found in your husband's

Instagram account. But you shouldn't for a moment doubt the love of a man who wanted to make sure you got one last love letter if he should die unexpectedly. That's not something a person would think to do for someone they didn't truly love. Your husband was who you thought he was. Your marriage wasn't a lie and your husband wasn't a liar, WIDOW, it's just that your grief—like you and your husband and your marriage and anything human beings do or feel or touch—is imperfect.

So far as you know, WIDOW, your husband never cheated on you—and after reading thousands of his DMs, and since your husband didn't think you would ever see those DMs, it's safe to say you know everything. And what you know now that you didn't know before is that sharing pictures with strangers was one of your husband's "thangs."

Now I'm going to ask you to make a leap, WIDOW.

Instead of seeing what you found on Instagram as evidence of your husband's unfaithfulness, WIDOW, try to see it as something that made it possible for a man like your husband to remain faithful. Think of those DMs like a pressure-release valve. On Instagram your husband could expose himself to strangers who wanted to see him naked—avoiding both

## OPINION

consent violations and legal trouble—without exposing himself to the temptations of face-to-face encounters, WIDOW, temptations that might've led him to violate the monogamous commitment he made to you and, like all people who make monogamous commitments, sometimes struggled to keep.

One person can't be all things to another person sexually. People can ask for monogamous commitments, of course, and we all have a right to expect consideration and compassion from our partners—and not having the needs we can't meet or the ways we fall short thrown in our faces is one way our partners demonstrate consideration and compassion. Your husband needed more attention than any one person could ever provide. He didn't rub that in your face. He cut an ethical corner by swapping DMs with strangers to meet a need you couldn't—but if getting that need met the way he did made it possible for him to stay in your marriage and stay faithful to you, perhaps you benefited too. And while your husband should've asked for your permission—while he should've gotten your OK—if you had found his DMs while he was alive, WIDOW, he would no doubt ask for your forgiveness. Think of the years he gave you and the love he showed you and ask yourself if you could give him the forgiveness he would be asking for if he could. Then give him—give yourself—that gift.

P.S. Your husband's willingness to accept attention from gay men is another sign he was one of the good guys. Straight guys who are secure in their sexuality are much more willing to accept compliments from gay men these days—some straight guys,

like your husband, even seek them out.

P.P.S. I am, again, so very sorry for your loss.

**Q:** I live in North Carolina. One of our two senators, Thom Tillis, is a Republican who tested positive for COVID-19 after cavorting with the president at the White House. But when I opened the local paper, lo and behold, the top story wasn't the ill Tillis but the admission by his Democratic opponent in the senatorial race—Cal Cunningham—that Cunningham had, in fact, exchanged “sexts” with a woman who is not his wife. I braced for dick pics or kink revelations or worse when I clicked through to the website that broke the story. At the very least I expected explicit references to sex. But nope! We're being told to clutch our pearls—and to vote for Tillis—over some text G-rated messages about “lots of kissing” and a vague wish to spend a night together. I guess these laughably tame exchanges round up to salacious because both parties are married to other people. It would be funny if it weren't so sad and if it wasn't threatening the Democrats' efforts to retake the Senate. —**VOTER IN NORTH CAROLINA ENRAGED**

**A:** So the worry here is that the people of North Carolina are going to vote for a U.S. senator who can't open his mouth without Donald Trump's nutsack falling out—Senator Thom Tillis—over Cal Cunningham because Cunningham sent a few not-that-dirty text messages to a woman who isn't his wife. Sigh. Tillis has literally spent the last four years tongue-bathing the balls of

a man who has cheated on every wife he's ever had and been credibly accused of sexual assault by two dozen women. By association and proximity, Tillis has a far more scandalous record. But whoever wins the senate election in North Carolina, there's not enough mouthwash in the world to get the stench of Trump's taint off Tillis's breath.

**Q:** I sent you a letter yesterday. Today I told my husband I want a divorce. So I didn't need any advice from you after all. Once I laid it out in my letter to you and thought about the last three years and the amount of struggling with this I have gone through, I realized that it was SO. DAMN. OBVIOUS. There was no question. There was only an answer. Divorce. It has been horrible the last couple days but things are starting to feel a bit better. The worst part is the intense pain that I have caused him. He loves me so much and it is painful to tell him that I do not love him the same way. But I am holding tight to my firm belief that in a few years, he will understand that I did this out of love—for him and for me. Thank you. Even though you did not need to respond, just being there to write to helped. —**WRITING WAS ENOUGH**

**A:** I'm happy it helped just to write the letter, WWE, and I read your letter and I agree: you're doing the right thing for yourself and your husband. Best of luck to you both. 🙏

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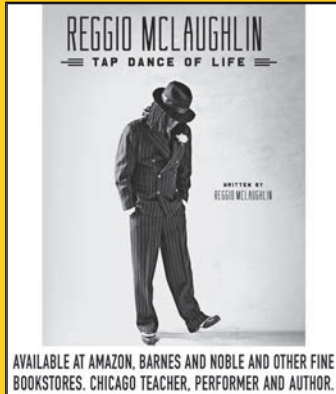
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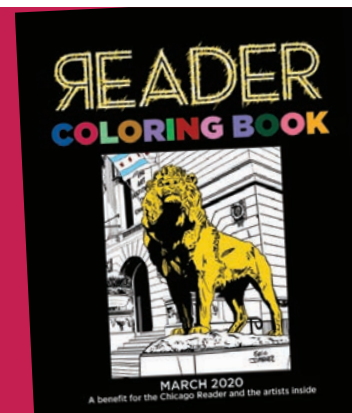
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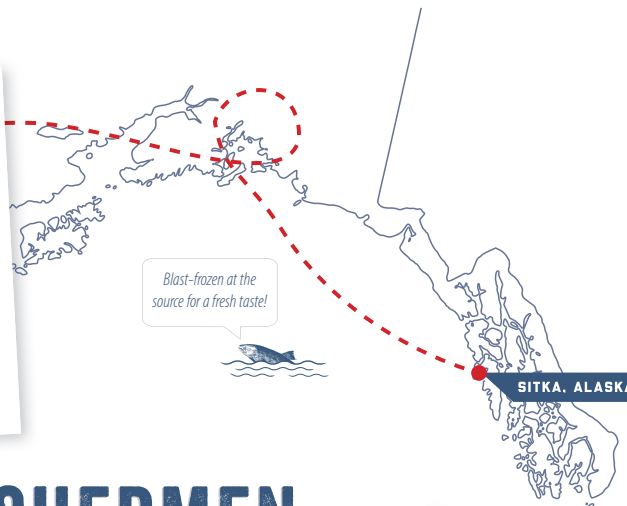
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