

# UHD DATELINE

Student Run Since  
Volume One

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# SGA's petition for Nov. 3 non-instructional day denied

By Shirley Bright

There is a move across college campus to recognize Election Day as a student holiday. Student governments want to give the students an opportunity to involved themselves with the political process. UHD Student Government Association has joined in support of this idea, creating a resolution that petitioning for the Election Day to be recognized as an academic holiday.

Tamir Harper of American University believes that she has lived through everything – she has seen wars, 9/11, the pandemic and now, this historic presidential election. In September, she began petitioning for 2020 Election Day to be recognized as an academic holiday at American University. In October, American University accepted the petition, joining Brown University, Colorado, and the University of Utah in recognizing Nov. 3 an academic holiday.

UHD SGA President Alan Timoteo Modrow indicated that as of the last faculty senate meeting in October, the resolution had passed from SGA into UHD faculty senate. The fine-tuning of the resolution called for a non-instructional day on even-numbered years on the first Tuesday after Nov. 1. It would not be an official academic holiday but a non-instructional

day. This would be an opportunity for the full-time students with jobs and other obligations, to vote and participate in other civic duties.

On Oct 20, the SGA presented the resolution to the Faculty Senate. It passed 27-0, and was sent to the UHD's Office of the President. The resolution was rejected by the president's office on Oct. 23. In a last minute effort to have this resolution reconsidered by the president's office before Nov. 3, there was a second vote via Qualtrics on Oct. 30. These votes from the Faculty Senate were 10 for the resolution, 11 against with 3 abstaining.

In response to questions concerning a student holiday for civic engagement, the interim president's office emphasized the amount of time students have to participate in early voting. Texas had 3 weeks of early voting this year. There were over 100 polling stations and 50 of those were located outside the beltway, which is where the largest number of UHD students reside. At the end of those early voting days, there were also 8 stations providing 24-hour voting.

Modrow was aware of this information and stated the resolution from the SGA was about more than simply having enough time to vote. SGA wanted

the students to have opportunities to volunteer on Election Day by working the polls, block walking or even phone banking for those they supported. He believes civic engagement was about more than casting a ballot.

The interim president's office emailed Gators on Oct. 26 encouraging students and faculty to get out and vote early.

"Citizens in Harris County, Texas, have had the opportunity to cast ballots since Tuesday, October 13th. For 18 uninterrupted days at over 122 voting locations located as far north as Tomball, Texas, and as far south as Webster, Texas..."

Yet the email makes no mention of civic engagement beyond casting a ballot.

The president's office did not reply to questions concerning the potential challenges of full-time students who are also working full-time when trying to vote or civically engage. There was also no response to the reasoning of students of a disenfranchised group or other civic engagement activities. The president's office strictly focused on the amount of time given in this current year to have an opportunity to vote.

As indicated by the clear non-verbal cues of the senators' faces, the rejection was filled with

sourness. There was not a rally against the president, but there were some disappointments to the language in the rejection of the original resolution. Senators found the words from Dr. Tillis to be "disturbing" and "dismissive."

Although there was not a student academic holiday on Election Day 2020, the future of an academic holiday for the 2024 election (and beyond) is still undecided. Senator Rachael Hudspeth, Biology Lecturer, felt it was urgent to frame a response because early voting days this year were based on the pandemic, and future elections may not have such widespread opportunities for early voting. On Election Day, the Senate voted, once again, to frame a response to the President's denial of the resolution and to encourage reconsidering this resolution in the future. This final vote was 24-0 in favor of reconsideration.

Modrow and the SGA did like the 1.6+ million voters in Harris County did: they voted for future change. Two-thirds of UHD's working body agree that Election Day should be recognized as a non-instructional day so UHD student body can initiate, participate and celebrate active civic engagement. Election Day has come and gone, but it will come again. Perhaps by 2024, there will be a unity of red, white, and blue, and those future Gators will become civic leaders in the community.



# THE DATELINE

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## Submission Policy

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

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

All paid writers must be currently enrolled students at the University of Houston-Downtown.

Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute.

Any student interested in joining The Dateline staff may request more detailed information sending an email to to the editors at editordatelinedowntown@gmail.com.

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# Local Business Spotlight Erika's Sweet Berries



By Priscila Batres

Erika Rivas, 21, is a psychology student at the University of Houston. Rivas was always interested in making pastries; during her free time, she made all types of sweets for her parents and boyfriend. With time, she became good at it. She realized that she could make something substantial out of something she enjoyed, which could help pay for tuition.

Earlier this year, before the pandemic, she faced an unprecedented situation; she lost her financial aid. Her salary at her full-time job wasn't enough to cover the immense amount of tuition at UH. She also could not rely on her parents for financial help. Without many options, she had an idea; she would sell chocolate-covered strawberries for Valentine's Day.

She began posting

on her personal Instagram account that she would be selling chocolate-covered strawberries for the upcoming holiday. Within days, she garnered dozens of orders, and her Valentine's Day sale was so successful that she created an Instagram business account called Erika's Sweet Berries.

The pandemic hit a month after, and many small businesses struggled to keep afloat amid the closing of physical locations and the switch to virtual business. However, Erika was fortunate enough that it didn't affect her so much, as she never had a physical storefront and was always placing orders virtually. So she continued selling chocolate-covered strawberries with different toppings and designs. In May, when many businesses were struggling, her's

took a positive turn once again.

She added “luxury boxes” to her list of offered products. These are a combination box that consists of both flowers and strawberries. She posted her work on social media again, and her posts went viral. She gained hundreds of followers, and all her products quickly sold out. She had so many orders that she was forced to waitlist many customers. Rivas added more luxury boxes of different colors and designs, so customers could have a variety to choose from, and of course, she sold out of those products, as well.

Currently, her business, though small compared to traditional business structures, is booming thanks to social media exposure. Thanks to her small business, Rivas can now afford tuition and provide for herself without becoming too worrisome. She expanded in product and now sells many types of designs including Luxury Boxes, Edible Arrangements, Cheesecake Churros, Chocolate-covered Bananas, and so much more.

She plans to graduate from the University of Houston next year. She aspires to be a school counselor, and of course, to grow her business throughout the Houston area. She also hopes she will be able to expand her business outside of the Houston area with the quality of product and customer service she provides to her customers.

For more information about Erika's business or to see the creations she offers visit @erikasweetberries on Instagram.



Erika Rivas of Erika's Sweet Berries, shopping for strawberries (bottom image) that will soon become elegant Luxury Boxes (top image). Images courtesy of Erika Rivas.

# UHS Board of Regents comprise a diverse characters

By Keven Balderas

Restless ambition seems to characterize the rich and powerful because they rarely content themselves with overseeing only one business or serving on only one board. Typically composing the University of Houston System's board of regents are nine individuals who, besides taking care of multiple organizations at once, regularly appear on cable television or host events in behalf of politicians.

According to the bylaws on the UHS website, the board elects the executive officers in charge of the UHS and the presidents of its four universities. It

also provides policy direction and oversight of management, broadly speaking. The UHS regents, as every regent of a public university in Texas, are themselves appointed by the governor of Texas for six-year terms, three at a time. The current chairman of the board is Tilman J. Fertitta (2009 - ), the sole owner of Landry's Inc., a private corporation which includes in its portfolio of businesses Joe's Crab Shack and the Downtown Aquarium. He is also the current owner of the Houston Rockets and the star of CNBC's television show, "Billion Dollar Buyer."

Another restauranteur currently on the board is Doug Brooks (2018 - ), who started as a manager at Chili's and ended up eventually as president, chairman and CEO of Brinker International, the public corporation to which Chili's belongs. He is currently also serving on the boards of Southwest Airlines and AutoZone.

Among the many notable former UHS regents may be found Nelda Blair (2008 - 2013) and Jack Valenti (1963 - 1965).

A Texas lawyer, Blair appeared in "Power of Attorney," a reality

court show produced by 20th Century Fox Television that aired in the early 2000s. Since then, she has organized events in support of prominent Republican politicians including U.S. Senator John Cornyn, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, and former U.S. presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani. In Jan. Gov. Greg Abbott appointed Blair to the Texas Public Safety Commission.

But Jack Valenti doubtless made more headway into television and politics. After serving in WWII and working in advertising, he became special aide to President Lyndon B.

Johnson. He went on to become the president of the Motion Picture Association of America, where he spearheaded the film rating system still in use today.

Perhaps most infamous of all those who have served on the UHS board is Kenneth Lay (1987? - 1993), the Enron executive who led the company's efforts in deceiving the public about the company's unsound financial performance.

Enron's collapse resulted in millions of dollars in lost retirement savings and the sudden disappearance of thousands of jobs. He was ultimately found guilty of mul-

multiple criminal counts, including fraud and conspiracy, before succumbing to a heart attack in 2006. Notably, while UHS regent, he chaired the committee that would bring the 1992 Republican National Convention to the city of Houston and the main UH campus.

All the above-mentioned individuals were once students in the UHS. They are arguably testament to UHS' sizable impact on American culture.

## Faculty Senate Update

By Sheryl Sellers

The first Faculty Senate Meeting of November was convened on Nov. 3. The first matter on the table was follow up on the request from Faculty Senate President, Ron Beebe, Ph.D., for a to-do list for the current Senate.

Nineteen respondents presented issues which were tallied; those topping the list on which Faculty Senate focused were: faculty salaries, teaching load, lecturers' eligibility for faculty development awards, home office stipend, parking, doctoral degrees, and graduate college. This is not a complete list, but these received discussion.

Dr. Beebe reminded the sena-

tors that a resolution was passed last year on merit increases for faculty salaries. It was suggested that the scale from the College and University Professional Association should be researched.

On the topic of teaching load, there was a suggestion to move from a 4-3 to a 3-3 course requirement. Currently, faculty are required to teach four classes/sections during the fall semester and three classes/sections during the spring semester, or vice versa. A 3-3 would require teaching three classes/sections in each semester.

The senate will take steps to move forward on the

request to allow lecturers to become eligible to receive faculty development awards.

Moving on, Edmund Cueva, Ph.D., Professor of Humanities, addressed the request for a home office stipend. Research indicated that the University of Southern California provides a stipend to faculty of \$350 per month to cover cell phone, internet, etc.; and the University of Miami provides \$148 per month.

Parking, or the lack thereof, was one of the issues discussed in the meeting; however, the subject has been brought up frequently in the past and there

was no movement on the issue. There is no space available to purchase and no funds to provide and cover the cost. There are 22 spaces at the Commerce Street lot, 10 of these are reserved and three are handicap spots. Multiple attempts to address the problem have been made, to no avail.

A vision to bring doctoral programs and more structure to the graduate college garnered a fair amount of discourse. Godwin Agboka, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Technical Communication, spoke on the need for structure in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences graduate college program to consist of streamlined programs

and a graduate dean. Mike Duncan, Ph.D., Professor of Technical Communication and launching doctoral programs at the university.

In the past, the UH System has not had much interest in allowing doctoral programs at UHD. It is perceived that the UH System "creates roadblocks" to installing these programs and additional graduate programs at UHD because they would compete with those offered at the University of Houston. Nell Sullivan, Ph.D., Professor of English, suggested that if this is an endeavor the Senate wants to tackle, the time to begin is now. She predicted

that it would be a minimum of a ten-year process.

It was also questioned if there would be an adequate demand for the programs. Candace TenBrink, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the College of Business, mentioned that her colleagues at other universities have mentioned that they "struggle to find doctoral candidates to study at their institutions."

Nina Barbieri, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the College of Public Service, mentioned the risk to UHD losing out by losing students (after earning their bachelor's degrees).

*Continued on Gator Life, Page 5*

## Gators phone bank to mobilize voters

By Indira Zaldivar

UHD Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning recruited UHD students for a paid opportunity to call and mobilize voters through Avenue's Voter Mobilization Phone Bank for the 2020 presidential election.

Gators trained virtually beginning in early October and made calls through Nov. 3, Election Day. Daniel Candelaria, Census and voter engagement organizer with Avenue, said Gators were industrious and eager. Candelaria added that volunteers with Avenue and Houston in Action collaborated, but "mostly it was the UHD folks who made it happen." Avenue's Voter Mobilization Phone Bank concluded with 251.33 hours of total call time, 10,710 coded calls, 25,897 texts, and 54,063 call attempts.

"It is important to inform every individual on political issues because every person has the power to make a difference and sadly, most folks are unaware of the impact their involvement could create for their community," Candelaria said. "Engaging voters to partake in elections is one way to get individuals in our community to develop their civic engagement."

Candelaria said he got involved in civic engagement organization while studying at the University of Texas. Candelaria is a Dreamer and said that his status compels him to be involved in these efforts. Harris County broke its all-time voter turnout record on

Oct. 30 with one day of early voting remaining.

"If you do not fight for what you believe in, others will not do so," Candelaria said.

Sedoo Ijir, of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, said that the CCESL will award students a university scholarship as compensation for phone banking, so the money can be used to pay tuition costs. Gators earned \$50 per three-hour shift plus \$50 for the two-hour training.

Karem Maldonado, UHD philosophy student said she participated to engage voters because so much was at stake during this election. Maldonado said this was not her first time phone banking to mobilize voters, but she was glad to receive training and support while using an unknown platform for her that consisted of a dialer software. For Halloween, she said she phone banked dressed up as La Catrina, one of the most recognizable symbols of Day of the Dead.

"It turned out to be lots of fun because it lightened the mood and in turn, I got to help others," Maldonado said. She added that she got to help more people than she expected and had a very positive and rewarding experience "It overall inspired me to commit to engaging my community in all future elections."



## Gators defend our coffee

By Indira Zaldivar

The Defend Our Future Chapter at UHD debuted on Nov. 4 with a presentation about how climate change threatens coffee production and simultaneously, the lives of many farmers predominantly from developing countries.

Kaylen Saxton, UHD general business student, and Kevin Mendez, UHD computer science student, founded this new student organization. UHD's chapter is one of a larger national organization, Defend Our Future.

Temperature changes affect the taste and production of even the most common and tolerant types of coffee, Arabica and Robusta. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that the combined land and ocean temperature has increased at an average rate of 0.07°C (0.13°F) per decade since 1880; however, the average rate of increase since 1981 (0.18°C / 0.32°F) is more than twice as great.

"Even one degree can change the flavor and the amount that can be produced," Saxton said. "We are the ones that are making temperature change differ and in return, we are getting worse coffee and less coffee along with that."

The coffee belt, located in Latin America, Africa and Southern Asia, generates an estimated \$20 billion from exportation alone. However, an Oct. 2020 report by the International Coffee Organization noted that global shipments decreased by 3.6% compared to last year and generated only \$17.87 billion. Overall coffee production also fell by 2.5% from last year.

The current pandemic reduced this year's

production. However, scientific data points to climate change as the most prominent threat to the production of coffee.

While climate change worries coffee consumers, it threatens the culture and only source of income of coffee producers in developing countries. 80% of the world's coffee is produced by 25 million smallholder farmers who live in poverty.

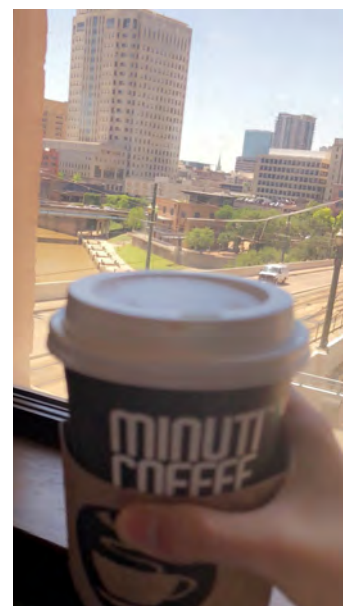
"We have to be a lot more concerned about these farmers and their families," Saxton said. "It's not just our coffee that is at risk right now; it's these farmers and their lives and their families and how they are making money."

Since 2013, the land able to use for coffee has dropped by seven percent. Studies estimate that the amount of suitable land that can sustain coffee production will be cut in half by 2050. Warmer temperatures bring more pests. Water cycles also change in ways coffee farmers are unable to predict or adapt. Their profit margin has decreased over the years as they seek to adapt techniques to compensate for climate change.

Mario Bravo, project manager with the Environmental Defense Fund, pointed out that most greenhouse gas emissions in Texas come from the transportation sector. Bra-

vo highlighted that Texas is still relying on coal and fossil fuels to power battery electric vehicles and therefore reducing the impact of green initiatives. He added that the more Texas transitions to renewable energy to power vehicles, the more efficient battery electric vehicles will be at cutting down greenhouse gas emissions.

Saxton and Men-



Student enjoys a cup of coffee from the former 40,000 Windows Cafe, S-OMB, Floor 5. Image credit: Indira Zaldivar.

dez encouraged commuting by bus, biking or walking, reducing food and water waste, and talking to friends and family about climate change, renewable energy, and energy-efficient appliances.

"Climate change is affecting everybody globally," Mendez said. "It's just so much easier to be sustainable in our lives and doing small things that can have a big impact."



Coffee plants in Santa Barbara, Honduras. Image courtesy of the Collaborative Coffee Source.

# Gators support ‘Stop TxDOT I-45’ expansion

By Indira Zaldivar

Gators joined Houston community group, Stop TxDOT I-45, on Nov. 7 at White Oak Bayou Trail in support of the Houstonians that will be displaced once the Texas Department of Transportation breaks ground on the proposed North Houston Highway Improvement Project.

Fabian Ramirez, graduate student at UHD, structural engineer, and Northside resident said he showed up in support of Stop TxDOT I-45 because he wants to preserve the existing ecosystem and help the community prevent a project which “accelerates gentrification, a systematic event of the genocide process.

He said he hopes he can keep his property located by the Saint Arnold Brewing Company where he plans to build affordable living spaces through grant

writing after graduating with his master’s degree in technical communication.

Ramirez said the latest TxDOT NHHIP drawings indicate Harris County Toll Road Authority funding a subsequent construction project that will slice through the Northside community and over his property in order to connect with the proposed NHHIP project. Ramirez said he has invested too much in his community to let TxDOT change it

“without virtuous cause.”

Alejandro Perez, UHD alumnus and Northline resident, also attended the event. Perez criticized TxDOT for giving Houstonians an inconsiderate amount of time to comment on the Final Environmental Impact Statement of the I-45 expansion.

In a press release on Sept. 25, TxDOT announced the release of the newer FEIS comprised of 8,189 pages and the

deadline of Nov. 9 to email comments. While Houston community groups such as Air Alliance Houston and LINK Houston have requested an extension of 120 days to respond, TxDOT announced on Oct. 28 an extension of 30 days not 120.

Houstonians now have through Dec. 9 to email comments before displacement and construction follow.

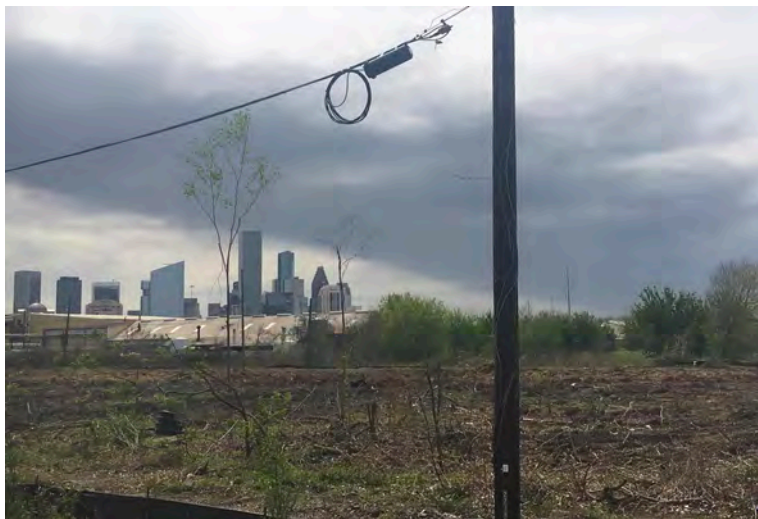
If TxDOT moves forward with its current plan,

160 houses, 433 multi-family residential units, 486 public housing units, 344 businesses, 5 churches, and 2 schools in low-income communities of color will be displaced. Residents along the freeway that are not displaced will be exposed to excessive noise and increased air pollution as a result of the expansion.

“This construction is dangerous, primarily because confined concrete construction

over long periods of time have a severe negative impact on air quality and spikes car pollution. This impacts respiratory health for residents, especially kids commuting to school by foot or participating in outdoor activities,” Ramirez said.

“I oppose needless construction based on low quality ethics and I feel TxDOT’s values are unethical. Their concern for a sustainable Houston should be priority.”



The view of Houston’s downtown skyline from a property that has been transformed into a retention pond, adjacent to Fabian Ramirez’s property. Image courtesy of Meshed Consulting LLC



Houstonians demonstrate support of Stop TxDOT I-45 on Nov. 7 at White Oak Bayou Trail. Image courtesy of Meshed Consulting LLC.

## Faculty Senate Update

Continued from Gator Life, Page 3

According to Dr. Cueva, member of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee of the Bridge Plan, these visions (additional graduate colleges and doctoral programs) are not included in the Bridge Plan.

On issues outside of the focus items, an ad-hoc committee will be tracing “what’s going on” regarding the senate Anti-racism Resolution, insomuch as UHD may not be moving as quickly as

the Senate would like.

Another issue identified was the Academic Freedom Policy. The Office of the General Counsel sent an email indicating there may be restrictions on what the faculty can discuss in classes.

Hossein Shahrokhi, Associate Vice President, Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, notified the Senate that between Christmas and New Year the Information Technology

Department will be merging Blackboard and Blackboard 1 “into the cloud” for faculty so they can use one platform for both spring and fall.

Interim President, Antonio Tillis, Ph.D., denied the resolution proposed by the Student Government Association, SGA, that Nov. 3 of every voting year be considered a no instruction day. The senate had strong feelings and words regarding the response from Dr. Tillis which

many found dismissive and disturbing. During the Oct. 20 senate meeting, the senate voted in favor of supporting the resolution by a vote of 27-0-0. Following Dr. Tillis’ response to the SGA, the senate held a second vote over the Oct. 30 weekend to decide whether the senate should submit a resolution requesting that the president’s cabinet reconsider their decision. The senate did not pass the resolution with a vote of 10 for,

11 against, and 3 abstained. Focusing on the loss of an instruction day, Dr. Tillis seemingly ignored the civic engagement side of the SGA resolution. He believed that students had plenty of time to vote. A team will focus a response framed around looking to the future. Dr. Beebe noted that school districts of Houston, Alief, and Aldine shut down “precisely for civic engagement.”

Dr. Cueva mentioned some highlights of the National Faculty Senate meeting he

and Dr. Beebe recently attended. The attendees had similar concerns surrounding COVID-19, and the affected economics. A major concern among all was salary. Some of the institutions have been asked to cut their salaries. Further, during discussions, it became apparent that the UHD faculty have a much better relationship with their provost and president than their contemporaries.

It appears that the senate will have plenty on their plates for this academic year.

# Student shares opinion of online classes

By Sheryl Sellers

To my knowledge, the student body has not been polled on its endearment, tedium, or degree of difficulty in solely online courses. Nor have they been polled on what steps, in their opinion, could be taken to make it a positive, successful experience, if it is not. Yes, there have been surveys emailed following a semester, but the ability to speak candidly is lost.

Although this opinion has not been solicited, I decided to entertain the positives and negatives from the preference of face-to-face classes and the experiences and knowledge garnered from others. It is doubtful that I am the only student among the approximate 15,000 registered that prefer instruction interaction.

On the plus side, if I am present-

able from shoulders or waist up, I could, if I wanted, keep my pajamas on the entire day, well except to walk the dogs. My neighbors may frown on that. Also, I do care about my appearance.

Also, on the positive side, one can move at their desired pace.

On the negative side, one can move at their desired pace.

I am familiar with courses that are 100% online. The syllabus is posted on Blackboard, and the "book" is online and independent study is expected. Every quiz and exam will be due at the time of the final exam. Although these courses may not fit into the core curriculum field, the effort can feel like a course one may have elected to test out of, that is, read the material and take the test. The curriculum is truly the

hallmark of an online course. Interaction with the professor is non-existent.

To stay on top of the reading, a student could divide the chapters up over the course of the semester. However, it is easy to get behind if there are due dates in other courses. A student may tend to work on those deadlines first. Students may complete all the chapter assignments during the "trial period" of the online text so purchasing the online book is unnecessary. One can then log in near-final exam time to review. Another example of an asynchronous course offers some communication from the professors. They either share information via Blackboard announcements or offer weekly videos to engage the class further. At least some interaction can be helpful. The student

does not feel afloat in a sea of seclusion.

The closest semblance to face-to-face is synchronous courses. Well, to some extent. At times it is more like face-to-square-box. The uncertainty is whether the student behind the box is paying attention, feeding a baby, helping a child student, or napping. Undoubtedly, this is more important to the professor than to fellow students, unless that face in a box is needed for a group meeting.

Here is the thing: online groups can be challenging. If there are six people in a group, there are six variations of work hours, school hours, class times, family needs and even sleep patterns. Particularly in asynchronous classes. Some students receive GroupMe notifications while some do not. Others look at

GatorMail and Blackboard daily while some do not. Group communication can be a big hairy challenge.

Another big hairy challenge is finding the right place on Blackboard to find needed assignments. Some professors do this very well while others, not so much.

For example, a mid-term was due for a particular class. Students could not locate the test on Blackboard. It was not under Course Work, Assignments, or Exams/Tests. It was not sitting in Student Support, Course Information, Content, Course Content, or Learning Modules. However, it was lurking in Student Support, Assessments. That was a new one. It took students several emails to get the answer from their professor - over 24 hours. The free weekend time for Mon-

day-Friday working students was lost.

School is never out for the pro; this is true throughout life. One is always learning. Learning new things is fun and exciting. Well, the fun is lost when searching for an exam, or for information on a project coming due, or unable to reach a team member. Learning becomes more of a drag.

Sometimes it feels like instructors are putting the fun in dysfunctional and juggling between control and chaos on Blackboard. Is there any reason the information on that platform cannot be placed consistently among courses?

What do I prefer? Face to face. Consistency. Communication. And, finally, please no group assignments within asynchronous classes. There is enough chaos in our world.



The Dateline is now hiring for fall and spring semesters!

Student-run since volume one, The Dateline provides students an opportunity to get involved on campus, gain valuable experience, and build professional skills. Students can also earn course credit with TCOM/ENG 4360 and can even make a little extra cash.

Students are encouraged to submit as many pieces as desired for each issue, however no commitment or experience is necessary.

We welcome students of all majors, and we are excited to see what you can bring to the team. We are currently hiring for positions including journalists, photographers, illustrators, cartoonists, and graphic designers.

To submit pieces or for inquiries about joining The Dateline, email the editor, Jaida Doll: [dollj1@gator.uhd.edu](mailto:dollj1@gator.uhd.edu)

Did you know...?

# Drive-Thru Voting

By Whitney Barrett

By Stephanie Alvarez

Drive-thru voting is legal and safe. It resulted in a high voter turnover rate in Harris County. As of its initiation, more than 127,000 Harris County voters have opted for drive-thru voting.

**Why did it start?**

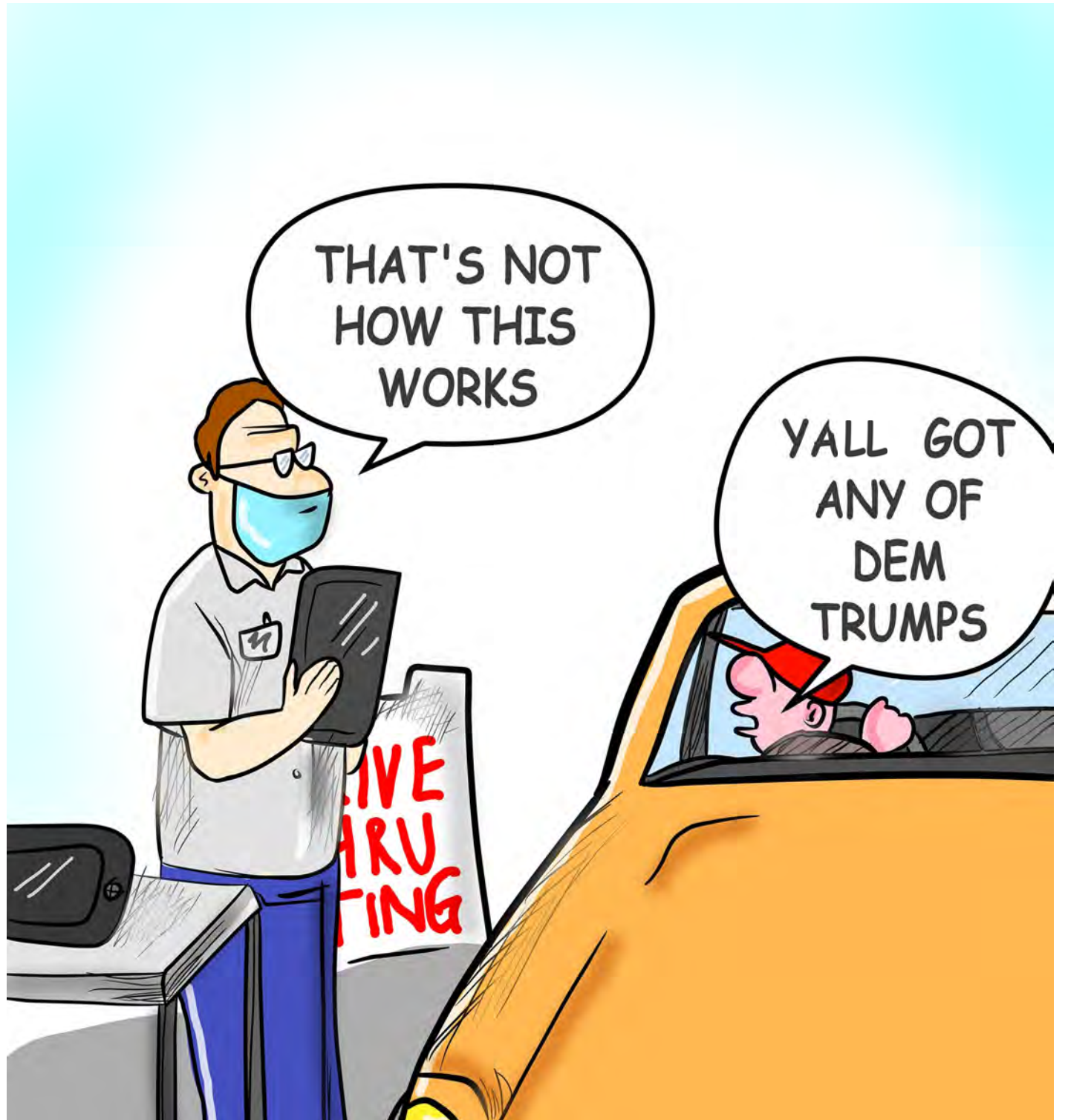
Harris County has reported more than 19,000 deaths due to COVID-19. To prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 from voting, Harris County implemented the drive-thru voting option which would be aimed at offering a safer voting alternative to concerned voters during this pandemic.

**What is all the fuss about?**

Harris County Commissioners court approved 10 drive-thru voting locations throughout the metropolitan area in August after receiving the blessing from Texas Secretary of State Ruth Hughs' staff.

**Who made it possible?**

Texas GOP filed a lawsuit to disrupt drive-thru voting. This has been one of several attacks trying to prevent drive-thru voting to occur. The Texas Republican Party has continuously been in a rift with Harris County Clerk's Office to prevent the expansion of voting locations.



By Whitney Barrett

# Harris County Early Voting 2020



**127,000 Drive Thru Votes**



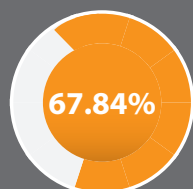
**250,434 Mail-In Ballots**



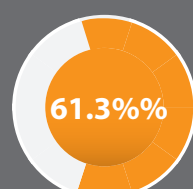
**1,264,811 In Person**

**Election Turnouts**

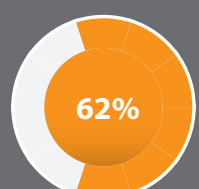
**2020**  
Voter Turnout



**2016**  
Voter Turnout



**2012**  
Voter Turnout



# Kamala Harris makes history

By Varah Thornton

On Saturday, Nov. 7, Joe Biden was declared winner of the 2020 Presidential Election. But what makes Biden's win an even bigger deal is his running mate, Kamala Harris.

Thanks to on the ground organizing from the likes of Stacey Abrams and countless others, the Biden-Harris ticket saw success delivered nearly five days after Election Day. This was in large due to a historic earlier voter turnout, mail ballot votes and overall turnout. Both Biden and Trump received the most votes ever cast for presidential candidates in an election of all time because of this.

But it is Harris's nomination that has been the focus of attention for many. The daughter of a Jamaican father and Indian mother, Harris will be the first Black, Indian and woman vice president in the nation's history. Harris is no stranger to be first. She was also the first Black and Indian woman elected to state Senator for California and was the first Black woman elected to San Francisco's District Attorney. Harris will also be the first Howard University graduate elected to the white house, a notable HBCU where she joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, the first Black Greek Sorority in the nation.

Harris's husband, Doug Emhoff, will also make history as the nation's first

Second Gentleman. Together the couple will be the first biracial second family, not to be confused with either Kamala Harris or Barack Obama's biracial lineages.

Harris has already started receiving racist attacks on her qualifications, one of the most notable coming from British Lord John Kilclooney who tweeted on Nov. 9 "What happens if Biden moves on and the Indian becomes President. Who then becomes Vice President." Despite displaying a complete lack of understanding for how American political succession works, Kilclooney attempted to defend the now deleted tweet with a following one explaining that "...it seems to have upset some people. I did not know her name and identified her with the term Indian. Most people understood. Racist NO."

Harris's maternal ancestral village of Thulasendrapuram in India celebrated by offering prayers and clanging bells expressing their pride and hoping that she would one day visit the village where her grandfather spent his childhood, Kamala's inspiration for wanting to go into public service.

UHD student, ReNita Burks-Green, explained what Harris' election means to her, "[It] means representation. Breaking barriers is always something to strive for and that's exactly what happened with

this nomination."

UHD student Michelle A.D Duvall said, "It means a step has been made but we are not done yet. This doesn't take away from the fact that people of color are still getting mistreated. I am proud of her and us as a people but I don't want us to feel like our fight is over."

"Kamala's nomination means women of color can do anything they really strive for and put their heart towards" said UHD student Ashley Marie Martinez.

UHD professor Creshema Murray, Ph.D., said that "it's indescribable!" in an interview with KHOU. Murray continued that, "We can't allow this just to be a moment. Celebrate now, but this is a movement we have to think about as women, as south Asian women, as African American women, as native women and Latinx women...as white women. How are we going to use this moment and make it a movement and make sure that all of our children see a woman not on as vice president-elect or vice president, but as President."

Whether or not her politics aligned with her critics', her nomination has shattered one of the biggest glass ceilings in our county. White House as fears of violence over the election results mounted.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and President-elect Joe Biden take the stage at the Chase Center to address the nation on Nov. 7 in Wilmington, Delaware. Image courtesy of Andrew Harnik.



## US elects Biden, Harris

By Sheryl Sellers

America, we have a president. The people of the United States of America made their voices heard with an historic vote for their next president. Joseph R. Biden has been elected as the 46th president of the country. And along with the second Catholic to hold the office, comes the first woman to the seat of vice president, Kamala Harris, a first-generation American of Indian and Jamaican descent.

Due to the covenants of some states, and by the direction of President Donald Trump, counting of early voting ballots was deferred until Nov. 3, the day of the regular election. Because of this, it took an additional three and a half days to determine which candidate achieved the required 270 electoral votes. The winner of the election was not announced until mid-morning on Sat., Nov. 7.

Early in the tallying it appeared as though incumbent Trump would keep his seat. However, as the early votes began to add up, Biden

gained the lead and kept it.

Anticipation mounted daily as votes from the swing states of Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, and importantly, Pennsylvania were added to the tally.

As of Nov. 3, Biden held 253 electoral votes to Trump's 214. The final count of Pennsylvania's 20 electoral votes was paramount to the decision. By Saturday morning, Pennsylvania went with Biden and the 270 electoral votes needed to gain the presidency was met.

As of Nov. 11, Biden received 290 electoral votes to Trump's 214. In the popular vote, Biden gained over 75 million – the most votes for a presidential candidate in history. Trump received the second highest number of popular votes in history with a total of 71,043,601.

It was perceived that the Biden count escalated after Nov. 3 because Democrats consisted of the majority of early voting, deciding to mail in their ballot or vote

early to avoid crowds on election day.

Thus far there has been no word from President Trump congratulating Biden and Harris on their win. However, he does continue to proclaim that fraudulent voting was at play. There is no proof of this conspiracy.

The president and vice-president elect made a public appearance to a drive-in crowd in Biden's hometown of Wilmington, DE the evening of Nov. 7. Biden contended that he would preside over the country, not splitting his concerns between Democrats and Republicans, but for all the people of the United States.

In celebration of the Democratic win, shouting, horn-honking and dancing in the streets were televised from major cities, including a crowd outside the White House holding signs stating, "You're Fired!"

A non-scalable fence was erected to secure the White House as fears of violence over the election results mounted.



# NASA discovers water on moon, signals potential explorations

By Lauren Anderson

During a news teleconference on Oct. 26, NASA announced that a telescope, known as the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) discovered water on the sunlit side of the moon. Scientists described the evidence that was found and concluded through a research package published in *Nature Astronomy* that lunar water ice “may be more widely distributed and accessible as a resource for future missions than previously thought.”

Two studies report a signature of lunar molecular water and show a map of cold traps at the moon’s poles that may contain reservoirs of water ice. Past research supports the existence of water on the moon, but these studies show the whereabouts and properties of this water and how it will aid future research and NASA missions.

The moon’s total surface area is about 38 million kilometers, with the majority of its terrain extremely dry as a result of hot temperatures. The result of these studies show that nearly 40,000 square kilometers of the moon’s surface may contain water ice, which is twice of what was previously estimated.

Casey I. Honniball, a NASA postdoctoral program fellow at the agency’s

Goddard Space Flight Center, led scientists and captured the signal of molecular water using the telescope.

“To be clear, this is not puddles of water but instead water molecules that are so spread apart that they do not form ice or liquid water,” Honniball said during the teleconference. “The abundance of small-scale cold traps implies that future missions exploring for ice may more easily target and access one of these potential reservoirs. If water is found in micro cold traps, the sheer number and topographic accessibility of these locales would facilitate future human and robotic exploration of the moon.”

Honniball and her colleagues previously noted that three spacecrafts detected hydration on the moon in the past, but it was not clear whether the source was water or other hydroxyl (OH) compounds.

The team searched the lunar south pole for signs of special spectral signal, known as the 6-micron emission feature. SOFIA was then able to pick up clear readings of the signal in and around Clavius, a large crater at the south pole.

Honniball said that the next question is figuring out how the water is being generated. “Without a thick atmosphere,

water on the sunlit lunar surface should just be lost to space,” she said. “Yet somehow we’re seeing it. Something is generating the water, and something must be trapping it there.”

A team led by Paul Hayne, a planetary scientist at the University of Colorado Boulder, used data from NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter to map out regions of the lunar poles that does not receive direct sunlight, due to the moon’s axis and the shadows cast by the rough terrain.

Past missions

revealed that large amounts of water ice may be frozen into huge, shaded craters at the poles, but Hayne and his team expanded the map to include ice locked away in smaller cold traps. The team’s models show that the most numerous cold traps on the moon measure just one centimeter across, suggesting there could be twice as much water ice at the lunar poles than previously thought.

Paul Hertz, director of the Astrophysics Division in the Science Mission Directorate at NASA

Headquarters in Washington said, “This is exciting because the expectation is that any water present on a sunlit surface of the moon would not survive the lunar day. The discovery reveals that water might be distributed across the lunar surface and not limited to the cold shadowed places near the lunar poles, where we have previously discovered water ice.”

The two new studies led by Honniball and Haynes represent a newfound understanding of the water supply on the moon, which has implications for the long-time vision of moving to the moon’s surface.

The new research is especially *Continued on News, Page 10*

beneficial considering that NASA plans to land humans on the moon in the 2020s and use lunar resources as part of its Artemis program, causing legal and ethical discussions about extraction of materials from the moon. Since there is a better estimate of the moon’s water, there is a new sense of urgency to establish lunar exploration and resource extraction.

Water on the moon could bring scientists closer to discovering if life could exist or already exists on the moon. Water is one of the main elements to the formation of life, although theories on this topic have varied over time.

## Amy Coney Barrett confirmed as Supreme Court Justice

By Salvador Hernandez

On Oct. 26, Judge Amy Coney Barrett was sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice, replacing the late-Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The ceremony was held at the White House with Supreme Court Associate Justice, Clarence Thomas, administering the oath.

After a grueling hearing, the Senate voted upon her confirmation, (52-48), completing her appointment to the Supreme Court. The vote was split down party lines - Senate Democrats overwhelmingly voted against, while Republicans voted in favor. According to CBS

News, “Only one Republican, Senator Susan Collins, voted against confirming Barrett to the Supreme Court. All the Democrats voted against her, including red state Senators, Doug Jones of Alabama, who is up for reelection this year, and Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who voted to confirm Brett Kavanaugh in 2018.” Senate Democrats viewed the move to appoint Barrett to the Supreme Court as a power grab orchestrated on behalf of the Republicans. Most Democrats saw her conservative views on politics

as a private citizen would influence her decisions regarding the Affordable Care Act and *Roe v. Wade* (1974).

On the other hand, Senate Republicans viewed the decision as a necessary move following Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg’s death. Barrett was viewed as an individual who would uphold the constitution fairly and just in the eyes of the people of the United States. Barrett has stood on the notion that she will not be persuaded by her own, nor anyone else’s interest only that of interpreting a decision against the

words of the United States Constitution.

The Trump campaign issued a statement in celebration of Barrett’s confirmation. “She is now the third solid, conservative Justice appointed to the Supreme Court by the President and she will apply the Constitution and not turn the Court into a super legislature.”

Barrett will be the 115th Supreme Court Justice and the 5th woman to serve the Supreme Court. She is a practicing Catholic with a family of seven children ranging from ages 8 to 19.

# Texas policing uses controversial hypnosis tactics to put suspects on death row

By Alex Riley

In April 2018, Lauren McGaughy and Dave Boucher brought to light an unorthodox investigative tactic used by law enforcement, particularly in Texas, the use of hypnosis to collect vital evidence.

McGaughy and Boucher, writing for the Dallas Morning News, reported that Texas law enforcement uses hypnosis in one form or another at least a dozen times a year. As of this year, 21 states have banned the use of evidence obtained exclusively via hypnosis. Texas is not one of them.

McGaughy discussed the tactic as “Texa standard” with host David Brown on May 18, 2018. In their discussion she pointed out one of the major problems with this method, “It can plant false memories in your mind without you even knowing it.”

If McGaughy’s claims are true, combined with the fact that almost half the country deems the strategy in-

admissible, one cannot help but wonder what degree of justice can be administered when it is legal for law enforcement to implant thoughts into witnesses’ and victims’ minds. This is likely the reason the tactic has been referred to as junk science.

Presently, there are several Texas inmates on death row awaiting either execution or an appeal to be heard of their conviction. Gregory Gardner is the attorney for two men currently on death row in Dallas, who were convicted largely based on evidence produced via hypnosis. Gardner, when speaking to the Dallas Morning News on the process of hypnosis, claims

“Once you have, at a minimum, serious questions that a technique sent a man to death row, you need to change the way you use the technique... [Hypnosis] does so much more harm to innocent people, than getting

guilty people behind bars.”

There are a few misconceptions about hypnosis: it is not a mind control technique. Professional hypnotists do not make their patients think they are an animal or put them to sleep during the process, and they are rarely seen using a swinging pendulum or watch to put people under their spell. However, there is consensus that it is an effective tool for therapy, helping patients kick addiction and heal past trauma.

Typically, a forensic hypnosis session involves an interview between the willing hypnosis victim (i.e., the witness) and the hypnotist. It is an interview style conversation in which the patient reveals intimate information about themselves to the interviewer and a subsequent chain of questions that jog a part of the patient’s memory that was previously inaccessible. The details of how this goal is reached is

kept confidential. Where there is a divide in the effectiveness of hypnosis, it is in the theory that the process can unlock lost memories.

One of the earliest cases where hypnosis was used was in the 1978 rape and mutilation of 15-year-old Mary Vincent. Vincent was left in a ravine to die after being raped and having both arms chopped off near Berkeley, CA. She survived but could not recall what her attacker looked like until she was hypnotized by way of strategic interrogation featuring a series of questions designed to uncover concealed information. This led to the subsequent capture and conviction of Lawrence Singleton, aka “The Mad Chopper.”

One case in particular that is presently in the spotlight is that of Charles Don Flores, who was sentenced to death in 1999 for killing Elizabeth Black in Framers Branch, Texas. Flores

was convicted under the “law of parties,” which targets accomplices of crimes. Richard Lynn Childs actually murders Black, and pleads guilty to it, serving 35 years.

At the scene of the crime, a witness describes seeing two men emerge from a vehicle outside of Black’s house. The witness originally describes the men as tall thin white men with long hair; however, it is not until after a hypnotic interview that this same witness now describes a heavysset Latino man with long hair that looks like Flores.

As of 2016, Childs has been released from prison on parole, while Flores awaits execution on death row. Just a few weeks ago, on Oct. 6, Flores appealed before the Texas Supreme Court that the only evidence obtained to convict him was obtained unreliably and should not be used to determine whether someone lives or dies. Gretch-

en Sween, Flores’ defense, gave her thoughts on the case prior to the appeal.

“The fundamental unfairness of a conviction and death sentence that hinges on hypnotically induced testimony merits the consideration of our nation’s highest court, particularly now that a majority of U.S. jurisdictions have deemed it inadmissible in criminal trials.”

According to the Dallas News, there are about two dozen forensic hypnotists in Texas currently, the majority of whom serve in the Harris County Sheriff’s Office and Texas Rangers. The Texas Rangers have confirmed they have conducted 24 hypnosis sessions in 2016 and ’17. While the Mayo Clinic warns that when using hypnosis, “It may cause strong emotions and can alter... memories or lead to the creation of false memories.”

The Dateline reached out to HCSO for comment, but they have yet to respond.

## NASA finds water on moon Continued from News Page 9

This discovery also means future missions to the moon could be prolonged by making use of these water molecules which are scattered across the moon.

Astronauts could use the natural resource and turn it into oxygen or drinking water to sustain a

future colony. Scientists also say the water could be used to make rocket fuel, lightening missions, and slashing mission costs to make interplanetary space travel easier and cheaper.

Honniball suggested that solar winds or micrometers could have brought

the water. Chris Welch, an astronautics and space systems expert at Kingston University London’s Faculty of Engineering, also explained something similar back in 2009.

Welch said, “Current thinking is that the water comes from particles in the

solar wind is emitted by, and streams away from, the sun continuously. The water is thought to exist as a very fine film covering the particles of the lunar soil, or as groups of molecules, not as a liquid. You couldn’t drink it in its current form, but if extracted, then you

certainly could. It has been suggested that one cubic meter of soil might provide one liter of water.”

Further exploration is required to find more definite answers, and scientists hope to discover more through the Artemis program, which has plans to send two people to the moon in 2024.

“We had indications that H<sub>2</sub>O – the familiar water we know – might be present on the sunlit side of the Moon,” Hertz said. “Now we know it is there. This discovery challenges our understanding of the lunar surface and raises intriguing questions about resources relevant for deep space exploration.”



## Reviews and Recommendations



# 'Hubie's Halloween'

By James Jurewicz

Netflix's studio has delivered yet again with their recent release of the comedy "Hubie Halloween." Released on Oct. 7 and directed by Stephen Brill, the film was produced by Adam Sandler's Happy Madison Productions. "Hubie Halloween" was written by Adam Sandler and Tim Herlihy. Sandler also stars in the film as the title character "Hubie Shubert Dubois" a well meaning yet goofy character who the townspeople of Salem, Massachusetts constantly pick on throughout the film.

Opening with the classic Halloween song "Monster Mash" by Bobby Pickett, the film's tone is evident. This is a fun movie meant to be a hilarious 102 minute escape from reality. Adam Sandler fans will recognize multi-

ple references to his other films throughout "Hubie Halloween." Ben Stiller reprises his role from "Happy Gilmore" as the abusive hospital orderly "Hal" at the film's start. "Billy Madison" is also referenced multiple times along with Sandler's film "The Waterboy." Keep an eye out for Hubie's ghost costume, made from a dirty, yellowed bedsheet.

There can be at least four Harley Quinn costumes spotted in the film, a clever reference to real life. For over four years Harley Quinn, the DC comics character portrayed by Margot Robbie in the 2016 "Suicide Squad" film has been one of the most popular costumes.

The movie takes place throughout Halloween day and into the night, com-

plete with a full moon. Throughout the course of the film, farm animals reportedly die of untimely deaths, an escapee from the local sanitarium makes his way back to his hometown of Salem, and townspeople start to disappear. Longtime Sandler collaborator Steve Buscemi plays Hubie's new neighbor who is seemingly a creature of the night. One of the things that "Hubie Halloween" does well is uphold a sense of mystery as to what is actually happening in the historical town of Salem.

The background of 1600s Salem plays a central role in the story – Hubie is the descendent of people rumored to have been accused of witchcraft and burned alive. Hubie's mother connects the family and town history and the effect it has had

on Hubie, especially how he is constantly bullied. Hubie is horribly bullied by nearly everyone in Salem, even the town priest portrayed by Michael Chiklis of "Breaking Bad." "If you get dirt on my good funeral shoes again, I'm going to bury one up your butt," he states to Hubie.

There are only a few townspeople who are actually kind to Sandler's character, including Violet Valentine, Hubie's longtime crush played by Julie Bowen, and a character cameo by none other than former NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neil. Hubie is a self-proclaimed town monitor, similar to a school hall monitor. He sees fit to do his best at enforcing safety throughout Salem, sometimes to an annoying degree, like

his constant, unwanted reports to the town Sheriff played by Kevin James. Kevin James is one of many actors in "Hubie Halloween" that have also appeared in Sandler's other films. Others include Maya Rudolph and Rob Schneider, though there is no surprise to longtime fans that Schneider made the appearance. Sandler's wife and daughters also have roles in "Hubie Halloween."

When Adam Sandler was snubbed of an Oscar nomination for his performance in the film "Uncut Gems," many were surprised. His performance in that film was very different than his usual comedic deliveries, offering the audience a layered scumbag of a character whom the audience actually rooted for. "Uncut

Gems" was a well-made directorial sophomore film from the Safdie Brothers. Sandler stated he was going to intentionally make the worst film he could in retaliation for the snub. "Hubie Halloween" is not that film. This film is entertaining from start to finish. Although the film is not a serious and well-thought-out narrative, it is nowhere near Sandler's worst film.

After only spending a few minutes with Hubie himself, it is difficult not to identify with the man. This character draws attention to and awareness about of bullying. Bullying is a real problem which has only recently been identified as a serious social issue.

*"Hubie Halloween" is available to stream on Netflix.*

# 'The Witches'

By Varah Thornton

Roald Dahl's "The Witches" was released on HBO Max on Oct. 22 and hit select theaters on Oct. 28.

This reimagining of the Roald Dahl classic features a stellar cast with little to offer. The film stars Octavia Spencer, Anne Hathaway, Stanley Tucci and introduces Jahzir Bruno as the young protagonist. A remake of the classic 1990s film, the story follows a young orphaned boy (Bruno) who stumbles upon a

convention of witches plotting to eradicate all children.

Shortly after being taken in by his ailing grandmother, he meets a witch and learns of their terrible goal. Frightened by the encounter, Grandma (Spencer) tells him that they secretly meet to make their plans and are lead by the Grand High Witch (Hathaway). In an effort to avoid the local witch she suspects has been making her ill, Grandma whisks them away to an upscale hotel when they encounter a southerly

gentile Hotel Manager (Tucci) whose subtle microaggressions put Grandma off from the start. Unbeknownst to them, The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has checked in shortly afterward.

Unlike the original film, the description of witches is vastly more maniacal and scary. Instead of being ordinary looking women with ordinary jobs, plain sensible shoes and purple tinged eyes, the new film describes them to have ghastly tells such as caked on makeup, long gloves, high wigs and raspy voices.

And instead of taking place in the English countryside, we get 1950s Alabama where racism plays a part in how the characters are perceived and navigate the stylish hotel. One of the more notable departures from the original film aside from the character design of the witches is the elimination of a key character.

In the original film, one of the witches gets fed up with the Grand High Witch and turns things for the better in the last scenes of the film. For the 2020 remake, the characters have to live with the consequenc-

es of their decisions both for the good and bad. This is one of the essential lessons of both films, learning to live with the decisions you have made. But it is still a lightly scary children's film meant to make your skin crawl. Whether it achieves this feat is debatable.

Unlike the original film, the majority of the special effects are CGI. What made for the scarier moments of the 90s classic were the practical effects that dramatically advanced the plot. There is nothing like seeing Angelica Huston

peel off her face to reveal a ghastly visage compared to Anne Hathaway simply tossing aside a wig and revealing an elongated jaw. Flat jokes and sometimes incomprehensible line delivery by Hathaway bring about less scares and more confusion as the plot rushes along to show us how different it is from its predecessor.

*The original 1990 film "The Witches" is currently streaming on Netflix. The newly adapted 2020 "Roald Dahl's The Witches" is streaming on HBO Max.*

# 'Borat Subsequent Moviefilm'

By Aansa Usmani

On Oct. 23, Sacha Baron Cohen returned as Borat Sagdiyev, a fictional, satirical Kazakhstani reporter. His last film, "Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan" made the Borat character widely recognizable, from an outdated wardrobe to odd remarks and offensive jokes.

Since the 2006 film, Borat has since been sentenced to the gulag; his American culture reporting made Kazakhstan a mockery of the world, promoting anti-Semitic and misogynistic tropes—qualities falsely associated with the Central Asian country. The film begins with Borat performing hard labor at the gulag, with a disheveled appearance and little awareness of how society had progressed. After being summoned by Premier Nursultan Nazarbayev—played by actor

Dani Popescu—Borat learns that his gulag life-sentence will end if he could deliver Johnny, the monkey, to President Donald Trump. However, in the previous film, he had earlier issues with then-citizen Trump, opting to deliver the monkey to Vice President Mike Pence instead.

As he makes his preparations to leave Kazakhstan, he meets Tutar Sagdiyev, his only daughter. From the time she was born, she was subjected to physical segregation from society and had dreams of becoming the next "Melania." The first lady in the film is viewed as an influential figure that inspires Kazakhstani women to marry rich men merely for materialistic purposes implying that the concept of true love does not exist.

After arriving in the states, Borat discovers that Tutar has snuck into the county in the mon-

key's crate, eating him to survive the grueling journey. Before entering the US, Borat made several stops in Wuhan, China, Australia, Iran, and Italy—these countries will later serve significance for Borat's mission.

Since the monkey was dead, he realizes that his daughter could fulfill the mission instead. He begins to groom and prepare her for her role, giving her a cleaner wardrobe and a much-needed makeover. The in-between incidents are beyond cringe-worthy, yet it showed the odd love Borat has for his daughter.

Borat manages to sneak into the Conservative Political Action Committee's annual conference, using Tutar as a prop to seduce the vice president and attain vengeance for the Kazakhstani government. However, things go awry, as his poorly fitting Trump costume results in

him being booted from the event. Later on, he discovers that Rudy Giuliani, President Trump's advisor, is a fan of "big-breasted, attractive women," and instead begins to plot out ideas on how to capture his attention.

Although things go awry with Tutar (spoiler: she ends up running away), she eventually agrees to seduce the disgraced mayor. Posing as a journalist for a mock conservative news network, Tutar interviews Giuliani and appears to be widely uncomfortable with his advances. At one point, Giuliani asks her to enter his room "to relax" and he lies on the bed and appears to fondle himself. Giuliani has since denied this allegation and states that he was merely "tucking in his shirt." Borat then decides to end this abrupt meeting, telling Giuliani that she is underage and will be leaving. Although

Borat poses the risk of being sent back to the gulag, he puts his daughter before himself, something he has never done before. Upon returning to Kazakhstan, Borat fears his fate is sealed. However, he learns something else—his mission had been accomplished, but differently than expected.

At the beginning of the film, he was seen making various stops in China, Australia, the Middle East, and Europe, areas now commonly known as COVID-19 hotspots. In one instance, he was coughing on meat at a wet market in Wuhan, China—the city in which the deadly virus emerged. As he continued to travel, he brought along the virus and continued subconsciously infecting others. Per the Kazakhstani leader, his mission was successful as the rest of the world is suffering from humility, just as Kazakhstan had, over a decade ago.

The film ends with Borat being

re-instated as the country's "#4 reporter," a downgrade from his previous ranking. His daughter, Tutar, takes on her father's previous rank "#3 reporter," demonstrating how women in Kazakhstani culture are equal to men. Lastly, the anti-Semitic "Run of Jew" display is removed, replacing it with "Run of the Americans," showing pinatas of MAGA supporters and anti-masker "Karen's."

Overall, the film was relatively better than the first one. It had some moments that are visibly cringeworthy, but at least its dark humor did deliver. This film is certainly not for the faint of heart or those who do not like raunchy or dark humor. The film has made progress to address current issues. However, knowing Cohen's character, it manages to find instances in making everyone in the viewing audience offended.

# 'Among Us'

By Anthony Raul Ramirez

The multi-player game "Among Us" has received meteoric success within the past few months. It was released on June 15, 2018 for mobile and PC gaming, but has only recently gained a large following.

"Among Us" was developed and published by InnerSloth, a team composed of three people: Marcus Bromander, Forest Willard, and

Amy Liu. Its gameplay is similar to the card game, "Mafia," in which a select number of players in the group are deemed the Mafia, while the majority of players are the Innocents. The Mafia members attempt to convince the Innocents that they are not Mafia. The game ends when either the Innocents guess all Mafia members or if there are an even number of Mafia members to

Innocents, allowing the Mafia to win. Innocents deduce who are Mafia based on questioning people in the group.

"Among Us" takes the game of "Mafia" online and sets it in space. Mafia members in "Among Us" are called Impostors, while the Innocents are called Crewmates. Crewmates move around the map to solve tasks while Impostors sabotage areas that can result in wins if Crewmates do not arrive in time

to fix it. All players have tunneled vision where the amount of visibility of the map depends on their character's position. For example, a player entering a room can still see down a hallway, but cannot see once the character moves to where a wall would block that visibility. This is one of the interesting features for the game as Impostors can kill Crewmates while other Crewmates cannot see what happened.

The social

aspect of the game has grabbed many fans both as players of the game and as viewers for people streaming it. As tasks are sabotaged, Crewmates are found dead, and group members mysteriously move away from the others, Crewmates can call emergency meetings where players vote on who they believe is an Impostor. The person with the most votes is thrust into space followed by a message revealing if they were an Impostor or not.

This continues until all tasks on the map are completed, all Impostors are voted out or the amount of Impostors equals the amount of Crewmates left.

The popularity of "Among Us" can notably be traced back to video game streamers such as PewDiePie, Sodapoppin, Pokimane and Ninja during the summer of 2020.

*Continued on Opinions, Page 14*

# Netflix holiday film suggestions

By Varah Thornton

The lower temperatures have arrived and with it the cozy weather that makes being cooped up inside somewhat bearable. The cooler weather also signals the beginning of the holiday movie season. From family friendly journeys to contemporary love stories, here's a guide to five holiday features streaming on Netflix.

## A Very Murray Christmas

It's the lazy musical special you didn't know you needed. After getting snowed in at hotel

during a black out, Bill Murray finds himself navigating a canceled Christmas special with a queue of special guest and lots of liquor. The film makes the effort to play up the "magic of Bill Murray" from the jump and doesn't skimp on the camp. With heartwarming performances from Maya Rudolph, Phoenix and Jenny Slate, it's as much a warm-hearted Christmas romp as it is a love letter to the resiliency of New Yorkers.

## The Christmas

**Chronicles**  
Kurt Russell stars as a hip Santa who gets stranded after a brother sister duo accidentally crash his sleigh. The nighttime adventure sees the trio navigate sibling relationships, the meaning of Christmas and a cohort of fiendish elves who's one goal is to make sure Santa gets back on track with delivering their presents. The family friendly jaunt shows off Russell's comedic chops with a few key cameos and lots of reindeer puns.

## Jingle Jangle: A

**Christmas Journey**  
If you are looking for something truly magical, Jingle Jangle delivers an original fantasy journey full of hope and dubious villains. The story follows a young girl searching for a revolutionary device made by the greatest inventor there ever was: Jeronicus Jangle, her grandfather. The vibrant musical features the likes of Forest Whitaker, Keegan-Michael Key, Hugh Bonneville, Anika Noni Rose, Ricky Martin and Phylicia Rashad. Grammy

award winners Philip Lawrence and John Legend composed an original soundtrack with a feature by Usher.

**Over Christmas**  
This German-language Christmas tale walks the path of a man ready for the holidays to begin only to arrive home to find that his brother is dating his ex-girlfriend. From drunken nights to fantasy murder reprieves, the Germain countryside dark comedy delights in the small mishaps of family gatherings and owning mistakes.

## Holidate

For the romcom lovers, there are always plenty of options. Consider peeking at this Emma Roberts and Luke Bracey lead cast who team for a new spin on "friends with benefits". After repeated pushing from their respective families about showing up to holiday gatherings with no significant other, the two pair up to avoid the awkwardness and make clear that things are not serious. We all know this story, but it does not mean the hijinks of the holidays are not fun to watch.

# Longtime host of 'Jeopardy!' passes at 80

By Varah Thornton

On Sun., Oct. 8, "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek passed away at the age of 80. The game show released a statement saying that Trebek had passed away peacefully in his home surrounded by family and friends. The beloved game-show host had been diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer in March 2019. Instead of taking time away from the show, he instead kept at it while giving regular updates about his health via the show's social media platforms. In his first video, he expressed that he wanted fans to hear the news from him personally regarding his health before hearing it from anyone else.

Trebek stated, "I'm gonna fight this, and I'm gonna keep working. And with the love and support

of my family and friends, and with the help of your prayers also, I plan to beat the low survival rate statistics for this disease. I have to, because under the terms of my contract, I have to host "Jeopardy!" for three more years! So help me, keep the faith and we'll win. We'll get it done..."

Trebek took the time to thank fans for their kind words, prayers and advice that they offered, calling himself "a lucky guy" in one of his update videos in which he revealed he read every single get well wish he received in every form.

Even when Trebek gave a somewhat grim six-month update, he still kept a positive attitude while succinctly walking viewers through the treatments he was receiving and what his doctors were planning

to do. He was even honest about having days that he suffered massive bouts of depression and wondering if it was even worth continuing on. But he considered that a massive betrayal both to his faith and those who looked up to him.

A native Canadian, Trebek hosted numerous game shows before becoming the host of "Jeopardy!" in 1984 and continuing for 37 seasons. He was known for his stylistic flair, compassion and good sense of humor. Many showed appreciation for the host, most notably Saturday Night Live, which runs continuous sketches of both "Celebrity Jeopardy!" and "Black Jeopardy!" hosted by Will Ferrell and Kenan Thompson, respectively. Trebek would occasionally weigh in

on the sketches and even had a cameo in an episode of "Celebrity Rock 'N Roll Jeopardy!" as well as numerous films and TV shows.

On Trebek's second to last show, which aired Nov. 5, he shared a touching moment with new champion Burt Thakur when Thakur revealed that Alex was the reason he learned English. Many were quick to post their condolences and remembrances across social media including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who said, "We have lost an icon."

In their statement, "Jeopardy!" says there are no plans to contract a new host. On this note, Trebek gave an interview in January

about giving how he wanted to leave the show. Jeopardy!'s executive producer had a special message to deliver when the following show after Trebek's death aired saying that there were still 35 shows remaining that Alex had recorded and wanted aired and had been rehearsing a message that he will deliver on his final show.

"I will say my goodbyes," said Trebek, "And I will tell people, 'Don't

ask me who is going to replace me, because I have no say in that whatsoever. But I'm sure that if you give them the same love and attention and respect that you have shown me for the past 30, however many years, then they will be a success, and the show will continue being a success."



Image courtesy of @Jeopardy via Twitter

# Minimum wage increase

By Anthony Raul Ramirez

The idea of raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a growing concern in America. Citizens cite the need for this increase to combat rising living expenses, but there are several reasons why raising minimum wage will actually make it more difficult to afford expenses in America.

There are two causes of inflation: cost-push inflation and demand-pull inflation. Cost-push inflation is when product costs increase because production materials to make those products increased, such as a state's minimum wage

or raw materials. These higher costs also lead to supply decrease if the business can't afford the new price on materials while the demand of those products remain the same, meaning the business can miss out on selling product to customers. Because of these new cost increases, small businesses struggling to survive would have to either buy cheaper materials or fire staff to stay afloat. A local example of this was when Mayor Sylvester Turner planned to lay off 400 firefighters in Houston to make up for the pay raises in the Houston Fire Department when the city voted on Proposi-

tion B in 2019. Minimum wage increases currently illustrate negative impacts on businesses and living costs in states. In Eric Escalante's article, he interviewed business owner Phil Courey in Sacramento about the minimum wage increase.

"A dollar a year every January is a lot of pressure for a lot of small businesses like myself, including but not limited to, the restaurant industry. Any service that employs minimum wage is suffering, I can tell you that."

Escalante mentioned that these owners were not

just looking at a \$1 increase, but almost a 50% wage increase. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, California wants a \$15 minimum wage increase (from its current \$12) by 2023. California also has a very high cost of living.

According to Rachel Blakely-Gray, the value of a dollar in California compared to other states is \$0.87, annual mean wage across all occupations is \$61,290, and median monthly rent is \$2,518. When ranking states by cost of living, California was 49.

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# 'Among Us'

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As word got around about the game, an article from YouTube Culture & Trends found that "Among Us" videos in September reached 4 billion views that month. Social media has also seen a surge in memes and artwork based around the video game.

Along with the trend of its gameplay across social media platforms, "Among Us" gained its popularity on the fact that it requires people to work together. The game forces players to converse as its core gameplay involves

convincing others that what you are saying is the truth, leading to entertaining interactions as everyone attempts to disprove doubts about themselves. "Among Us" allows for socialization between people that we have missed during a socially distanced point in time.

A sequel was planned for the game, but seeing how much people enjoy the current "Among Us" has convinced InnerSloth to instead update the original game with what they planned for the future.

# The Federal Reserve

By Keven Balderas



"Powell and co. injecting liquidity into the economy to keep it running through COVID-19."

## Minimum wage Continued from Opinions, Page 14

To put it into perspective, Texas has a dollar value of \$1.03, a mean wage of \$50,490, a median monthly rent of \$1,455, and was ranked 23 in cost of living.

COVID-19 did not stop these wage hikes. Chris Marr stated, “Scheduled increases took effect in recent months in more than 20 states and cities from Los Angeles to Connecticut, even as

the number of confirmed coronavirus cases surged in parts of the U.S. and businesses navigated partial closures, new safety protocols, and customer capacity limits. More than a dozen other states are set to raise their minimum wages for the start of 2021.”

According to a local economic impact report from September of 2020, 65,769 businesses had temporarily closed

down in America, while 97,966 closed down permanently. Over 19,000 of the permanent closings were in California.

Demand-pull inflation is when product demand increases. As more people want to buy products, the business decides to increase its price to receive more profit per sale. This inflation usually allows businesses to raise wages or increase staff, as the

higher demand for products and increase in revenue provide the business more profit to invest into the business. What separates these two causes of inflation is that while demand-pull inflation occurs from better business productivity, cost-push inflation occurs from either increased prices or as a demand by the government. If a business can't meet these new material or wage costs, they are required to either

buy cheaper material which would decrease the value of their product, fire staff until there's enough money to stay within budget from the new expense costs, or close down.

With these issues in mind regarding increased material costs, decreased supplies, instances where businesses would have to fire more staff to make up for new wages, and closing businesses altogether from minimum wage hikes in the wake of

COVID, I believe a \$15 federal minimum wage would cause severe problems that are disregarded when discussing the topic. Forcing businesses that are barely surviving to pay wages that are, in some cases, double what they currently are (Texas minimum wage is \$7.25) during these tough economic times will lead to more unemployment and less available businesses to provide job opportunities.

## Addiction support throughout COVID-19

By Jeremy Barrientos

According to the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 67,300 Americans have died from drug-related overdoses in 2018, including illicit drugs and prescription opioids.

That number could reach an all-time high this year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CDC data has already revealed 74,000 overdose deaths that counted from April 2019 to March 2020. The pandemic has disrupted many treatments and recovery programs that Americans rely on to survive. The question remains, how to adapt and treat those who are affected and struggling with addiction?

The New York Times recently featured an article that supports an addiction treatment approach referred to as “contingency management,”

which rewards drug users with money and prizes for remaining abstinent. Those who visit the treatment facility and pass a urine test will receive words of encouragement, gift cards, or vouchers for prizes. Contingency management can be used as a tool to help motivate the number of people who suffer from addiction to seek treatment. This treatment alone may not help those suffering from addiction, but with the combination of therapy and group sessions, can show improvement to achieve a sober life.

Many addicts are afraid to seek help and are not encouraged to find treatment options for fear that they will fail or be judged by others. This program will reward them for good behaviors, hopefully turning those behaviors into habits that will promote healthy changes to improve the patient's overall quality

of life. The same ideology is taught to most individuals at an early age and throughout childhood. For example, making good grades in school or completing chores at home are behaviors that are often awarded by authority figures. Contingency management models this simple, yet effective task-reward model. However, many treatment providers are against rewarding good behavior with fears that the incentive is counterproductive.

Facilitators in drug rehab programs worry that addicts could use those vouchers or gift cards to trade for drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, rewarding good behavior is always a great incentive, but what happens when the treatment is over? The treatment plan does not closely resemble the real world – when the program ends, the former addicts are left with

no reward system to enforce good behavior. Without the financial incentive to stay sober, patients face larger temptations in staying sober.

Funding to support this type of treatment is another critical issue of why facilities do not encourage it. Under federal laws, incentives can be considered kickbacks or inducements when they exceed monetary values that are considered nominal. Insurance companies will not pay for contingency management, and those who cannot afford treatment could relapse.

The American Psychiatric Association defines addiction as “A complex condition, a brain disease that is manifested by compulsive substance use despite harmful consequence.” Treatment options will differ for every person who struggles with their addictions. Alcoholics Anony-

mous and Narcotics Anonymous are great resources for those who seek help. These fellowships and support groups are free and available to everyone who want to help fight their addictions. The pandemic has forced many programs to be available online. The online programs have dramatically increased the recent amount of support to help those in need.

UHD's social work program has created a community of support groups to help get through these difficult times caused by the pandemic. UHD Solidarity Circles is a student-run group that provides all students, faculty, and community members to interact and engage with each other through email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings.

One of these groups, Candid Conversations (formerly Recovery Circle), welcomes those who

are struggling with their addictions or require support for any problem that they may be having. Judith Harris, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the UHD College of Public Service, has extensive social work experience and is involved with the Candid Conversations.

She said, “It was an amazing eyeopener for me, to be part of a circle, to be involved with a group of people who were so committed to helping each other and sort of suggesting different things of how someone could get through a particular problem. It was just like a conversation between individuals.”

She continued, “I look forward to being able to sit there, and decompress. and listen to people and what they are going through. And I think one of the most important things is active listening.

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# Four years not wasted thinking about Trump

By Keven Balderas

On Oct. 29, The New York Times published an opinion piece written by Michelle Goldberg. She argues that the Trump presidency, since its beginning, has distracted much of the American public from producing or appreciating culturally significant work. What is happening is, nonetheless, the opposite.

In effect, she makes out the Trump presidency to be the counterweight or antithesis to American culture, as if giving attention to one object is the same as taking attention away from

the other. This act works only if the former and the latter are two different things. The evidence, however, points to them being two indistinguishable parts of a whole.

Donald J. Trump has always been around. Whatever its shortcomings, his book "Art of the Deal" has consistently sold well since its publication in 1987. He has a dozen cameos in television shows and motion pictures, appearing alongside Hugh Grant, Macaulay Culkin, and Will Smith. Millions

would watch "The Apprentice," a television show in which he starred when it aired, and millions would watch the "Miss Universe" pageant contest while he owned it.

For better or worse, no one had questioned his presence in popular culture before he became president. However irresponsible and ill-mannered (to say the least), his antics as president cannot negate this time-honored celebrity. Then there is the indisputable fact that every American president is an extension of Amer-

ican culture. No man can become the leader of a country without significantly embodying its people.

Additionally, few would deny the "American" quality because the man elected president is the grandson of a German vagabond. All things considered, then, when the people stare at Mr. Trump in the White House, they are staring at themselves.

Now, we do not have to like the sight that greets us; facing the repulsive reflection in the mirror is not a waste of time. Those who

remain calm and curious will notice that there is much to learn in being well aware of their present condition, and will be better for it because knowledge leads to self-improvement.

Cultural impoverishment is not the result of so many non-fiction books published about Trump, as Ms. Goldberg says it is. Instead, those books are data points, so to speak, that, when put together, must give a clear picture of how the Trump presidency has gripped Americans. They know now what they fear. They

know now how fragile their way of life is. They know now how fond they were.

Jerry Saltz's point, which Ms. Goldberg references, is closer to reality in terms of where culture, as represented by art, stands during the Trump presidency.

"The [2016] election left many feeling alienated, alone, in shapeless psychic pain," he writes, "but in fact this foul, broken, alien place is a very old locus of art." Indeed, times of crisis not only do not erase culture but often also reinvigorate it.

## Social media censors political speech

By Salvador Hernandez

The internet has long been considered the marketplace of ideas. However, in recent years it has transformed into a shell of its former glory. The internet has been a space where individuals could share their opinion on a topic, sparking conversation, and debate with others. Recent years have made this type of interaction an exception rather than the rule, due to those who control the marketplace of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, placing it upon themselves to dictate who can share what with whom and how they can share it.

This is shown by the censoring of the New York Post article regarding Hunter Biden. The article contained damaging claims toward Hunter Biden and, in association, presidential

nominee Joe Biden and their dealings with the Ukraine. This story is newsworthy but has neither been corroborated nor denied. However, it is important to note is that the Post's freedom of speech was infringed upon. Efforts to distribute the article have been stifled by Twitter, who argued that the New York Times violated their hacked materials policy.

If this can happen to one of the oldest major news publications in the United States, who is to say who is safe from censorship? It does not end with news publications: numerous right-wing content creators have been outright de-platformed. Among such names are Gavin McInnes, Milo Yiannopoulos, and Alex Jones. However controversial they are,

these moralistically unpopular opinions still have a place in the marketplace of ideas, regardless of how one feels about them.

This censorship from social media platforms does not end with the right of the political spectrum. The Instagram Live posted by prominent left-wing political activist, Rania Khalek was also restricted. She uploaded a video concerning the Socialist party's win in Bolivia, but soon after, Instagram blocked her stream to "protect the community."

One video posted by Jacobin Magazine, a Socialist publication based in New York, was blocked by Facebook. Jacobin Magazine published a critical video of Biden's unwillingness to adopt Progressive ideals and the Socialist party's

victory in Bolivia. Journalists such as Abby Martin and Max Blumenthal have also received the same social media treatment of voice censorship.

Progressive talk show host, Kyle Kulinski, commented on the social media censorship of those on the left-wing on his YouTube news channel Secular Talk.

"This is the way censorship works. You start with people who are genuinely bad like Alex Jones... You established the precedent... The heads of these social media companies, unaccountable billionaires, they get to determine who can say stuff and who can't."

Kulinski went on to state that giving this handful of billionaires the power to decide

what people can and cannot say is just as bad as it being handed off to politicians because "corporate censorship is just as bad as government censorship because the new public square is all these social media outlets."

Kulinski's quote highlights that censorship is a

slippery slope since the ones that will receive the brunt of the censorship will be those who question the establishment. The censoring of the right will trickle down to the left eventually, and the only side that will win will be the social media billionaires.

## Addiction support

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"We wanted it to really have a holistic approach to people who maybe are having anxiety attacks or even trying to reenter back into the workplace or into school. That's very stressful. We're all prone to our addictions, our anxieties, no matter what it is, so we wanted to make sure that individuals were totally welcome on that level."

The pandemic has put us in a unique and uncertain future, causing stress, anger and fear. Students will

be pleased to know that this group meets every week on Wednesdays from 4 - 5 P.M. via Zoom; all students are welcome.

Please reach out to those who are in need of help or seeking help.

Those interested in joining Candid Conversations can email [villanos@uhd.edu](mailto:villanos@uhd.edu). The weekly meeting link is on the UHD Solidarity Circle Instagram and Facebook page. Additional resources available on UHD website.