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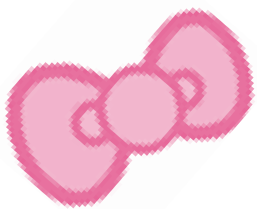
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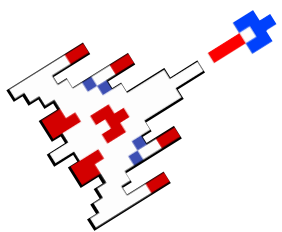
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## City of Houston creates internship opportunities for Gators

By Madiha Hussain

Gators now have even more opportunities to intern at the mayor’s office than ever before. Former UHD interim President Antonio Tillis and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner met in March to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to devote professional opportunities for students. Although winter storm Uri just passed, President Tillis and Mayor Turner felt that it was best to establish the internships anyways.

There are now six

new student internships across five departments: Mayor’s Office of Education, Mayor’s Office of Complete Communities, Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, Houston Municipal Television, and Mayor’s Office of Governmental Affairs.

Further details about these internships have yet to be revealed, however, they are expected to be discussed in detail within the next few months. Creshema Murray, Ph.D., who was appointed

Special Assistant to the Office of the President in 2020 and is an associate professor of corporate communication at UHD, will be managing these six internships.

Interning for the City of Houston is a great way to gain political and communication experience at a local level while also improving the city. Not to mention, an internship at the City of Houston looks great on all resumes. Since City Hall and UHD are only six minutes away

from each other, these internships are more attainable than ever for UHD students.

There are other internship and volunteer opportunities on the City of Houston’s website if the aforementioned internships do not interest you. However, any other internships and volunteer openings are not solely for UHD students and may be more competitive due to open applications.

## Proposed cement plant poses health risks to low-income community

By Indira Zaldivar

UHD history student, Ana Alvarez, wants the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to reject the permit application for a proposed concrete batch plant in her neighborhood of Trinity Gardens. Health and safety concerns attached with concrete batches affecting Houstonians in the past, drive her concern.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is currently accepting public comments on permit number 163333 from Nunez Concrete, LLC, to build a concrete batch plant on 9940 Peachtree St.

Only a block away from the proposed site,

Alvarez lives with her husband and three kids. Less than a mile away from the proposed site is a Title 1 school, Shadydale Elementary. Less than half a mile is a predominantly Black church, Love Fellowship Church of God. Even though the concrete plant has not been approved, Alvarez who’s lived there for six years, said the proposed site has stored concrete trucks for roughly two years. For months, the concrete trucks have roamed the narrow streets of her neighborhood leaving sand, dirt, and gravel on Peachtree St., Mayle St., and Sandra streets. She said dust has been left

on her family’s cars. She thought the dust would be temporary but now, worries becomes a long-term problem.

“It’s not going to be just the dust, or the dirt,” Alvarez said. “It’s going to be more of a potential hazard especially with children.”

When her daughter used to attend Ninfa Lorenzo Early Childhood Center, a concrete batch plant, Cemex, was built 1.2 miles from her daughter’s school. She recalled seeing dust every morning. There were days when the kids were restricted from outdoor playtime because of the dust. According to OSHA, cement dust can

irritate eyes, nose, throat and upper respiratory system and cause damage and chemical burns to skin. Silica, which is often in cement, can cause lung cancer.

“What would happen to my children if my insurance doesn’t cover any health problems that might occur from the particles. How would it affect their development... and our elderly parents?”

Because Halls Bayou is behind the proposed site, Alvarez also raised concerns of possible spilling of hazardous chemicals and then running down when it rains.

*Continued on page 4*





# THE DATELINE

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The Dateline is the official student newspaper of the University of Houston-Downtown. Since its first issue in 1982, The Dateline is proud to be "Student Run since Volume One." We strive to meet the needs of a growing university as well as the growing metropolitan city that surrounds us.

## 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 the editors at editordatelinedowntown@gmail.com.

## Follow us on Social Media!



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# UHD honors Autism Awareness Month

By Emily Saldivar



April is Autism Awareness Month. With that in mind, it is important to understand what autism is.

Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, is a complex, lifelong, genetic developmental disorder that affects essential human behaviors. This includes things such as social interaction, communication of ideas and feelings, self-regulation, or the ability to establish relationships with others.

Autistic people come from all walks of life and don't fit into a single stereotype. Similarly, there is no one way to be autistic. Some people need alternative ways to communicate while others don't. Some people need help in their day-to-day lives while others get by just fine by themselves. With this in mind, it is important to understand that all autism should be accepted.

According to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, there are a few things to be aware of that most, but not all, autistic people have in common. These functions are done in a way that a neurotypical person, or a person who thinks, perceives, and behaves in ways that

are considered to be "normal" by the general population, wouldn't necessarily understand.

As an autistic person, thinking can involve hyper-focus on a particular subject of

interest as well as trouble with executive functioning, or trouble starting/finishing a task or making decisions. Senses can also be extra sensitive to stimuli such as bright lights or

loud noises. In addition, when there is a lot of emotion or a need for regulation, the act of repetitive motion is used, which is called stimming.

*Continued on page 4*

**UHD'S AUTISM AWARENESS**  
Everything You Need to Know

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a serious developmental disorder that affects the ability for social interaction, communication of feelings, or noise regulation. The severity can range widely.

Common symptoms of autism include

- Avoiding eye contact
- Delayed speech and communication skills
- Reliance on rules and routines
- Being upset by relatively minor changes
- Unexpected reactions to sounds, tastes, sights, touch and smells
- Difficulty understanding other people's emotions
- Focusing on or becoming obsessed by a narrow range of interests or objects

**CDC reports 1 in 45 US adults are on the autism spectrum.**

UHD Autism Awareness events include "Embrace Autism Spectrum Disorder" via Zoom scheduled for Friday, April 2. "Understanding Autism: Awareness, Advocacy, and Integration at UHD" will be at Robertson Auditorium, room A350 on Wednesday, April 13 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

We encourage people to not self-diagnose or diagnose others. Please consult a doctor if you suspect you may be on the ASD spectrum.

Karina Rodarte Alvarez



# Do you know protocols for returning to campus?

By Sheryl Sellers

Following spring break, UHD opened its doors for classes that were originally scheduled for face-to-face but were subsequently moved to an online mode of instruction due to the pandemic.

Following are some things to note when returning to campus.

Face coverings must be worn on campus. This includes elevators even when there is only one oc-

cupant.

Only four persons are allowed on an elevator at one time.

Students must enter at designated entries and sign in using their student ID card, their student number, or by scanning the QR code by the main entries.

Student parking is free on the surface parking lots including the Daly Street Lot, Parking Lot B, and the Naylor

Lot. Parking permits are still required.

Students who have no holds on their account and have no citations should go to Parking & Transportation Services located on the first floor of One Main Building, room N117, to receive a parking permit. A student ID or driver's license is required.

Also when parking, choose a curb marked "Student Parking."

Payment is required in the metered park-

ing areas which are owned and operated by the City of Houston.

Garage parking at the Marilyn Davies College of Business is also free, however, a \$10 fee is required to purchase a garage entry card.

The bookstore can be accessed from Level 2, via a door adjacent to the vending machines.

Starbucks is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m.

to 3 p.m. and on Fridays until 1 p.m.

Miss Patty Wagon's Food Truck will offer their menu on Tuesday's and Thursday's from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Sciences and Technology Building. Some favorite choices are the Mac and Cheese Balls, Zesty Shrimp Po-Boys, Old-Fashioned Cheeseburgers and Philly Cheesesteaks.

Some of the

campus vending machines will be stocked with healthy food choices, however, as of March 24, these were still unavailable.

Stairwells on the north side of the One Main Building are designated as "up only" stairwells, and "down only" stairwells are located on the south side of the building. However, in the case of an emergency, one should choose the nearest stairwell.



## Sufra Catering serves up tasty Pakistani food

By Madiha Hussain

Sufra Catering is a small, family-owned catering business created by a mother, son, and daughter trio based in Spring, Texas.

Arshi, Hamid, and Heba Qureshi started their business in January 2021. Their business specializes in creating satisfying and affordable meals for a variety of occasions. Whether it's for a large event or an intimate family dinner night, Sufra has you covered for lunch, dinner, and dessert.

Sufra Catering specializes in Pakistani food, but they offer exceptional American food as well, like chicken parm pasta and garlic knots.

"We were inspired by other people starting their own businesses from home during the pandemic," said Heba, the spokesperson for her family's

company. "It made us think it was a good idea to get to work and start brainstorming."

According to Heba, their business' unique name is derived from Arabic. "Sufra" is an Arabic word that means "come to the table," which aptly describes the business's goal. The purpose of Sufra, according to Heba, is to bring people together with delicious, quality meals.

"I always had a passion for cooking," Arshi said. Arshi remarked that she always wanted to turn her passion for cooking into a business. She finally felt like it was the right time to do so towards the end of 2020. With the help of her son and daughter, she was able to fulfill her dreams.

Although starting a business was a lifelong dream

for Arshi, there are quite a few struggles that the family encounters. Finding clientele is reportedly the hardest part of running their business, Heba said. She admitted that attracting customers is difficult due to the highly competitive market in Houston. There are so many restaurants, food trucks, and other catering businesses to choose from.

Despite the challenges, Sufra Catering is not slowing down. Their goal is to continue churning out tasty food that people enjoy.

Support this small business by checking out their website: [sufracatering-info.wixsite.com/website](http://sufracatering-info.wixsite.com/website). Or follow Sufra's social media accounts. Instagram: @sufra.catering. Facebook: Sufra Catering.



Indo-Pak & Asian fusion dishes served at a party catered by Sufra Catering. Photo courtesy of Heba Qureshi.



Several Indo-Pakistani dishes catered by Sufra Catering. Photo courtesy of Sufra Catering's official Facebook page, Sufra Catering.



## Cement plant poses risks to community (continued)

Concrete batch plants have recently posed environmental risks for Houstonians. On Jan. 6, 2020, Harris County Attorney's Office filed a lawsuit against Sesco Cement facility for violations of the Texas Clean Air Act, Texas Solid Waste Disposal Act and the Texas Water Code.

Alvarez and her family enjoy the peaceful neighborhood. Her husband and her husband's family have lived there for more than 30 years.

"I love the area...We feel comfortable in this area. Why should I leave the comfort of my neighborhood and feel like I'm being forced out because they're not considering the people, the citizens?"

While Alvarez has submitted her own comments to the TCEQ and emailed representatives, she has not heard a response back from any. Air Alliance said Rep. Senfronia Thompson has requested that the TCEQ organize a

public meeting for residents to comment and learn more about the proposed permit.

The Dateline also emailed elected officials. At the time of publication, only a representative from the Office of Councilmember Tarsha Jackson from District B, invited us to join an Environmental Justice Committee. No information of the public hearing by TCEQ has been provided or posted.

## Autism Awareness Month (continued)

Socialization is also another area that may not follow social norms. For example, some people with autism can be labeled as too direct or clueless to the feelings of others, which isn't true. Some autistic people are too empathetic and can avoid eye contact, while those who are perceived as less empathetic may need a more forward and candid approach to others' feelings. There is no right or wrong to being autistic, there is only adaptation and understanding.

In 1963, Autism Awareness began using puzzle pieces as its defining symbol. While it is well-known, a more recent symbol used for the Neurodiversity Movement is a rainbow infinity sign. The rainbow coloring and infinity symbol itself both represent the diversity in the autistic spectrum and the variations of the disorder.

When in doubt, it is always a good idea to do your own research and find recommended books or resources from people that are in the autistic community. It is important to use credible resources. A good website to look towards for information is [autisticadvocacy.org](http://autisticadvocacy.org) as well as its sister site [autismacceptance.com](http://autismacceptance.com).

UHD has two events in honor of Autism Awareness Month. "Embrace Autism Spectrum Disorder via Zoom" is scheduled for Friday, April 2. The Center for Public Service and Family Strengths and the College of Public Service will host a panel discussion titled "Understanding Autism: Awareness, Advocacy, and Integration at UHD" in Robertson Auditorium, room A350 on Wednesday, April 13 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.



# AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

### A BOWLFUL OF COLLEGE

By Jeremy Jones





# Harris County sues TxDOT for civil right violations in proposed multi-billion dollar I-45 expansion

By Bryan Kimbro

The contentious Interstate 45 expansion project was stalled March 11 after Harris County filed a lawsuit against the Texas Department of Transportation, according to the U.S. District Court records.

Litigation arose from TxDOT's recent decision to expand and widen I-45 from south of downtown Houston to Greenspoint, removing the Pierce Elevated section to re-route the highway to the east and north of downtown. Together

the project is named the North Houston Highway Improvement Project, NHHIP.

Harris County alleges in the lawsuit that TxDOT officials ignored serious harms, disregarded concerns of impacted communities, and brushed off numerous comments received as part of a flawed process known as the Environmental Impact Statement.

The lawsuit also reveals that the Federal Highway Administration raised concerns that the project might violate Title VI of the

Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"The defendants had already made their mind about what they were going to do and then simply did it, running roughshod over the procedural requirements of [the National Environmental Protection Act], the substantive law of [the Department of Transportation Act], the [Administrative Procedure Act]'s constraint on arbitrary and capricious decision-making," said Charles W. Irvine, the attorney representing

Harris County. "And the Federal Highway Administration asked the state agency to pause the project while it investigates environmental and civil rights concerns."

After TxDOT released its draft Environmental Impact Statement in April 2017, Harris County and the City of Houston conducted community and stakeholder engagement meetings to seek input and ideas from residents, businesses, neighborhoods, property owners and commuters for the

NHHIP. According to the lawsuit, the input resulted in a new vision—which was submitted to TxDOT—that proposed an alternative way to accomplish the safety, flood mitigation and other benefits of the NHHIP while keeping much of the freeway's current footprint to minimize its impact on existing communities.

Harris County is also claiming that TxDOT ignored a possible paradigmatic shift in traffic patterns due to the pandemic and widespread

adoption of remote technology.

"In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered the region's traffic numbers, with significant numbers of daily commuters shifting to working from home," Irvine said. "Many companies are making long-term or permanent changes to allow their employees to continue to work remotely fulltime or for parts of the week."

# Senate blocks provision to raise minimum wage

By Gianni Barragan

A provision to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour failed to pass in the Senate on March 5.

The wage increase was first introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, but was ruled against by Senate parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough. MacDonough cited the "Byrd Rule" in her ruling, which prohibits the Senate from "considering extraneous matter as part of

a reconciliation bill," as summarized by former Chairwoman Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Ky.

The vote held on March 5 was meant to add the provision back to the stimulus package. However, the provision was blocked by seven Senate Democrats and an independent alongside 50 Republican senators.

Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, was among the seven Democratic senators

that broke from the majority.

"I support the \$15 minimum wage and intent to work for its passage later this session," Sen. King said in a statement he released, "but I have concerns about this bill's provision which would entirely eliminate the tip credit."

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, similarly stated, "I support the minimum wage increase, but I'm concerned about including the tipped wage

provision because of the current status of the restaurant industry."

Several senators that voted against adding the provision back into the stimulus package claimed they supported raising the minimum wage but believed \$15 an hour was too high.

"I think the minimum wage needs to come up," Sen. Jon Tester, D-MT, said, "but I think we need to extend it out a ways before it hits the


\$15 figure."

Alongside Tester, Democratic Sens. Kyrsten Sinema from Arizona, Tom Carper and Chris Coons from Delaware, Maggie Hassan from New Hampshire, and Joe Manchin from West Virginia voted to reject the provision.

Minimum wage is not a recent phenomenon, however. It has been a part of American history since before 1938, when it was first

introduced federally at \$0.25 per hour. It was gradually raised in 1961 and 1966 to preserve its purchasing power.

The federal minimum wage has not been raised since 2009. Over a decade ago, in 2007, Congress passed the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007, which would gradually raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 by 2009.




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# NCAA ignites uproar over equipment disparities, unequal resources for female athletes

By Karina Rodarte Alvarez

On March 18, Ali Kershner, Stanford University's coach, uploaded photos of the NCAA men and women's separated exercise rooms. The men's weight room is shown having dozens of machines and barbells, as well as several racks of dumbbells. However, the women's weight room is a stark contrast, having a few yoga mats and six pairs of dumbbells capped at thirty pounds.

The incident caught the attention of many popular

athletes, with NBA superstar Steph Curry tweeting, "Wow-come on now! y'all trippin trippin." Curry also tagged the NCAA official account. Sabrina Ionescu, former NCAA national player of the year, also tweeted, "Women's bubble weight room vs Men's weight room.... thought this was a joke. [What] is this?!? To all the women playing in the March Madness tournament, keep grinding!"

After fierce backlash, NCAA Vice President Lynn

Holzman tweeted in response that the difference was due to "space limitations" in the women's facility. However, a viral Tiktok video posted by Sedona Prince, a female NCAA basketball athlete, showed that the women's facility was a large room akin to a regular sized gym.

The video compared the men's fully decked weight room and the practically empty female weight room, with Prince captioning, "It's 2021 and we're still fighting for

bits and pieces of equality." The story unraveled further as both male and female NCAA student athletes came forward and posted their own experiences of discrepancies.

Another example involved food, with the men receiving a buffet style meal of meat, shrimp, chicken, and pasta versus the women receiving pre-packaged meals. Additionally, the men's swag bag was full of a dozen full-size products, attire, and merchandise while the women's

swag bag was half as full and featured "women's basketball" instead of the March Madness logo.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the men were using PCR tests while the women received less-expensive and less-accurate antigen tests. These disparities potentially risked the lives of the female athletes and could have ruined a well-earned experience as a top-tier athlete.

Some argue that the men and women deserved their respective conditions

because the men's tournament is very profitable, and the women's tournament loses money. However, only five of the 90 championships across the three divisions make actual profit for the NCAA. The men's basketball tournament foots the bill for every NCAA championship apart from baseball, men's ice hockey, men's wrestling, and men's lacrosse.

# Sexual misconduct allegations against New York governor spark investigation, calls for resignation

By Lauren Anderson

On March 12, 83 Democratic New York lawmakers—both state and federal—have called for Gov. Andrew Cuomo's resignation after being accused of sexual misconduct by seven women.

However, Cuomo continues to refuse resignation.

After the sixth accusations from a woman who claimed that Cuomo groped her at the executive mansion after summoning her there,

lawmakers discussed and concluded that Cuomo is no longer fit to be governor, so a letter was made and signed. However, Cuomo denies the allegations.

"I did not do what has been

alleged. Period," Cuomo said. He emphasized that New Yorkers and politicians should wait for the results of the investigation being done by the New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is inves-

tigating the accusations that range from inappropriate remarks to unwanted advances and groping.

"I won't speculate about people's possible motives, but I can tell you, as a former attorney

general who has gone through this situation many times, there are often many motivations for making an allegation," he continued.

*Continued on page 7*



## Now hiring!

The Dateline is now hiring! Student-run since volume one, The Dateline students with 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. The Dateline 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, graphic designers, editors, and business manager. To submit pieces or for inquiries about joining The Dateline, email the editor, Jaida Doll: [dolljl@gator.uhd.edu](mailto:dolljl@gator.uhd.edu)

The University of Houston-Downtown



# CDC releases new, post-vaccination guidelines By Lauren Anderson

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new safety guidelines for those who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The CDC states that people who are fully vaccinated are those either two weeks past their second dose of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine or two weeks past the single dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Vaccinated people are protected and it has been shown that they do not spread the virus. However, scientists have a lot more to learn and understand about how long the vaccination protection lasts.

“COVID-19 continues to exert a tremendous toll on our nation. Like you, I want to be able to return to everyday activities and engage with our friends, families, and communities,” CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said at the White House briefing. “Science, and the protection of public health must guide us as we

begin to resume these activities. Today’s action represents an important first step. It is not our final destination.

“As more people get vaccinated, levels of COVID-19 infection decline in communities, and as our understanding of Covid immunity improves, we look forward to updating these recommendations to the public.”

The CDC says that fully vaccinated people can visit other vaccinated people without masks or social distancing indoors if they are not high risk for severe disease, and skip quarantine and testing if they are exposed to the virus.

However, fully vaccinated people should still take certain precautions, such as wearing a mask and social distancing when around those who are unvaccinated and at a higher risk of severe COVID-19. They should also continue to practice safety precautions by wearing a mask and social distancing in public, washing their

hands, and avoiding crowds.

The guidelines state that although risk for infection is lower for the vaccinated, people should still take precaution since social activities, like the gym or restaurants, still have high transmission rates.

The CDC also noted that its travel recommendations have not changed, and people should delay travel and stay home. Walensky said the CDC travel guidelines will be the same until there is more knowledge on how much vaccinated people can spread the virus to others.

“Every time there’s a surge in travel, we have a surge of cases in this country,” Walensky said. “We’re hopeful that our next set of guidance, will have more science around what vaccinated people can do, perhaps travel being

among them.”

There are over 30 million people who are now vaccinated, yet hundreds of thousands of new cases appear daily.

“We continue to have high levels of virus around the

country, and more readily transmissible variants have now been confirmed in nearly every state, while we work to quickly vaccinate people more and more each day, we have to see this through,”

Walensky said. “Let’s stick together. Please keep wearing a well-fitting mask and taking the other public health actions we know work to help stop the spread of this virus.”

**Fully Vaccinated People Can...**

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask and physical distancing
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers and travel requirements

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

Created By: Whitney Barrett

# Sexual misconduct allegations (continued)

The New York Assembly Speaker and leader of the lower chamber Democrats, Carl Heastie, issued a press release that said he will meet with members to address the growing allegations. Afterwards, Heastie authorized an impeach-

ment investigation into Cuomo.

Many Democrats have made statements regarding the allegations, which includes, New York Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Jamaal Bowman, Jerry Nadler, Reps. Nydia Velazquez, Grace

Meng, Sean Patrick Maloney, and Carolyn Maloney.

The congressional statements come a day after the New York State Assembly started the investigation for potential impeachment.

“The Democratic Conference is

taking the first step toward impeachment by opening an investigation with full subpoena power to obtain facts and testimonies under oath,” Democratic Assemblyman Ron Kim said in a statement obtained by Fox News.

The Demo-

cratic members of the state Assembly and Senate issued a joint statement on March 11.

“The budget, the fight against COVID-19, and restarting the economy all demand clear and trustworthy leadership,” the statement

reads. “In light of the Governor’s admission of inappropriate behavior and the findings of altered data on nursing home COVID-19 deaths, he has lost the confidence of the public and the state legislature, rendering him ineffective in this time of most urgent need.”



# Atlanta shooting leaves 8 dead as Asian hate rises

By Shaheryar Khan

On March 16, gunman Robert Aaron Long, 21, opened fire at three different massage parlors in Atlanta area, killing eight people in the process. The shooter was a previous customer at two of the spas. Seven of the eight people killed were women, with six of them being of Asian descent. Long is charged with eight counts of murder and one count of aggravated assault and is currently held at Cherokee County Jail.

According to authorities, Long targeted the massage

parlors because he wanted to eliminate his “temptations.” With this information, police are investigating this as a potential hate crime. Still, according to NBC News, former federal officials said that there is not enough evidence to support the hate crime charges. However, local law enforcement agencies stated that “nothing is off the table when asked about state hate crime charges,” as the investigation is still in the process.

The victims of the shooting are

Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33, of Acworth; Paul Andre Michels, 54, of Atlanta; Xiaojie Tan, 49, of Kennesaw; Daoyou Feng, 44; Soon Chung Park, 74; Hyun Jung Grant, 51; Suncha Kim, 69; and Yong Ae Yue, 63. The ninth victim,

Elcias Hernandez Ortiz, 30, is still hospitalized.

Eight people died, while the one survivor still resides in the hospital in critical condition. The following victims listed below lost their lives in the shooting.

Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33, of

Acworth and her husband chose Young’s Asian Massage as a date spot that Tuesday afternoon. Yuan’s husband survived the shooting as he took cover in an empty room, according to Dane Toole, Yaun’s half-sister.

Paul Andre Michels, 54, of Atlanta was a U.S. military veteran as well as a business owner specializing in installing security systems.

Daoyou Feng, 44, worked at Young’s Asian Massage with her boss Xiaojie Tan, 49, of Kennesaw.

Tan, who was only two days from her 50th birthday, is said to have been a loving and hardworking business owner. Greg Hynson, a frequent customer of Young Asian Massage and long-time friend of Tan, said Tan “was the sweetest person you’d ever meet.”

Hyun Jung Grant, 51, was a South Korean immigrant and owner of Gold Spa. Her eldest son told The Daily Beast, “She wasn’t just my mother. She was my friend.”

Suncha Kim, 69, and Soon Chung Park, 74, both worked at Gold Spa and immigrated from South Korea.

Yong Ae Yue, 63, worked at Aromatherapy Spa, right across the street from Gold Spa. Her ex-husband told the Times that they met in South Korea, where he was stationed while serving for the U.S. Army.

Elcias Hernandez Ortiz, 30, the only survivor of the shooting, got shot in his forehead, throat, lungs, and stomach. Ortiz’s wife stated that she had to plead with her husband to stay alive so that he can be there for their daughter’s 10th birthday.

The attack occurred after a surge of hate crimes targeted members of the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community. During a time of increasing attacks on the Asian American Pacific Islander community, these shootings have appeared and increased fear among AAPI communities.

According to a report conducted by Russell Jeung Ph.D., Aggie Yellow Horse Ph.D., Tara Popovic, and Richard Lim, nearly 3,800 hate incidents have been reported since March 2020. The report also stated that women of Asian descent had reported 2.3 times more incidents of violence than AAPI men.

Racism against people in the AAPI community remains rampant and silent. There is a long history of hyper-sexualization of Asian women, connected to the imperialistic nature of Western political, military, and economic domination of developing nations. Throughout history, women from underdeveloped countries are forced into sexual submission to white men. For further understanding of racism and sexualization of Asian women, please read “White Sexual Imperialism: A Theory of Asian Feminist Jurisprudence” by Sunny Woan.



Houstonians participate at a vigil and rally on March 20 at Discovery Green to mourn the eight victims, six of Asian American descent, killed in Atlanta and call to “Stop Asian Hate,” due to the rise in hate crimes targeting Asian Americans.





# Hello Kitty Café returns to Houston

By Natalie Beauchemin

The Hello Kitty Café Truck is making its annual stop in Houston on April 10 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Woodlands mall. First hitting the road in 2014, this bright pink truck sells cookies, mini cakes, macarons and more decorated as cute as Kitty herself. It also sells merchandise like T-shirts, canvas

totes, thermal bottles, and much more that can only be bought at Hello Kitty Café locations. Just like previous years, the event is cashless so make sure to bring a credit card.

While there are permanent Hello Kitty Cafés such as The Grand Hello Kitty Café in Los Angeles and the Hello Kitty Café Las Vegas,

the Hello Kitty Café truck allows fans all over the continental U.S. to get their Hello Kitty fix. Since there are only two trucks, Truck East and Truck West, the Hello Kitty Café can only make an appearance once a year, making it a special event. And just like any special event the lines can be comically long, so

bring a water bottle and a charged phone.

Here are some tips if you plan to attend. Get there early. Merchandise is limited, if you get there at 10 a.m. you will be lucky to get a sprinkle mug. Be prepared to spend money. Yes, it is overpriced. The cheapest item is a \$4 bow bottled water and most expensive is the

32-ounce stainless steel water bottle for \$39. Dress cute. The truck is a great photo op.

As one who has visited the truck twice, here are some personal recommendations. The macarons always sell out first. If you want those, you must be super early. Get the bow bottled water, it

is the cheapest item and still looks cute when it is empty. The canvas totes are extremely high quality, durable, and spacious. They are a bit steep at \$30, but you will get a lot of use out of it. Finally, save the packaging. The packaging is cute and is good for storing items.



Hello Kitty Cafe Truck parked in Orlando, FL. Photo courtesy of Orlando Weekly.



Bow Water Bottle, available for purchase at the Hello Kitty Cafe. Photo courtesy of Hello Kitty Cafe Truck's Facebook page.

# Immerse yourself in Van Gogh with new exhibit

By Jeremy Barrientos

Coming to Houston in June, the latest art exhibit from Lighthouse Immersive and Impact Museums will feature the works of post-Impressionist Vincent Van Gogh. “Immersive Van Gogh” combines the elements of state-of-the-art technology, theatrical storytelling, and world class animation that allows the guest to literally step inside the famous paintings of Van Gogh.

According to a recent press release, the exhibition is “a digital art experience that invites audiences to enter the works of Van Gogh, evoking his highly emotional and chaotic inner con-

sciousness through art, light, music, movement, and imagination.”

The exhibition itself displays over 500,000 cubic feet of digital projections from Van Gogh’s lifetime of masterpieces. Designed by Creative Director and Italian film producer Massimiliano Siccardi, “Immersive Van Gogh” features original music from Italian composer Luca Longobardi and art director Vittorio Guidotti.

Co-producer Corey Ross stated, “We’re incredibly excited about bringing ‘Immersive Van Gogh’ and Lighthouse Artspace to Houston

and are eagerly anticipating the opportunity to become part of the diverse canvas that makes this place so unique.”

Diana Rayzman, co-producer and co-founder of Impact Museums added, “This is a city that boasts one of the largest working artist communities in the country and whose support of the arts is legendary, as evidenced by the world-class Museum District, Arts District Houston, and wholly unique offerings like the Art Car Parade.”

The internationally acclaimed exhibit had huge success in London, Barcelona and oth-

er cities around the world including sold out shows in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto.

It is an hour long, timed entry, walk through experience that is designed with health and safety protocols to limit capacity. According to its website, the experience features

digitally projected social distancing circles on the gallery floors to ensure appropriate spacing. There will be temperature checks and hand sanitizer stations when entering the exhibit and all guests are asked to wear face coverings throughout the immersive experience.

For more



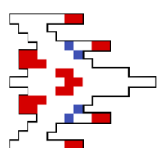
One room in the Van Gogh Immersive Exhibit, complete with social distancing bubbles. Photo courtesy of The New York Times





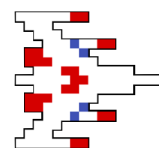
By Safa Abdallah

It can be daunting when wanting to do something in Houston by being underwhelmed thinking that there is not much to do. The following establishments are guaranteed to ensure both enjoyment and content whether you are a local Houstonian or just visiting.



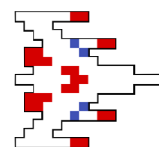
### Main Event

With more than 100 arcade games and three areas, Main Event is one of Houston's most notable game centers. Games range from notable works of art like PAC-MAN to classics including Shuffleboard, pool tables, and even bowling. They not only have Laser Tag Arena, but they also have advanced virtual reality games, though those very often have long lines.



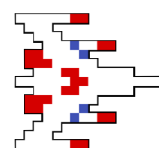
### Dave & Buster's

With over 100 locations located around the U.S., only one location is in the Houston vicinity. Located in Katy, Dave & Buster's garners a large audience spanning all age groups. Aside from their virtual reality attractions, Dave & Buster's also has multiplayer first-person shooting games, mobile games like Fruit Ninja and Flappy Bird, classic video games like Guitar Hero and Mario Kart, a 4-way air hockey table, and much, much more.



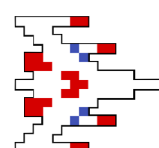
### Bowlero

Originally known as AMF Bowling in Stafford, Bowlero is becoming an increasingly popular bowling alley and arcade center. Not only does Bowlero offer a casual bowling experience with 32 bowling lanes for different venues like corporate events and birthday parties, but they offer daily deals. Their arcade games let you blow off some steam, and they are a fun way to end the night while collecting tickets to win some fun prizes. And just most arcades, they also have a restaurant and sports bar.



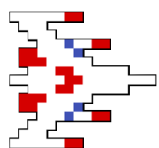
### ExitusVR

Normal life feeling mundane? Then immerse yourself in an experience like none other before. At ExitusVR, anything is possible in their virtual reality arcade. Travel back in time, fly in zero gravity, or take down aliens and robots, all in one place. With over 100 different VR games, ExitusVR offers these experiences solo or with friends.



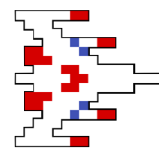
### Mr. Pixel's Classic Arcade

Take a trip back to the '90s at this unique arcade located only in Houston, Texas. Started by two friends who wanted to share their personal arcade games and pinball machines, Mr. Pixel's Classic Arcade has managed to collect over 100 games for the public to enjoy for only \$8 per person and a special \$5 deal on Thursdays. This is a local, affordable place for family and friends.



### Joystix Classic Games and Pinball

With two stories and over 10,000 square feet of space, Joystix Arcade is bursting with a rotating selection of classic arcade games and vintage pinball machines. They also include a more modern selection of arcade games, first-person racers, as well as air hockey and foosball tables. Joystix is a showroom more often than it is an arcade, so all machines and game systems are for sale, though they will cost you a pretty penny. Because Joystix is mainly a showroom, they are only open for public gameplay on the first and last Fridays of the month from 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Unlimited gameplay is only \$15, but only players 21+ are permitted to enter the arcade.



### Tea & Victory

Tea & Victory is unlike any other arcade center because they offer what many other centers do not. With over 600 board games, ranging from vintage classics to modern masterpieces. If you find a game that interests you, but have no idea how to play, Tea & Victory workers are trained to assist customer gameplay. The employees, referred to as "Game Guides" will guide you to victory, and will even make recommendations for future gameplay. However, if you find a game that doesn't interest you, you can even create your own. Aside from their plethora of board games, they offer many refreshments including beer, wine, and coffee, and of course tea (as their name suggests), all sourced from local establishments.



# Halsey switches to she/they pronouns

By Emily Saldivar

Halsey welcomed change once again. The 26-year-old singer caused a buzz on the internet after adding “she/they” pronouns to all of their social media accounts. Though she did not make a big presentation of the change, avid fans caught the change days after it happened.

Previously, Halsey had talked about how fluid she perceived their gender during an interview

with the Advocate in January 2020.

She stated, “I’ve always really identified with being an androgynous performer.”

She also mentioned that using a non-binary or gender-fluid label didn’t quite feel right.

“Will that change? Possibly. I don’t know. But I’ve never felt any reason to change the way that I refer to my gender identity.”

Following

their pronoun update, fans responded with an outpouring of support for the “Manic” singer. Fans posted tweets of support for the singer’s dedication to living their most authentic life and thanking the singer for, once again, being open and honest with their life which also encourages others to do the same. Other fans took this as an educational moment and made threads explaining how multiple pro-

nouns work.

The most common question to appear was which pronouns should be used at which times. Halsey later posted an Instagram story to address the question. She wrote, “For those asking..., I am happy with either pronouns.”

While it may vary from person to person, Halsey has made it clear that addressing her as “she” is acceptable but also referring to

them as “they” is just as acceptable. The inclusion of “they” gives an androgynous option that allows clearer self-definition and better self-expression than just the feminine pronouns.

They explained, “The inclusion of ‘they’ in addition to ‘she’ feels most authentic to me.”

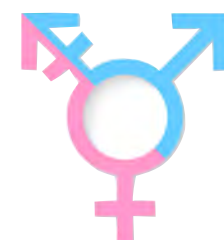
Halsey announced in January that her and her partner, Alev Aydin, are expecting a child. On

the verge of motherhood, the singer thought this maternal experience would give them more of a feminine outlook of themselves. However, that did not happen.

“I thought pregnancy would give me very strong, binary feelings about ‘womanhood’ but truly it has leveled my perception of gender entirely. My sensitivity to my body has made me hyper aware of my humanness, and that’s all,” she wrote on Instagram.

# Elliot Page becomes first transgender man on the cover of Time Magazine

By Sheila Delgado Rayo



On Dec. 1, 2020, Elliot Page came out as trans-

gender via statements on his social media platforms. In an

Instagram post, Page stated that he was transgender and used

the pronouns he/him or they/them. While Page said he expected “support and love and a massive amount of hatred and transphobia,” he was not expecting the news to be as big of a story as it became. He was trending on Twitter in more than 20 different countries.

On March 16, Page became the first trans man to feature on a Time magazine cover. The cover reads, “I’m fully who I am,” and was shot by transgender photographer Wynne Neilly who described the experience as his “dream assignment.”

Time magazine also conducted an interview with Page, who had not spoken out since his announcement on social media. Page held nothing back as he talked about how excited, but anxious

he was days before his coming out.

Page said he felt the need to come out now, not only for himself, but also for those who look up to him. Growing up, Page said, “there were no examples” of people who looked like him. He wants to change that because he understands that the world is not easy for the transgender community, especially those of color.

According to research conducted by the U.S. Trans Survey in 2015, “Transgender people of color are more likely to experience unemployment, harassment by police and refusals of medical care.”

Due to his fame, money and whiteness, Page can access spaces that others cannot, a privilege he recognizes and aims to use to

help his community however he can.

Page will be seen in Netflix’s hit series, “The Umbrella Academy,” where he plays Vanya, a character that first interested him because he could relate to how “closed off” she was.

After coming out in December, Page received public support from castmates and crew alike and Netflix immediately changed his name on the credits screen to correctly identify him. Filming has begun on the third season and though Page said returning to set has “been an adjustment” and been a tad awkward at times, it has also been extremely validating because his “co-workers also see and acknowledge him.”



Photo courtesy of Time Magazine



# Latin-American star speaks against body shaming

By Karina Rodarte Alvarez

Danna Paola, 25, starred in many hit shows such as “La Rosa de Guadalupe,” “Atrévete a soñar,” “Alegrijes y rebujos” and “La Familia P. Luche.” She is a well-known figure in Latinx media and entertainment since her childhood and recently revealed the body shaming she faced.

In Paola’s interview with Yordi Rosado, she explained how she was used to eating well and then developed a habit of eating out.

This caused water retention and a weight increase of around 25 pounds around the time she left Mexico.

Paola said she recorded a commercial with a hair product company prior to her weight gain, which is likely L’Oreal Paris’s “Casting Crème Gloss” hair color line, that she was the face of in January of 2016. In Paola’s next commercial with the company a week later, her manager called her. Paola recalled that her manager said, “We’re

going to have to redo your commercial or they’re going to have to cut some parts out, because you look fat.”

Paola explained how that comment stuck with her and had a negative impact on her self-esteem. Paola continued to say she never felt self-conscious about her body before that incident. Her mother instilled confidence and a healthy sense of self-esteem.

Paola also claimed in the interview that it is inappropriate for people

to comment on other people’s weight gain or weight loss because you never know what is going on in their life. She started dieting and working out sporadically and said she continued with this lifestyle once she returned to Mexico. She also said that her main focus was no longer acting or singing. She was now fixated on how she looked.

Paola then stared into the camera and called out a member of the paparazzi who said she looked

much prettier and thinner and inquired if she was working out. She stated that she was beautiful before and that she is beautiful now. Paola continued and asked how the paparazzi would have felt if she asked them personal information about their diet or exercise habits.

Paola mentioned the song she wrote a song about feeling self-conscious and combatting those feelings with self-love to impress the importance of these sub-

jects upon her fans.

She then asked the interviewer, Rosado, to try her self-help exercise of naming three things he loves about himself physically. Rosado was at a loss for words, and Paola says, “See, it’s hard!” She also says that self-love is complicated but necessary and that people should learn to love themselves before they love someone else.

# Chadwick Boseman’s widow accepts Golden Globe

By Emily Saldivar

Six months after his death, Chadwick Boseman won a posthumous Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Drama Motion Picture. The award was for his performance as Levee Green, an ambitious trumpet player, in the motion picture “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom.” It was also the last performance he gave in his career. Due to the circumstances, his widow, Taylor Simone Ledward, accepted the award on his behalf.

Boseman passed away on Aug. 28, 2020 from stage 4 colon cancer. He fought his battle in private for four years with his wife and family by his side.

Boseman’s agent, Michael Green, told the Hollywood Reporter that it was Boseman’s mother that advised him to keep his condition a

secret from the public. Green stated, “He [Boseman] also felt in this business that people trip out about things, and he was a very, very private person.”

Despite receiving a stage 3 diagnosis in 2016, Boseman continued with his career and starred in seven films before he passed. Those films are “Marshall,” “Da 5 Bloods,” “21 Bridges,” “Black Panther,” “Avengers: Infinity War,” “Avengers: Endgame,” and of course, “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom.”

After Boseman’s passing was announced, many of those who had previously worked with the late actor took to social media to give their condolences. Some even wrote touching tributes in his name such as the director of “Black

Panther,” Ryan Coogler.

Coogler stated, “I realized that he was living with his illness the entire time I knew him. Because he was a caretaker, a leader, and a man of faith, dignity and pride, he shielded his collaborators from his suffering.”

Coogler ended the tribute on a lighter note by saying, “But it is with a heavy heart and a sense of deep gratitude to

have ever been in his presence, that I have to reckon with the fact that Chad is an ancestor now. And I know that he will watch over us, until we meet again.”

Ledward’s acceptance speech for Boseman’s Golden Globe takes on a similar positive yet melancholy note.

“He would say something beautiful, something inspiring, something that would amplify that little

voice inside of all of us that tells you, you can,” she said. “That tells you to keep going, that calls you back to what you are meant to be doing at this moment in history.”

Ledward also mentioned that he would have thanked God, his parents, and his ancestors for their guidance and sacrifices. She ended the speech with, “And I don’t have his words. But we have to take

all the moments to celebrate those we love, so thank you, H.F.P.A., for this opportunity to do exactly that. And honey, you keep ‘em coming. Thank you.”

Notably, Boseman is the first Black man to win this award in 15 years. He is also the first Black man to win posthumously in the actor category.



Chadwick Boseman before his passing. Photo courtesy of Vulture.com



Boseman’s widow tearfully accepts a Golden Globe Award on his behalf. Photo courtesy of Slate.com



# Reviews

## Houston-based film 'The Curse of Professor Zardonicus' streams on Prime

By Amber Williams

Need a dramedy film after a long, hard day? "The Curse of Professor Zardonicus," a Houston-made film, written and directed by Gabriel Theis, is enjoyable for film students wanting to learn or experience an interesting story and decent acting. Theis was 21 when he wrote and directed the film. With a budget of only \$3,500, "The Curse of Professor Zardonicus" is the first of Theis' films that was published and submitted to a film festival. After winning the Austin After Dark Film Festival in the summer 2020, it debuted on Amazon Prime on Feb. 12.

"The Curse of Professor Zardonicus" involves a young film

student, Greg (played by Theis) who needs to create a documentary for a school project. Darren (played by Alec White), is a mysterious student from the University of Houston, who contacts Greg to accompany him in finding Professor Zardonicus. Legend has it, this mythological creature used to be a professor of the school.

The film's main conflict is whether Professor Zardonicus actually exists or if he is simply a delusion of Darren's mind. The film indicates that Greg is selfishly using Darren whom the film depicts as emotionally unstable. The film seems to imply that Greg is only accompanying Darren to

complete his school project, rather than actually believing or supporting Darren's mission.

As the movie progresses, some parts of the film dragged. Examples of such include the scenes in which the two men go around campus to convince every student or staff that the mythical creature exists. Darren even tries to convince someone that the beast lives with a priest. Then, Darren was interviewed by a radio station that did not believe him. However, these examples showed that Darren was prepared to meet the creature and how far Greg was willing to go to film his documentary.

Psychological

and moral issues arise in many parts of the movie. Examples are when Darren finds someone else that saw the creature and interviews them. Another example is when Greg searches for Darren's father to ask about Darren's mental health to assure Greg that he was not using Darren's psychological illness for the sake of a grade.

When the hunt for the creature became too long, or Darren's erratic behavior became worse, the male leads' conflicts posed an emotional burden on Greg and his limitations. The confrontations with the other characters, even those that did not interact with the creature, leaves the film open-ended.

It allows the audience to answer the question of the beast's existence or the existence of Darren's mental illness.

Overall, the film was exciting and keeps audiences

on the edge of their seats. It is a puzzle of drama that reveals more of the character's personalities with a twist of comedy that is more suited for young adults.

"The Curse of Professor Zardonicus" is currently streaming on Amazon Prime.

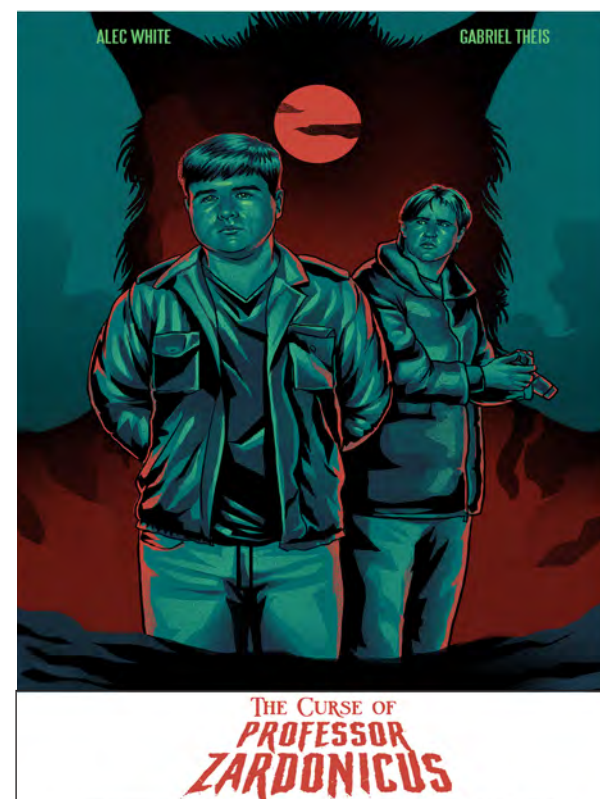


Photo courtesy of IMDb.

## 'Coming 2 America' streams on Amazon Prime

By Sara Garcia

Children of the '80s, grew up watching classics such as John Hughes' "Pretty in Pink" to Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing." In the summer of 1988, director John Landis released "Coming to America," starring Eddie Murphy. The summer smash film grossed over \$300 million. It was also the first time I remember watching a movie that featured

such a diverse cast.

"Coming 2 America," the sequel to "Coming to America," picks up years later with King Akeem (Murphy) back in his home country of Zamunda, where he and his wife have given birth to all girls. Unfortunately, the laws of Zamunda dictate that only a male can be an heir to the throne. With a neighboring country poised to take advan-

tage of this rule, King Akeem must return to America to find his long-lost son (played by Jermaine Fowler) to bring him home as the rightful heir to the throne of Zamunda. The sequel lives up to the comedy of the original, with classic humor shared between Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, John Amos, and star of the film, Leslie Jones.

"Coming 2 America" focuses on

women, drawing directly from Murphy's relationship with his own daughter. In the film, King Akeem believes in his daughter's ability to rule the country but does not think to challenge the rules of the system. It is up to his queen to open his eyes to the possibility of shaking things up. While the film is wrapped up nicely, there are a few plot holes that could possibly leave room

for another sequel in the future.

The setting is beautiful, with lots of lush countryside scenery. The costumes are amazing, taking traditional royal garb and elevating it beyond modern fashion and into the next generation of style, reminiscent of the fashion-forward costuming of the tribes of Wakanda in Marvel's "Black Panther."

Director Craig Brewer did an excellent job, though the film has received mixed reviews. If you are a fan of the original, or of Eddie Murphy's particular brand of comedy, then this movie is for you. If not, I would still recommend it for the scenic eye-candy, and for the star-studded finale.



# Reviews

## Zack Snyder's cut of 'Justice League' streams on HBOMax By James Jurewicz

On March 18, the Snyder Cut of "Justice League" was finally released on HBOMax. Part of the DC Extended Universe, "Justice League" was Snyder's third film featuring DC superheroes Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Cyborg, Flash and Aquaman. The film is about the formation of the League for defense against outer space invaders and the ruthless tyrant Darkseid and his general Steppenwolf. Snyder crafted a film that is filled with both

action and a rich storyline which expands the mythos of these classic characters.

A brief history of the production of JL is necessary to understand the unprecedented re-edit of a \$300 million movie. The film was originally slated for release in the fall of 2017, and to be directed by Zach Snyder. Two sequels to JL were even in the works. After a family tragedy, Snyder left production in order to be there for his loved ones.

Warner Bros decided to bring in

director/writer Joss Whedon to reshoot and rewrite numerous scenes. JL had already wrapped filming, though the studio disliked Snyder's serious and complex story. Whedon was asked to inject more humor for a light-hearted tone like what he had done for Disney's Marvel Avengers movies. The film flopped. Critics and fans alike hated Joss Whedon's Justice League.

Plagued with production problems, Whedon has since been exposed for creating a toxic

work environment. Reshoots and rewrites dismantled Cyborg as a central character, part of Whedon's abusive behavior toward the actor Ray Fisher. Many stars have come forward in support of Fisher, citing their own negative personal work experiences with Whedon.

After the revelation that Snyder had in fact finished filming JL, DC fans insisted to see the original director's vision. For over three years there was a movement called "release the #Sny-

derCut." WB insisted the Snyder Cut would never happen. Though when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of theaters, the studio saw a chance to capitalize by bringing subscribers to the HBOMax app. This was done first with the announcement of the Snyder Cut in May 2020, then later the announcement of every 2021 WB film to hit the app simultaneously with movie theaters for no extra charge.

WB originally allotted Snyder \$35 million. After the project grew, along with fan anticipation the budget was doubled to \$70 million.

Edits, effects, and reshoots eventually gave loyal fans the finished product that they desired and expected. Not one scene filmed by Whedon appeared in the film.

This 4 hour film is worth the watch. Snyder divided JL into six chapters, which eases the viewer's responsibility to recall how characters fit into the colossal film. The characters of the film are mostly the returning cast from "Batman v Superman" and "Man of Steel."

In BvS we were introduced to all six members of the JL. Bruce Wayne is portrayed onscreen by Ben Affleck who offers a nuanced performance as a reformed Batman responsible for bringing the team together. Ray Fisher's Victor Stone is integral to the film's plot. Cyborg is a meld of man and machine, the result of a life-threatening car accident, healed and enhanced by an alien supercomputer. Ezra Miller is back as Barry Allen, a young man who possesses superhuman speed, as well as Gal Gadot as the Amazon warrior, Wonder Woman, Diana Prince. Jason Momoa reprised his role as Arthur Curry, the heir to the underwater kingdom of Atlantis.

*Continued on page 15*



Photo courtesy of Verge.com.



# Reviews

## ‘Raya and the Last Dragon’ streams on Disney+ By Safa Abdallah

Not only is “Raya and the Last Dragon” the first Disney animated film to feature Southeast Asian characters, but the places and story itself are inspired by Southeast Asian cultures. “Raya” is directed by Don Hall (who also directed “Moana”) and Carlos Lopez Estrada. It was written by Qui Nguyen and Adele Lim (who co-wrote “Crazy Rich Asians”). The creators of “Raya” were able to create a magical world that has fully developed characters, visually appealing and detailed kingdoms, and a heart-warming story.

“Raya and the Last Dragon” begins with a narration telling the audience about how long ago, the world was in harmony alongside dragons. But when

the Druun appeared, a purple plague that turns its victims to stone, they broke apart Kumandra. The dragons, being humanity’s guardians, had no choice but to sacrifice themselves to protect the people. They were able to erase the Druun and in exchange they became stone. For 500 years, Kumandra stayed divided until the Druun reappeared once again. Now Raya has to find the last dragon, to stop the monsters, and save humanity. Although trust is something she does not give easily, Raya will learn that in order to save the world, she will have to take the first step towards trust.

Though now considered a Disney princess, Raya does not break out into a song every few min-

utes or when she is going through something. There is also no noticeable romance as many Disney films seem to portray. Instead of finding true love, “Raya” is about being optimistic and most importantly, it is about finding the ability to trust your enemy especially during difficult times.

But like other Disney princesses, “Raya” gives the audience adventurous and engaging characters. Besides our heroine Raya (Kelly Marie Tran) and the last dragon Sisu (Awkwafina), we have another female princess and warrior, Namaari (Gemma Chan), a street-smart boy, Boun (Izaak Wang), a kind man who pretends to be ruthless, One-Eyed Tong (Benedict Wong), and a hilarious and adorable

con-baby, Little Noi (Thalia Tran). And of course, a Disney princess is not complete without her furry friend. Raya has Tuk Tuk (Alan Tudyk) who is a cute mix of an armadillo and hamster. Or maybe dog.

Watching “Raya and the Last Dragon” is reminiscent of “Avatar: The Last Airbender” in its beginning narration as well as the ending. Just like in “Avatar,” a hero and their friends have taken it upon themselves to save the world from monsters. It is also reminiscent of “Mulan” as there are not one, but two female characters fighting to save not just their country but all of humanity.

“Raya and the Last Dragon” has everything that

makes an animated film perfect. It has characters that are interesting and funny, and a life-threatening quest that eases its audience through the beautiful animation of the characters and

the world. “Raya” is a beautiful, animated film worthy of being watched over and over again because one simply can’t get over just how detailed everything is.



Photo courtesy of IMDb.

## ‘Justice League’ (continued)

Clark Kent also appears in the film, portrayed by Henry Cavil.

Even though the overall plot of the film falls into the cliché end of the world category, the struggles and imperfections of the characters take center stage. Snyder’s heroes all come with their respectable emo-

tional baggage, making it difficult not to connect with viewers on a personal level. Batman wanted to bring together earth’s meta-humans as planetary protectors against any cosmic threat. This is a major turnaround from his BvS character, cynical and murderous. In JL Batman repeat-

edly cites the hopeful concept of “faith.” This is also a stark contrast to Whedon’s Batman who cruelly taunts Wonder Woman about her deceased boyfriend.

The characters care about each other in Snyder’s vision. Multiple breaks may be required due to the daunting runtime

although each character is thoroughly validated and explored. Reshoots brought back Joe Manginello as Deathstroke/Slade Wilson and Jared Leto makes a surprise cameo as The Joker. This is a reprisal of Leto’s Joker from director David Ayer’s 2016 “Suicide Squad” movie.

There are no future plans for the continuation of the series or for Snyder to have further involvement with DC. The first weekend was a success with 1.8 million views on the HBOMax app. There is always a possibility that the Snyder Cut success could lead to WB eventually green lighting sequels. Many fans are

happy just to be able to watch their favorite heroes through the lens of the more serious minded and action-oriented Snyder. There is no comparison between the 2017 Whedon and 2021 Snyder releases. Snyder delivered twice as much movie as Whedon with better quality by a large margin.



# Biden administration's Rescue Plan fails Americans

By Salvador Hernandez

On Mar. 11, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act, a \$1.9 trillion relief package in response to the current pandemic and the economic issues plaguing the nation. This piece of legislation presents many Americans with a glimmer of hope, yet it seems more likely that it is just another half-hearted attempt to complete the goals of the Biden administration.

The American Rescue Plan Act contains a \$3,000 child tax credit, a provision to expand the existing unemployment benefits by \$300, and aid to states and cities most affected by the pandemic. Not included in the relief package are the \$15 federal minimum wage increase and the \$2,000 stimulus checks.

Instead, the American people are treated with a milk toast response by

Congress to receive \$600 stimulus checks.

This move from the Biden administration and Congress has failed to hear the voices of the citizenry. The Justice

Democrats, Reps. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and Ayanna Pressley, among others within the Congressional Progressive Caucus of the Democratic Party,

failed to use their political leverage to place the provisions of a \$15 minimum wage and \$2,000 stimulus checks.

A multitude of progressive political

commentators such as hosts, Jimmy Dore (of "The Jimmy Dore Show") and Kyle Kulinski (of "Secular Talk"), as well as a former member of "The Young Turks," have expressed their discontent on the inactions of the Congressional Progressive Caucus to stand up for their progressive views.

Krystal Ball, progressive commentator, political pundit, and co-host of "Rising with The Hill's Krystal Ball and Saagar Enjeti," commented on the failure of Congress to pass these provisions and their priority on foreign intervention on Twitter.

"So when they said \$2K checks immediately what they actually meant was \$1400 checks, whenever we get to it, after bombing Syria and abandoning the minimum wage hike. Good luck in the mid-terms!"

Another piece

to the puzzle is the Vice President Kamala Harris' inability to overrule the Senate parliamentarian. As well as the inability of Congress to pass an amendment to the bill in the Senate presented by congressman Bernie Sanders to increase the minimum wage not garnering enough votes to pass.

The Biden administration sure has passed a number of legislations such as pardoning student loan debt and other seemingly progressive legislation. However, as it turns out, the pardon on student loan debt only applies to those who got cheated by for-profit universities. The legislations passed by the Biden administration are dishonest at worst and mediocre at best.

The last time the minimum wage was raised was in 2009, under former President George W. Bush's administration.

## Fight for 15 dwindles

By Salvador Hernandez

The \$15 minimum wage debate has recently come across a bump in the road. The lack of support under an all-Democratic leading Congress and the head of the executive branch presents the image that the fight for \$15 will have to rage on.

No seemingly fight was put up by the Congressional Progressive Caucus of the Democratic party. Congressmen Ro Khanna and Bernie Sanders brought the issue to the Democratic Party. Khanna provided a letter to inform the Biden administration that they should overrule the Senate parliamentarian. Over 20 House

Democrats signed the letter suggesting that the Biden administration should overrule the parliamentarian.

Ro Khanna eventually signed the American Rescue Plan Act giving up leverage or opposition. In addition, the failure of the over 20 house Democrats to use their political leverage in order to make the establishment Democrats listen to their demands is a fault in the game of politics.

Additionally, Bernie Sanders sought to add an amendment to the bill to include the provision of a \$15 minimum wage. However, it did not

garner enough votes to pass, with eight Democrats voting no. Chief among them, Krysten Sinema, who made a gesture that flew in the face of the working class.

Many progressives are also placing the blame on Vice President Kamala Harris, who decided that she was not going to overrule the Senate parliamentarian. The progressives and Democrats alleging that they are on the side of the working people, have truly shown their true colors with the lack of effort placed to pass a hike on the minimum wage.

# Financial inequality, psychological displacement reigns in America

By Jesse Fitzgerald Rodriguez Sr.

Ever wonder who made a killing off the pandemic, clearly overlooking the death rate, the American misfortunes? Who capitalized on this epidemic while millions of others live in despair and confusion?

After one year of strict federal mandates, rules and regulations, and pandemic misery, the

country's 664 billionaires now have a combined wealth of \$4.3 trillion, up from just under \$3 trillion since March 18, 2020, which is more than the \$2.4 trillion held by 165 million other Americans.

In dire times, many struggling Americans question the federal minimum wage. What exactly constitutes fair pay

without financial discrimination for all.

Some companies in certain states have hopped on the "trending" fight for \$15 bandwagon and are rethinking about increasing the minimum wage for their employees. Some small business owners disagree though. But who is right, wrong and what is ethically acceptable for the

21st century?

Over 30 million Americans have filed for unemployment. An outstanding \$16 trillion of mortgage debt exists. Student loan debt accounts for \$1.6 trillion, and it is the second highest consumer debt category as of 2020.

As a result, many students and parents in America

cannot consistently provide for their family or educate their children adequately. They fought these struggles while also undergoing psychological stress, as protests turn into riots and mobs wreak terror on governmental buildings. Remember seeing the insurrection at our nation's capital on Jan. 6? It streamed live as millions witnessed the heinous acts of violence—a disrespect to the country.

When will the

federal government, big tech, big business lobbyists, interest groups and political officials, listen and realize the consequences of their actions – both rhetoric and legislative – which aggressively impact the financial inequality in America?

I do not see how President Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus and relief package, intends to uplift a country, which as a whole, remains in debt.



# Failure to label Atlanta spa shootings as hate crimes hurts Asian American community

By Karina Rodarte Alvarez

On March 16, 21-year-old gunman, Robert Aaron Long, opened fire at three separate Atlanta-area spas. This act of violence resulted in one injury and eight tragic deaths, six of whom were women of Asian descent. The victims who passed were as follows: Paul Andre Michels (54), Xiaojie Tan (49), Daoyou Feng (44), Soon Chung Park (74), Hyun Jung Grant (51), Sun Cha Kim (69), and Yong Ae Yue (63), Elcias Hernandez-Ortiz, the only male victim, was a lone survivor, currently recovering.

Long was captured by police unharmed in Crisp

County on I-75, hours after his attacks on Young's Asian Massage and Gold Spa and Aromatherapy. Long's parents called to confirm his identity as the suspect. When he was captured, he was carrying a knife, a legally purchased 9 mm firearm that he bought hours prior to the shootings, and a handgun magazine.

The night before the murders, his parents kicked him out of the house for a pornography addiction. Long was the member of Crabapple First Baptist Church which seemed to instill immense guilt in Long as a result of his lusts and sexual addiction. Though

Long's membership has since been revoked, before the shooting, Long participated in a church rehabilitation program for his pornography addiction.

Throughout rehab, Long relapsed weekly, allegedly visiting these massage parlors to in sexual activity. He told police that the shootings were "not racially motivated. Rather, Long saw these spas as a "temptation" that he wanted to eliminate. Long originally planned to take his own life but decided to target these spas to "help" others who attended them to take part in illicit activities.

Four of the victims were of Korean ethnicity and the community fears an increase in Asian American hate crimes in the wake of the pandemic. The surge of hate crimes is likely connected to former President Donald Trump's discussion of the virus, naming it "the kung-flu" and the "Chinese virus." This ignorant verba-

tim has been formally banned by President Joe Biden.

Long is currently facing four counts of murder, one charge of aggravated assault and an additional four counts of murder. The attacks are currently regarded as hate crimes, which is extremely controversial as the nature of the attacks indicates otherwise.

A survivor from the Gold Spa shooting claimed Long stated, "I'm going to kill all Asians."

Organizations such as the Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta, Asian American Advocacy Fund, among others, are gathering financial resources for the families of the victims.

*Photo courtesy of Atlanta Journal-Constitution.*



# UK femicide denotes ongoing gender inequality

By Aansa Usmani

On March 3, Londoner Sarah Everard, 33, was walking home when kidnapped by a then-London Metropolitan (The Met) police officer. A week later, Everard's body was discovered in a wooded area near Kent. Her death sparked a powerful movement across England as women shared their stories of harassment, abuse, or other traumatic experiences.

Inspired by these accounts, Baroness Jenny Jones, a member of the UK's Green Party, called for a "male curfew," a potential remedy to the assault and abuse of women. Despite her positive intents,

Jones' comments received massive condemnation.

Arwa Mahdawi of The Guardian, responded to Jones' proposal.

Nobody seriously really thinks a curfew for men is a good idea," Mahdawi said. "Almost 1 in 3 women in the UK will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime, and women are far more likely to be killed by a partner than a stranger. It's not like keeping men in the house after 6 p.m. would make women safe."

Mahdawi reiterated the issue with this proposal—not only would Jones' proposal limit men's freedom, but it would

not be effective in preventing assault or abuse. Additionally, women are more likely to be abused by a partner or other male figure within their life—a random stranger would be highly unlikely.

Jones' proposal also highlights another double standard, showing two expected attitudes for the two sexes. If men were to have any restrictions implemented, they could freely air their frustrations. Women, however, are to accept the rules without any fuss or disagreement.

Mahdawi also illustrated how this double standard is implemented throughout society, especially when it comes to

sexual abuse and harassment. For women, the conversation shifts to victim-blaming. Female victims of rape, abuse and harassment are often questioned on what they were wearing or what they said prior to the assault, implicating that the woman was "asking for it," and blaming for the traumatic events that transpired.

Rather than hearing the woman's account and seeking justice, society wants to make the incident be the woman's fault, rather than the perpetrator's. For example, being cat-called on the streets means a woman is wearing something that calls attention, whether it

be her clothes or the makeup applied.

Women are taught at a young age to adapt to the rules, not challenge them. It is better to "sit still and look pretty" than to ask for equality among both sexes. This type of mentality impacts women in areas ranging from the workplace to their health and their perception of society. These issues are often characterized as political, such as asking for equal pay, better access to reproductive services, or merely addressing that toxic masculinity still exists. If men were to experience a mere quarter of similar criticism, they would be enraged at the fact

that their frustrations are "overreacting."

In regards to the massive movement across England, it seems that the conversation is geared towards what women should do better, and not what men need to do better. Rather than ask men to reflect and realize how they contribute to hostility and systemic inequality, women are told to adapt to the very society that belittles them. Until the day comes when men realize how they must also adapt, there will never be true societal gender equality.



# Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo shines ray of hope for progressive Texans

By Indira Zaldivar

Lina Hidalgo, the first woman to be elected Harris County Judge of the third most populous county in the United States is Latina, an immigrant who continues to

inspire many despite strong criticism from right-wing politicians. More than two years after defeating long-time Republican incumbent Ed Emmet, Hidalgo's progressive

leadership garnered national recognition and applause with awards that commend her transparency and accountability.

Right off the bat, 29-year-old

Hidalgo stretched Commissioner's Court meetings from the short 1-hour time frames to often 5-hour long meetings (one even lasted nine hours), where community participation is truly given a chance. All meetings are posted on the Harris County's website. She also led the creation of the 3-1-1 system to make County services reachable.

Her forward-thinking politics have led initiatives to mitigate the pandemic, implement changes in the criminal justice system, increase voting and civil rights, enforce environmental protections, and sue transportation projects that do not favor the health and interests of people in Harris County.

In March, Hidalgo was named UH's public official of the year for her proactive role in 2020. Famous magazines have featured her for paving a path for youth, women, and Latinos in politics. Forbes magazine in December 2019, named Hidalgo one of Forbes 30 under 30 in law and policy. She made it on the cover of Time Magazine in 2018 along with other elected women. An article for Politico Magazine last September praised her progressive initiatives in the early stages of the pandemic which pushed for mask man-

dates and business safety protocols in Harris County.

In March, she took the initiative to mitigate the pandemic by forming an emergency management response guided by public health officials. In response, she ordered most businesses to close, leaving only essential business sectors open from March 25 through April 3. While Gov. Abbott declared Texas was facing a public health disaster three days after Hidalgo's order, he later went on to prohibit local authorities from enforcing stay-at-home orders and business restrictions.

Hidalgo along with several officials from Bexar, Dallas, and Travis counties, also asked Abbott to allow local authorities to implement local restrictions for respective regions as cases rose after the statewide stay-at-home order and business restrictions rolled back.

Last April, Hidalgo was one of the first officials in the nation to order face coverings. While this ignited strong criticism from GOP officials, Hidalgo never backed down in pushing for a mask mandate. Since then, countless scientific studies have shown how effective masks are at reducing the chances of contracting COVID-19, backing Hidalgo's claims

when she fought for the safety of her residents early in the pandemic.

Voting accessibility was another key accomplishment of Harris County in the 2020 presidential election. The Hidalgo-led Commissioners Court allocated \$29 million, seven times the amount of funds than in 2016, to expand voting accessibility. Chris Hollins, 34, was also appointed as county clerk by the Commissioners Court after the county clerk resigned in May following a bad March primary election notorious for system glitches and long lines.

Harris County broke all-time voting records with only two weeks of early voting under their proactive leadership. Unfortunately, Texas GOP launched bills mid-March that would suppress voters and the successful voting accessibility efforts accomplished last year.

"These are weapons for voter suppression disguised as election integrity efforts," Hidalgo tweeted March 15, in response to the bills.

Environmental protections in Harris County have seen the most enhancement in at least 30 years with the allocation of \$11 million in funds.

*Continued on page 19*



Whitney Barrett



Judge Lina Hidalgo wins UH's 2021 Public Official of the Year Award. Photo courtesy of Hidalgo's Instagram @linahidalgotx.



## Hidalgo shines ray of hope (continued)

Under Hidalgo, the county implemented a state-of-the-art air monitoring network, increased the size of the pollution control department by more than 50%, and provided more resources for HazMat First Responders.

“No family in Harris County should have to worry about the air they breathe, the water they drink or their environment,” Hidalgo said. “Our region is a petrochemical powerhouse which we’re all proud of; these industries bring jobs and... prosperity to the wonderful county we call home. But, I refuse to accept the premise that we have to choose between jobs and health.”

Harris County is also fighting giants for better modes of transportation. During the press conference on March 11, where Harris County addressed the lawsuit filed against TxDOT for proposed I-45 expansion, Hidalgo called TxDOT to “stop putting cars over people.” In the lawsuit, Harris County alleges TxDOT’s Final Environmental Impact Statement fails to address health and environmental risks and ignores alternatives designed by local authorities and community members. The Federal Highway Administration also ordered TxDOT to pause the project because of concerns that the project might

violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Hidalgo said the project is bad for traffic, displaces tens of thousands of Houstonians, particularly those in Black and Brown and low-income communities, and is bad for our health.

“It won’t solve our traffic problem,” she said. Numerous experts back her up as TxDOT’s promise to solve congestion is flawed. The widening of the I-Katy freeway is proof. Various advocacy groups such as Stop TxDOT I-45, Air Alliance, and LINK Houston praised Harris County’s intervention.

“We’ve seen

this movie before. We know through studies and experience that wider highways just means more congestion. We can prepare for the challenges of the future rather than being stuck in a transportation model that the rest of country, frankly the rest of the world, outgrew decades ago.”

Contrary to recent GOP-led bills aimed at suppressing civil rights, Hidalgo is distinguished for her progressive view on civil rights. On June 25, 2019, Harris County updated the language of the nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies to specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity. The decision

protects all employees of the county and Harris County Flood Control District.

A report released March 3, praised Harris County for progress on the misdemeanor bond reform that resolved in 2019 following a federal lawsuit for civil right violations in 2016 under Republican leadership. The reform frees tens of thousands from being jailed while awaiting trial for not being able to pay bail from misdemeanor accusations (except for domestic abuse or previous bond violations).

Hidalgo is guided by science and logic while confronting big entities and outdated ideologies. With only two years

of leadership, Hidalgo has set an example of accountability and transparency that has long been absent in Texas politics. When she announced the possibility of running for governor after Abbott ended the mask mandate and business restrictions in Texas, progressives in Texas rejoiced. Texas demographics are changing, and with that, the chance for more inclusive and progressive politics such as those enforced by Hidalgo gained traction. Amidst the many bills in Texas excluding and reversing civil rights for Texans, Hidalgo shines a ray of hope.

## Incredible mask disappearance act fuels recklessness toward hospitality workers

By Rachel Ann Preston

On March 2, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issued an executive order which lifted the mask mandate statewide. The executive order also allowed for businesses to reopen 100%, which means there is no limited capacity necessary anymore.

I am a bartender who has been working at least four times a week, every week, since the pandemic began. When the mask order was first put in place, there was initial panic throughout the service industry. Being that I work in the Montrose area of Houston, I am

in one of the epicenters of nightlife. My coworkers and I fear every day for our safety, constantly lathering our hands in sanitizer after every single interaction.

The service industry in Houston has been hit hard by the pandemic. Many bars who didn’t have kitchens were forced to remain closed, unable to make any money to pay their leases or even yet, their employees who rely on tips from patrons to pay their bills.

Throughout the last year, the struggle to enforce

the mask rule has been somewhat of an unfunny joke. Even though the masks are required, people tend to forget that requirement when they start drinking.

I have had numerous encounters with people who blatantly told me, “I don’t care about COVID.” This was appalling. I encounter people from various age groups. I serve people who are over 60. I care about them. I don’t want to get them sick.

Not only does the public sentiment seem to be, “I don’t care,” but I’ve

had people actually scream at me.

The most memorable encounter was with a man who walked up to the bar and asked me for a beer. He didn’t have a mask on, and I asked him politely if he could put one on. I won’t serve people who are not wearing a mask.

“Go f--- yourself!” He screamed at me. He waltzed off and reappeared with his mask, only to scream his drink order at me until he realized I wasn’t going to serve him after that. “Are you brainwashed? You

people have lost your minds!” he screamed, along with other profanity meant to degrade me and my coworkers, his face visibly red and the veins in his neck bulging.

The establishment I work at still requires masks, but people are now ignoring the rule because of the governor’s order. As “sacrificial workers” in the service industry, we do not qualify for vaccines yet, but we are on the frontlines of everyone’s outlet for a good time.

I believe that those employed in the

hospitality industry should be able to get vaccinated just like school teachers, as we are the ones serving the larger public. If I work four days a week and we’re busy, that’s at least different 100 people a day. Four times a week? That’s 400 people. That’s more than a school teacher who interacts with the same student body throughout the week.

Even though masks no longer required, we will continue to require masks and wear them until we’re vaccinated, ever-hopeful that the public sentiment remains vigilant and cautious.



# Cancel culture sentences skunk for statutory offense

By Sheryl Sellers

One of my favorite cartoon characters has been banished from future roles, ostracized by the very Hollywood that fettered his fame. Yes, Pepe Le Pew, the self-absorbed skunk has been blacklisted, charged with stalking, promoting rape and inappropriate touching.

In his cartoons, unable to detect his own strong

stench, the misguided mammal endlessly pursued poor Penelope Pussycat, a confused black and white fetching feline who was not to be wooed by the stinky skunk. But alas, there is no record of Penelope giving Pepe permission to make advances on her.

This cartoon originated in 1945. Unarguably, there is a big societal

difference between the years 1945 and 2021. Andrew Farago, curator at San Francisco's Cartoon Art Museum explained this to the Washington Post.

"Animators used then-commonplace racial and cultural stereotypes," Farago said. Though, "the enduring popularity of... Looney Tunes has led to some issues that their creators,

born in the early 1900s, never could have anticipated."

Linda Jones, whose father created Looney Tunes, an animated series of short films, had a similar message. She agreed that Pepe's mode of operandi towards Penelope looks bad today, but the cartoon was about his thinking himself irresistible unaware of his offensive odor. She also offered her doubts that anyone who watched the cartoon went on to harass people.

I, for one, just enjoyed Pepe's French accent and swanky swagger. And who couldn't giggle at Pepe telling Penelope "let's get away to zee casbah." This a reference to Pepe le Moke, played by Charles Boyer, in the 1938 "Algiers" (a movie, an oldie but a goodie).

Okay, so I get it, I really do. From my perspective it is a fun, fanciful cartoon, which was, let's remember, it's reason for being. To another, in today's ever discerning society, it demonstrates that pursuing the unwilling is tolerable and that rape is acceptable.

Previous generations did not even consider those elements. And, though I have no evidence, I find it hard to believe that any rape was conducted because the perpetrator watched

a cartoon skunk lust after a cat.

But how far do we go to wipe out ill perceptions of the past? What's next?

Well, I'll tell you what's next. Yosemite Sam and Elmer Fudd are cartoon characters, hunters that relentlessly run the range with a loaded shotgun and pistols, void of anything in their path except that "wiley wabbit," Bugs Bunny. Elmer and Sam have lost their Second Amendment rights and will no longer carry weapons.

"We are no longer doing guns," stated Peter Browngardt, executive producer of the re-launched Looney Tunes.

Fudd will now carry a scythe (a long-curved blade at the end of a pole) and he and Sam will be allowed to use dynamite. Can anyone else predict where this will be going?

And if those efforts to decrease rape and crime are not enough via cartoons, here is one from the opposite end of the crime spectrum.

Paw Patrol. For the unfamiliar, these cartoon canines serve people in the community. There is a police dog, a fire fighter dog, a sanitation dog, and a search and rescue dog. Sounds helpful, right? Wrong. This cartoon is on the

verge of cancelation because, it is argued, Chase, the German Shepherd police dog exhibits behavior that is too positive towards police. Oh. My. Gosh.

So, back to Pepe Le Pew. An opportunity to discourage his past exploits and serve as a lesson to the audience is lost. On receiving his pink-slip, Pepe Le Pew's scene has been cut from the sequel "Space Jam: A New Legacy" fluttering to the production cut floor. Le Pew was to play a bartender who hits on a patron, kissing her arm by which she then slams him into a chair, slaps him and douses him with a drink. LeBron James enters and warns Le Pew that he cannot grope women without their consent.

Interestingly, a teaching moment missed.

In the end let's remember this.

Cartoon character: a fictional character depicted in an animated film or a comic strip.

Fictional: Not real or true.

Character: A being involved in the action of a story.

Story: An account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment.

So, what we have is an imaginary account of a fictional character involved in the action of an event for entertainment.



Pepe ponders his pending postponement. Image courtesy of The Washington Post.

## Financial inequality reigns (continued)

That is not to say, some Americans gained wealth, stability, and opportunity, but rather, became aware of the chance at an opportunity and ran with it.

In the end, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, part of the stimulus and relief documentation, introduced by the

116th Congress, is a whopping 2124-page declaration, according to President Biden, to help raise millions of Americans out of deep poverty.

I remain optimistic about the future, but the U.S. federal minimum wage, the global and technological economic platforms and its policies, the

current education system, fully online and in-person, the health care and social security system, and our United Nations and its allies, to name a few areas of immediate reconstruction, must be addressed and reorganized to the best of our abilities.