

the village

VOICE

VOL. LXIII | NO. 1 SPRING ISSUE, 2021

**New
York's
Coming
Back.
And So
Are We.**

**Nan Goldin's
Activism,
Addiction,
And Art**

**Musto's
Back, Just In
Time For The
Oscars!**

**Zeroing In
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"Naomi and Marlene on the balcony, Boston," 1972, by Nan Goldin

Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

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A CHANGE NEEDS TO COME

By Brian Calle

If you do not know what the acronym DWB means, then you are probably not Black. I didn't know what it meant until a friend said to me, after being pulled over by a police officer: "It was just the typical traffic stop for DWB." He told me it stood for Driving While Black.

We have greater awareness of the term today because we see it on social media posts, cell phone videos, and even police body cam images. In one of the more recent instances that went viral, Army Second Lieutenant Caron Nazario was brutalized by police while he was in uniform in Windsor, Virginia, at a gas station. It's not just DWB though, it could be Walking While Black, as was demonstrated in a viral video in which Army officer Jonathan Pentland accosted a young Black man who was walking on the sidewalk in a South Carolina neighborhood.

It's become an all too familiar scene to-

day, but tragically, it's not a new one. As legendary *Voice* writer Peter Noel shared with me and my colleague Bob Baker via email:

"The '90s were perhaps one of the deadliest periods in the history of policing Black lives in America. In New York City, police targeted Black men and boys, deeming them permanent suspects who had rap sheets stapled on their backs. Blacks like me were illegally tailed, pounced upon and jacked up by mostly undercover white cops who bloviated about owning the streets—and the night. The stops were systemic and threatening to all aspects of African American freedom of mobility. Those who resisted wrongful arrest went to jail on the most frivolous of reasons for stopping, questioning and frisking them in the first place. Cops, in essence, were criminalizing law-abiding Black citizens."

Even during the '90s, writing about is-

suages of racism and police brutality in NYC and beyond was considered somewhat taboo. In fact, Noel, in the reprinted piece from 1998 on these pages, aptly chronicled the racial profiling of Black men and women on the Jersey Turnpike. However, his use of the phrase "racial profiling" caused an internal debate with top *Voice* editors at the time. Despite Noel's advocacy for the phrase, it was not allowed to be used in the original headline.

What is so striking about Noel's words, then and now, is that nothing has really changed. The only thing that is different today is that technology allows us to see and share these appalling occurrences readily and rapidly. The advent of social media has allowed for any incident of discrimination, racism, police brutality, and more to be instantly streamed for the country (and world) to watch in horror. And, of course, the immediacy of digital sharing obliges for greater collective consciousness, outrage, and activism.

There are countless issues that merit the attention of columns like this one, commemorating the rebirth of the *Village Voice*, such as: media bias and out-of-touch reporting that has led to the erosion of public trust in journalism and thus the rise of conspiracy theories taken as truth; or the unthinkable, unregulated power of large

technology companies that have more data on individuals than any government in the world; or the number of overbearing (and increasing) laws that restrict actions that ought to be a matter of personal choice but rather are used to unnecessarily incarcerate more Americans; or Governor Andrew Cuomo's alleged cover-up of nursing home death tolls from COVID; or our country's response to the pandemic; or President Joe Biden's apparent continuation of disturbing border policies for which he lambasted his predecessor; or the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans.

Every one of those subjects warrants the attention of the *Voice*—and they will get it—but the issue of the day is the treatment of Black Americans. While the trial for the murder of George Floyd is ongoing, new examples of racism against Black people surface almost daily. And that is why I felt a duty to republish Noel's original piece on DWB in the *Voice*.

Although Noel's story was first published in 1998, when reading it one cannot help but think it could easily have been ripped from today's headlines. "Driving, walking and simply trying to live while in our skins had become hazardous to our health," Noel wrote via email about his reporting a quarter-century ago. "And, again, we had the bodies to prove it." ▮

A small group of protesters took to the streets in New York City after the shooting and killing of Daunte Wright by a Minneapolis police officer.



MAYORAL BINGO

Use our handy chart below to help you pick the next mayor

By Ross Barkan

On June 22, the next mayor of New York City will be crowned. Yes, this is a Democratic primary and there will, technically, be a general election, but the days of Mike Bloomberg spending tens of millions to bludgeon Democrats are no more. If you're a registered Democrat, con-

grats—you'll have a say in the city's future. If not? You're out of luck.

What to make of this sleepy race, lost in the shuffle of endless Andrew Cuomo scandals and that never-quite-over global pandemic? It's still wide open. No Democrat has captured a majority of hearts and minds in any single poll. Your consistent

leader is Andrew Yang, the former presidential candidate and entrepreneur, who is no longer promising a thousand bucks to everyone—with a municipal budget, he can't—but who wants to bring a public bank and some other goodies (a geothermal power plant) to the five boroughs.









But the field is starting to gang up on Yang. The No. 2, and the person who could still win it all, is Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a combative former police captain with a knack for soundbites. Rounding out the top tier are a couple of liberals, City Comptroller Scott Stringer and former de Blasio counsel Maya Wiley, who are chasing the MSNBC set and maybe a few socialists.

And then there's ranked-choice voting. In June, New Yorkers get to rank their top five picks, and if no one hits 50%—don't worry, they won't—lower-finishing candidates are automatically eliminated, dispersing their votes to whoever is ahead.

The process repeats until a winner emerges. Sound good?

Yang has said he'd make Kathryn Garcia, another candidate who served under de Blasio, as sanitation commissioner, his second choice. Garcia hasn't returned the favor. A surging left-wing candidate, Dianne Morales, has been courted by Stringer and Wiley for some alliance making—but maybe she leapfrogs them both. Wiley already asked voters to rank Morales No. 2 behind her. Ray McGuire, a millionaire business executive, hopes to spend the field into submission, though he lacks Bloomberg's world-historical billions. And Shaun Donovan, who ran agencies under Bloomberg and Barack Obama, is counting on being everyone's second choice.

How to sort through it all? The *Voice*, in our handy chart below, has you more than covered. Find your best bet for each category. **V**

Who you should vote for on June 22 if you are a Dem Socialist	... you think taxes are high enough, thank you	... you encrypt your email	... you have a thing for technocrats	... you bike everywhere and have solar panels	... you think the rent is still too damn high
 Shaun for NYC	Shaun Donovan's rich father is pouring a million bucks into a super PAC to support him, so probably not.	Could be for you! Donovan's only open to a "temporary surcharge" on wealthier taxpayers.	Is the Obama veteran anti-monopolist? Donovan hasn't said, one way or the other.	A former HUD secretary and HPD commissioner who mailed a 200-page policy book to a bunch of city reporters? You might be in love with Donovan.	Donovan's championed the "15-minute city" and loves all your busways and bike lanes. Consider him.	Donovan says he'll build 30,000 affordable housing units a year, but he's not exactly an opponent of the real estate industry that keeps the rents so damn high.
 ERIC ADAMS FOR MAYOR	Eric Adams is a landlord who has aggressively fundraised from the real estate industry—not for you.	He'd like a "modest increase" on the income taxes of city earners who make more than \$5 million a year, sunset after two years, so unless you've got a pretty nice house in the Hamptons, you're safe.	Adams has been a Big Tech cheerleader. Maybe not.	Adams held a pretty powerful political office for eight years. This one might not work out for you.	He's in great shape and cycles plenty, but Adams lets his Borough Hall staffers park their cars wherever they want with their placards. Don't stub your bike tires on the fenders.	Adams has his own affordable housing plan. He's also a landlord.
 garcia FOR NYC MAYOR	Kathryn Garcia is a technocrat with a heart, but she also doesn't want to raise taxes on the rich. Sorry.	"Raising taxes is the last tool in the toolbox we should be using," Garcia said in one recent interview. Could be a winner for you.	Technocrats can cut either way, can't they? Your precious data could be totally safe with Garcia—or get hoovered up for some big city programs.	Choosing between Donovan and Garcia is like trying to decide between Di Fara's and Spumoni Gardens. Get a slice at both!	Not a fan of absolutely crushing the car culture! But Garcia'll build 250 miles of protected bike lanes, at least.	Garcia was once interim chair of NYCHA and promises to create 50,000 units of "deeply affordable" housing.
 SCOTT STRINGER FOR MAYOR	Scott Stringer: Maybe! A socialist state senator, Julia Salazar, endorsed him. But he's also been a conventional Democratic insider for much of his life.	Stringer did waffle, at first, on backing a plan pushed in Albany to raise taxes on the wealthy, but he's courting progressives hardcore. Pass.	Stringer's a numbers guy, so perhaps he knows his way around a ProtonMail account.	City comptroller is a plus—think of those thick, juicy audits Stringer's office has to keep pumping out—but 30-odd years in elected office? Meh.	A lot more bike lanes, a lot more places for pedestrians to walk. You'll like Stringer.	Stringer would give tenants the opportunity to purchase their own buildings and establish community land trusts.
 RAY FOR MAYOR	Ray McGuire: An exec at Citigroup with a gorgeous duplex on Central Park West. Are you kidding me?	McGuire's open to raising taxes, but has been nonspecific enough on it that you're probably good to go.	McGuire is as corporate as they come. He may not be the one.	McGuire: He's really rich and has never been elected to anything. You've been pining for another Bloomberg, right?	McGuire hasn't said a whole lot about your bikes, your buses, and chasing out the almighty automobile.	With his bank account, McGuire might be a developer's dream, but he does at least vow to build more affordable senior housing.
 Dianne Morales FOR NYC MAYOR	Dianne Morales: You're getting warmer. She might have been a well-compensated nonprofit executive, but she speaks the language of the left and has her very own socialist state senator endorser, Jabari Brisport.	Hard pass! Morales absolutely would fight to raise taxes on the rich and on corporations.	Maybe Morales? We gotta hear more.	Morales was an exec at a housing nonprofit, so you'll like that. But she's hunting for socialist votes. Not for you.	Morales would like to "reimagine" city streets, kicking out plenty of the cars you hate.	Hey, if Morales got her way, you'd probably see your rent locked in place. She did make \$24,000 renting out part of her brownstone, though.
 Yang For New York	Andrew Yang: If you're Democratic Socialist of America, he runs hot and cold. A public bank? Great! More cops on the subway and old Bloomberg hands running the show? Yuck.	Yang's a bit all over the place on this one. Assume, if you're an oligarch reading this, your taxes won't change much.	When Yang ran for president, he came out against breaking up Facebook and Google—but he did say he'd regulate them, considering your data a property right.	He founded a nonprofit, sold a testing company, and was never elected to anything. But Yang may be a little too bubbly for technocrat vibes.	Yang bikes everywhere, but he angered transit activists when he said a Queens busway had to make some concessions to cars.	A fan of community land trusts, Yang would have to answer questions about what sort of influence Bloomberg alums would have on his administration.
 MAYA FOR MAYOR	Maya Wiley: Not as left as Morales, but she's at least been willing to fight the bête noire of socialists everywhere, Andrew Cuomo.	Sorry, not for you. Wiley is trying to own the progressive lane.	As de Blasio's counsel, Wiley said that personally identifiable data would not be in the city's possession when the mayor rolled out free wiki kiosks a few years back.	Wiley's never held elected office. But she's swimming with the left, and away from your cold, number-crunching heart.	Wiley's proposed \$10 billion capital plan would leave plenty of room for busways and protected bike lanes.	Wiley: Rent subsidies and universal rent protections sound like they'd at least keep your rent from going sky-high again.

Cannabis

SELLING POT IS STILL NOT EASY

Black and Brown Entrepreneurs Have to Get Past Pot's "Old Boy Network"

By Sarah Ratliff

March 31, 2021, was a historic day for New Yorkers, when Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cuomo sweetened the pot for two groups of people with a lot of crossover: Over the next two years, the state will expunge the records of approximately 150,000 New York residents previously convicted on cannabis charges; it will also address an issue that most cannabis-legal states have done a poor job with—providing social equity to Black and Brown people who've been excluded from the industry.

While the majority of states where medicinal or recreational cannabis, or both, are legal have largely ignored this disparity, a handful (California, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, and, now, New York) have created programs to provide a path for people of color to own plant-touching businesses such as a dispensary, a grow facility, or a manufacturer of extracts. Unfortunately, the solution is more complex than states simply promising to prioritize applications from people who've disproportionately

been affected by the war on drugs.

It's very expensive to buy into the cannabis business. For example, it costs approximately \$1.5 million (plus or minus, depending on the state) to own a dispensary. This covers licensing and application fees, building permits, construction, and enough cash in the bank for future operating costs. Even with social equity programs, and states offsetting some of these costs, most people need investment money.

Cannabis sales in the U.S. are expected to reach \$45 billion by 2025, and, as is the case in most industries, wealth is consolidated in just a few hands. In the cannabis industry, many of these people are known as multi-state operators (MSOs). Unless investors are moved to invest in Black and Brown people, even the most well-drafted social equity programs are no match for these large-scale MSOs.

Between January and June 2020, \$2.57 billion was raised to fund North American cannabis ventures. Of this amount, 93% (\$2.13 billion) went to white people, with the balance (\$437 million) split by people of

color. Sal Ali owns AgroSelect hemp farm, Dr. Terpz dispensary, and a staffing agency that vets potential employees in the industry. He remembers how difficult it was getting investors to give him the time of day, let alone money.

"In 2015, I went to MJ Bizcon [the Marijuana Business Conference] hoping to find investors. Usually I was the only Brown guy in a sea of white people. I approached one investor with my pitch deck, and he looked at me and laughed. He turned to the white dude next to him. 'Yeah right, I'm gonna invest in this guy.' Meanwhile, I talked to many white guy entrepreneurs who told me they secured millions for their projects without even trying."

Reginald Stanfield, owner of JustinCredible Cultivation, concurs. "I had a realistic model and a proof of concept to capture brand recognition and expand. I was open to all equity investors. I was repeatedly passed over. The only time they look at Black people is to help expand the few who've already made it."

One investor I interviewed (who preferred anonymity) believes the fault lies with the Black community, not with discrimination. "There aren't enough minority leaders to serve as examples to up-and-coming minority entrepreneurs. And because most have records, I won't touch them with a 10-foot pole. I'm here to make money, not waste it on someone with no experience or ethics."

Such attitudes are precisely why, as a woman of color, I teamed up with two other marginalized people to form 420 Equity Labs, whose mission is to amplify Black voices in cannabis. Sometimes these social equity programs are exploited by predatory investors who seek out less savvy members of BIPOC communities to use as props, so they can line their own pockets. For those who are successful at securing funding and

qualifying for a social equity program, their fight is far from over; they still have to market themselves and set up relationships with vendors. Our goal is to use our combined expertise (both in and out of the cannabis industry) to better compete against members of the "good ole boy network," and win.

Kaisha-Dyan McMillan is co-founder of Let's Sesh, which provides educational workshops for people new to the cannabis industry. She has examined social equity from multiple angles and believes the problem is more involved. "Along with not having the money needed to enter the industry, Black people are at a disadvantage because many lack information. I've interviewed two high-profile social equity participants in the Bay Area, and both told me they initially heard about the social equity program via word of mouth—not through the city or state."

McMillan continued, "It's wonderful to have programs like this, but unless it's well-publicized, people have no idea whether they qualify, how to apply, etc. Looking at the policy and regulations, the language is complex and hard to understand for most people—I've been in this industry for over five years and this year alone I've attended two workshops to help me understand the MORE Act [the bill decriminalizing marijuana]. There needs to be more and better education overall."

If wealth in the industry continues consolidating and shutting out Black and Brown people, it may require some ingenuity and creativity to create change. Mss Oregon and her family own the National Cannabis Diversity Awareness Convention (NCDAC) in Portland, Oregon. "I gave up the idea of owning a dispensary when I tried getting hired and repeatedly had the door slammed in my face," she says. "The only way I was going to be part of the industry was by creating an ancillary business. The NCDAC connects people in the entertainment and cannabis industries. We're already planning NCDAC 2024, in Atlanta. We believe that creating a cannabis network is important to industry and societal growth."

Devin Jones manages Elev8 dispensary in Eugene, Oregon. He and inventory manager Alonzo "Zo" Medley are providing social equity in a small yet sustainable way. As they build their list of extracts and flower suppliers, they prioritize Black- and Brown-owned companies. They started in the summer of 2020, and today 68% of their inventory comes from BIPOC-owned businesses. Of those, 25% are Black-owned. As Zo explains it, "We stock both high-end, expensive weed and high-quality, less expensive weed, so we can help everyone at every socioeconomic level. It may sound simple, however, Devin and I can tell you these relationships take time to cultivate, but the rewards are so sweet."

So long as large-scale MSOs and investors are disinterested in doing their part to uphold state and local government-enacted social equity programs, as with everything else in life, Black and Brown people are ready, able, and willing to create our own social equity and legacy.



Photos courtesy Lori Shepherd

Taking care:
Zo Medley
and Devin
Jones

RAT-BORNE BACTERIA AND OTHER AMENITIES IN VED PARKASH'S BUILDINGS

"He should live in one of his apartments for a year. He really should. Him or his family."

By Eileen Markey

Ved Parkash, once known as New York City's worst landlord, a Bronx emperor of evictions who forced out more apartment dwellers in 2019 than any other city property owner, and whose tenants in one building got sick from rat-borne bacteria—one died—is at it again. With Covid-19 and its economic fallout still

hammering the Bronx, Parkash is moving to oust more than 10% of his tenants—some 600 families—while at the same time begging for property-tax relief on buildings where families went without heat this winter. Even as the state grapples to ameliorate a Covid-induced real estate crisis, Parkash's record illustrates that the problems facing

poor tenants long predate the pandemic, and will shape whatever version of the city emerges from it.

Ana Javier keeps her apartment immaculate. Her one-bedroom a block south of Fordham Road exudes the aggressive cleanliness of a Dominican grandmother's home: silk flowers on the polished table, a dark-wood sofa set whose spotlessness suggests it is reserved for very important occasions, diaphanous curtains that keep out the sidewalk. The floors are what you notice first though: light-blond laminate made in imitation of the hardwood flooring that once ran through this six-story 1941 building, where the high ceilings and murrled lobby hint at former grandeur. The murals depict Peter Minuit laying claim to Manhattan Island, NYC's first real estate transaction—in which someone got screwed. The building on Tiebout Avenue is not a glamorous address these days, but Javier and her neighbors are living their lives. She paid \$1,000 for the new floors to replace the boards ruined last year when a pipe burst, spewing filthy water two inches deep throughout her apartment. The senior citizen clutches her shawl around her housedress as she leans over to point to the tops of the baseboards, where the slosh of water reached. She submitted

the receipts to the landlord, but Parkash has ignored them.

"I just want him to come and fix the stuff he's supposed to fix and then leave me alone," she says. This winter the problem was heat. For 10 days in February there was none in the building. "We were shivering. I'm still shivering," she says. "I called the landlord crying. I called him directly, but he did nothing."

In 2016, Parkash topped a list the city public advocate compiles to try to shame the landlords with egregious housing-code violations into making repairs; it's modeled on the "10 Worst Landlords" articles Village Voice muckraker Jack Newfield pioneered in the 1960s. Parkash made enough repairs to get off the list, but his portfolio still has scores of serious violations, from lead paint to mold, broken doors, roach and rodent infestations, busted window guards, and holes in the walls. In 2019 he evicted 158 families across his 71-building portfolio, more people than any other property owner in the city, according to records analyzed by the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition and data collective JustFix.nyc. Because of state and federal Covid-19 protections, no one has been evicted from a Parkash building—or any other—since March 2020.

Mold grew dark on the bedroom walls at Tiebout Avenue, fed by faulty plumbing and a leaky roof.



Ricky Flores



A sentry in the vestibule: Michelle Lopez and her son

Ricky Flores

But in August, landlords were cleared to bring new cases against tenants who fell behind on rent in 2020, and to petition to resume eviction cases started before the pandemic. Parkash filed 300 petitions in housing court between August and November and another 350 since, 5% of all Bronx cases, according to court records. Actual evictions—the city marshal carting tenant’s stuff onto the sidewalk—have been suspended, but the legal steps leading up to that scenario are moving forward.

Many tenants leave when they get an eviction notice, or sign agreements to pay back rent that they’ll never be able to honor, unaware that in certain NYC zip codes they have the right to a free lawyer. Parkash has more than 100 appearances on the court calendar set for March, April, and May. A third of those tenants are not represented by counsel.

“He’s just lining them up for when the moratorium lifts,” says Caroline Kirk, a data analyst at University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP), a nonprofit in the Northwest Bronx that conducts research on affordable housing.

At the same time, Parkash is seeking relief from city taxes. On October 9, he filed 53 motions against the city Tax Commission,

arguing that his Bronx portfolio is worth less than it was assessed for. Forty-seven of these buildings were without heat and hot water for stretches this winter—the same buildings where he has begun eviction proceedings against hundreds of tenants. “The guy’s a multimillionaire, why does he need a tax break?” asks Yoselyn Gomez, one of Parkash’s tenants.

“We have complied with all local, state, and federal eviction regulations and housing laws throughout the pandemic,” Anurag Parkash, manager at Parkash Management, and Ved’s son, said in a written statement. “The housing court, not Parkash Management, is slowly restoring cases to the calendar—especially pre-pandemic cases and particularly those where a judgment had been entered.”

But Parkash’s history demonstrates that he makes aggressive use of housing court. “There’s enough reporting on and past organizing in Parkash’s portfolio to know that evictions and minimal building reinvestment have been key parts of his business plan,” says Jacob Udell, research director at UNHP. The state budget adopted on April 7 provides significant aid to tenants who owe back rent; New York tenants owe a total of \$1 billion. But beyond avoiding evictions,

it’s critical that state and city leaders ensure that landlords who get that rent actually take care of their buildings, Udell explains.

Parkash denies that eviction is part of the company’s business strategy, or that he turns to it easily. Anurag Parkash said in the written statement, “Empty apartments, just as failure to pay rent, have a negative impact on all tenants and the building itself, which is why our efforts, first and foremost, are geared toward compassion and flexibility—working with financially struggling tenants, giving them time to pay, within reason of course.” He argued that some tenants took advantage of Covid protections, “despite having the financial wherewithal to pay rent.”

This past winter, what many Parkash tenants were struggling with was cold. There was no heat or hot water at 825 Gerard Avenue for 15 days in February. At 125 Mt. Hope Place, tenants had no heat or hot water for 19 days in December, including Christmas Day, or for 11 days in February. Another Parkash building, 2842 Grand Concourse, was without heat or hot water for 13 days in January and for 8 days in February. A few blocks south, at 2625 Grand Concourse, the tenants had no heat or hot water for 16 days in January or for all but

four days of February.

In a portfolio of old buildings—most of them built before 1940—maintenance is a constant process, Parkash has said. In the written statement, Anurag Parkash said, “We maintain heat and hot water at the lawfully required temperatures, but when a problem arises in our aging buildings, we work with the appropriate city agencies to efficiently, effectively, and lawfully remedy heating and hot water, as well as lead paint and other complaints or problems when they are brought to our attention.”

Another tenant, Ms. Clare, smiles ironically when asked about life at 3873 Orloff Avenue. She doesn’t give her first name because she’s a survivor of domestic abuse and doesn’t want her former partner to find her, but she has plenty to say about the building. Persistent mold in her poorly ventilated bathroom made her asthmatic daughter sick. She had to take Parkash to court before he would make repairs. This winter there were 46 days without heat. She’s grown accustomed to turning on her kitchen faucet and having nothing happen. “They are always claiming that the boiler is broken so they have to shut off the water to fix it. How many times do you have to fix it?” she asks, cocking her head. “I just think

they shut it off in daytime so they save in heat and hot water.” The front doors are always broken, Clare says. Anyone can walk into the building. When it rains, the lobby floods. In the summer, the apartments are full of flies, coming in through the plumbing, she suspects. “He should live in one of his apartments for a year. He really should. Him or his family,” she says, amused at the idea. “The tenants are afraid, but they don’t know their legal rights.”

In 2016, residents at 750 Grand Concourse—where the rat-borne infection sickened people and killed one—gathered tenants from other Parkash buildings to file lawsuits forcing repairs. The Parkash Tenants Association got lots of media coverage, and met with then Public Advocate Letitia James; things got better at 750 Grand Concourse and they won rent freezes, says resident Gomez. But in other buildings, conditions remained poor and it took years to get repairs.

Eighty-two-year-old Bolivian immigrant Jaime Steinberg battled Parkash—and mold—for five years. He helped start a tenants’ association in his building on Tiebout Avenue, and worked with organizers from the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition and Community Action for Safe Apartments, which works primarily in the Southwest Bronx, while Gomez was organizing her neighbors on the Grand Concourse. But over the years tenants moved out, and others lost heart. “One thing that I noticed since I come here to this country, the American people are very quiet. They accept it. If they raise the rent, if they raise the subway cost, they don’t complain. Maybe they complain for one week and then they forget it. But people need to wake up,” Steinberg says, his emphatic pronunciation equal parts Yiddish and Spanish.

Mold grew dark on the bedroom walls in Steinberg’s apartment, fed by faulty plumbing and a leaky roof. Parkash made repairs again and again, but they never got to the root of the problem. Steinberg thinks the shoddy repairs were harassment for his organizing work. “Every time they came to fix something, they made it worse. They wanted me out,” he says. (Parkash denies this.) Many nights the smell of the mold, and of something fetid and nasty in the broken radiators, was so intense it drove the old man from his apartment. “You can’t sleep with this, the smell. There were nights, so many nights, I slept on the stairs because the smell was so bad,” he says, waving a hand at the staircase leading to the roof. Steinberg sued Parkash, and at the end of March reached a settlement in which the landlord will pay Steinberg a sum and ensure that the apartment is in good condition for a year. (The settlement is not an admission of harassment.) Steinberg says, “This has always been the state of the world: the greed and power. These two things dominate the world. I didn’t go to university, but I learned some things in this life.” It only takes a minute standing in his bedroom to smell the mold. He sleeps in his living room now.

Michelle Lopez looks like a sentry in the vestibule on Tiebout—the buzzer doesn’t work, so she’s waiting for her Ama-

zon package, greeting neighbors with “Love, how’s your mother?” as they come and go. She’s lived in the building for 20 years, raised her sons here, and remembers when the lobby used to be decorated beautifully for Christmas, and when the super made real repairs. “We as a community have to stick together and make things work better, but ourselves, we can only do so much,” she says.

Lopez believes the two weeks without heat in February were the result of slapdash

check on her. “She’s my princess. Always,” he says. Many people have moved away. “A lot of these people moved out because they couldn’t take the negligence,” Lopez says. “I would love to move, but everywhere else is expensive and I can’t afford it. Everywhere you go these landlords want to take advantage of you.”

Since January, the city’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development has filed five lawsuits against Parkash. At 58 East 190 Street, HPD has been trying since

complained about heat on seven days each in December, January, and February. A ceiling collapsed on the sixth floor in December, and HPD issued violations for roach and rodent infestations in multiple apartments. After receiving dozens of 311 complaints from 3873 Orloff Avenue—where Clare lives—the city sued Parkash in March, seeking an order “to provide legally adequate heat and hot water to the premises.”

Parkash owns 4,643 apartments. Most of the tenants don’t know each other. Even within buildings, engaged tenants like Lopez, who’ve watched families grow up and

“One thing that I noticed since I come here to this country, the American people are very quiet. They accept it. If they raise the rent, they don’t complain. People need to wake up.”



Ricky Flores



Ricky Flores

repairs. “He hired Mickey Mouse boiler repair people because he don’t want to pay,” she scoffs. “That’s why we were weeks without hot water. We slept with jackets and extra blankets.” Her son, a sweet-faced young man in his early 20s, moved to upper Manhattan a few years ago. When there was no hot water, she went there to shower. On this day, he’s stopped by the building to

2019 to get him to follow the lead-paint law. A city lawyer argued that Parkash should pay \$60,000 in fines—and prove he’s gotten rid of the lead paint. That case will be back before a judge on May 6. At 835 Walton Avenue, not far from Yankee Stadium, HPD is invoking a \$1000-a-day fine against Parkash for failing to provide heat and hot water. HPD records show that tenants

know people’s names, are now a rarity. They work too many hours to chat in the hall. And since Covid, you barely see other residents.

But some still have Yoselyn Gomez’s number from when tenants fought back in 2016. This past fall, she started getting calls and texts from people on Gerald Avenue, and from the building on Walton. When tenants got eviction notices, they dialed her number. In early March, more than 40 tenants from several buildings met to develop a plan. It’s the sort of activism that’s happened for generations in the Bronx, from rent strikes organized by leftist Jews in support of Black neighbors in Bronx Park East during the Depression to strategy sessions in Catholic parish halls in Hunts Point in the 1970s and 80s, as fire engines wailed, where people parsed banking regulations and eventually got laws written against redlining.

They are usually meetings led by women—pushy, demanding, working-class women who aren’t expecting luxury, but know they deserve better than this. Instead of a lobby or a church basement, the March meeting took place over Zoom. “Someone has to stop him. Someone has to stand up,” Gomez says. She moved to the Bronx a decade ago, after getting pushed out when Harlem gentrified. Rent on the Grand Concourse ate up \$1,600 of the \$2,000 she made each month as a customer service worker at a Lowes in Brooklyn, a job she no longer has. “I’m behind on rent. I know I’m on the [eviction] list,” she says. “Where else am I supposed to go? We have nowhere else.” She’s not scared though, she says. “I’m ready.”

NOMADLAND! JUDAS! MINARI! WHO'S GETTING THE OSCAR AND WHY IT STILL MATTERS

Save yourself from Oscar night tedium with Musto's sure-fire predictions

By Michael Musto

Despite the fact that the industry was devastated and many major releases were bumped ahead to this year, 2020 ended up serving a rich and diverse crop of Oscar nominees. The films' prevailing topics—institutionalized racism, protesters' rights, sexual abuse, and the tanking economy—seem ripped from today's headlines, with even the period pieces feeling as current as the Capitol attack on January 6. As we watched these films through links and on streaming services, our isolation was reflected in the dark cinematic scenarios, most nominations going to works about the art of valiantly fighting authority and oppression while barely getting by. Not long ago, Oscar voters had a bias against streaming services because they were cutting into the movie theater biz, but now it's accepted that that's the way the business has shifted. And besides, last year these services stepped in and saved our asses. The winners will be announced on April 25 in a scaled-down, televised ceremony that will provide a return to semi-normalcy in the form of boosting the industry while giving us the cathartic chance to watch big stars alternately squirm and rejoice.

Or you can skip all that and just read my predictions below.

BEST PICTURE

The nominees are:
Minari

A Korean-American family starts a farm in Arkansas amidst various challenges, including the arrival of a very unorthodox granny. Based on writer-director Lee Isaac Chung's childhood, this is a "movie-movie" about a family learning to communicate, and it's enriching to watch.

Judas and the Black Messiah

A sort of reversal on *The Black Klansman*, Judas chronicles the time in the late 1960s when a Black man infiltrated the Black Panther Party with intent to harm one of its most influential leaders, Fred Hampton. The film is swirling and gritty, with a great sense of the period, though I didn't find it consis-

tently strong. It bears noting that between *Judas*, *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, 2020 spotlighted a lot of Black-on-Black crime/harassment, all of it instigated by whites.

Mank

A visually stimulating take on the iconography of the *Citizen Kane* era, *Mank* has the most nominations of any film this year (10), but the liberties it takes with the truth and its failure to enthrall the public have removed some gleam from the sled. (The lack of a Best Original Screenplay nomination is telling.) Also, *Citizen Kane* didn't win Best Picture, so *Mank* winning would be bizarre—though Judy Garland never nabbed a competitive Oscar but Renee Zellweger got one for playing Judy, so anything goes in Oscar land.

Promising Young Woman

The ultimate #MeToo movie, this revenge fantasy plays out in ways that rivet and provoke. I've urged everyone I know to see it, and without looking up the plot, because your mind will reel.

Sound of Metal

A heavy metal drummer loses his hearing and battles his own best intentions when it comes to seeking help. A terrific surprise about the difficulty of reigning in adversity, done with the proper indie spirit.

The Father

Similarly, this play adaptation has Anthony Hopkins as a mature man suffering from dementia and replaying various scenes in his head with different outcomes. The best of the three dementia movies I saw, *The Father* scores mainly because of Hopkins' heartbreaking attempts to make sense of everything.

The Trial of the Chicago 7

Aaron Sorkin's look at 1960s activism and racism provides a crisp ensemble piece full of tasty turns. (And another Black Panther leader, Bobby Seale, is shown being taunted and victimized.) It could easily win Best Picture just for showing that some good people can also be accused of inciting a riot. But without a Best Director nomina-



Kaluuya's fiery speech is award-worthy in itself.

tion, it seems adrift (even if *Driving Miss Daisy* and *Argo* proved otherwise).

The winner will be...

Nomadland

Virtually everyone can relate to this story about forced reinvention in the face of per-

Most nominations went to works about the art of fighting authority and oppression while barely getting by.

sonal and economic loss. It's a haunting work about a woman who loses everything and goes to live in her van, traveling amongst the evanescent nomad community. *Nomadland* pulses with gorgeous landscapes, music, Frances McDormand, David Straithairn, and real-life nomads, and though I felt it might be a little too oblique to win, Oscar has been going pretty arty lately, and it's picked up a bunch of other key awards. *Nomadland* will find its home at the Oscar podium.

BEST ACTRESS

Frances McDormand, *Nomadland*

Always the anti-diva, McDormand gives

a subtle, lived-in performance as a wanderer living in a van and in the moment. Giving this genius a third Best Actress Oscar would be utterly justifiable.

Vanessa Kirby, *Pieces of a Woman*

Kirby (*The Crown*) plays a married Boston lady who has a home birth and endures some hair-raising drama as a result. It's edgy stuff, with Kirby pulling off a long and harrowing scene, leading to courtroom melodramatics that betray the theatrical roots of the material. (It was originally a play based on the filmmakers' real-life experience). The movie's prestige has only been damaged by the fact that the male lead is Shia La Beouf.

Viola Davis, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*

Davis transforms herself into the feisty blues singer, and the Oscars love that kind of effort, though some might think, "Octavia Spencer could have just slid into it."

Andra Day, *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*

I'm a Diana Ross fanatic, so I'm Team *Lady Sings The Blues*, but Golden Globe winner Day does a good vocal interpretation of Billie Holiday and gets to effectively mope around as everybody betrays her. (She's afforded even less joy time than Ma Rainey.)

And the winner will be....

Carey Mulligan, *Promising Young Woman*

Mulligan immerses herself in the role of a woman obsessively determined to find justice, going for full-throttle, seething realness every step of the way. Her performance

Illustrations by Joaquín Aldeguer

Mulligan goes full-throttle.



screams Oscar. If she loses, Mulligan won't seek revenge, but voters' consciences might.

BEST ACTOR

Anthony Hopkins, *The Father*

The Silence of the Lambs winner masterfully plays a man losing his grip, although I don't feel he'll be gripping another Oscar this time. It's just not his year.

Gary Oldman, *Mank*

Oldman won for his Oscar-bait role of Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*, and he does well as Herman Mankiewicz, espe-



McDormand: Always the anti-diva

cially in his Oscar-bait scene of drunkenly haranguing all the biggies at a banquet table. He's about 20 years older than Mankiewicz would have been at that moment, but again, Mank is not a documentary.

Steven Yeun, *Minari*

The heart and soul of the film, Yeun—the first Asian-American nominated for Best Actor—ably plays a man juggling family, risks, and even disaster, though his performance is more admirable than astounding.

Riz Ahmed, *Sound of Metal*

In his breakthrough film role as a musician who takes a stab at getting his hearing back, Ahmed is broodingly effective and would be sort of the Rami Malek of 2020, except for the competition.

The winner will be....

Chadwick Boseman, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*

As an ambitious musician who's about to get ripped off by white people, the late Boseman is radioactively good, and it's not his fault that his big monologue is set up as His Big Monologue. This is a chance for Oscar to honor Boseman for the first and last time.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Glenn Close, *Hillbilly Elegy*

Glenn will get stiff competition from Vicki Lawrence in *Mama's Family*. Kidding—Vicki was ridiculously snubbed! But I'm still predicting that poor Glenn will have to sit

there and lose for the eighth time, though by that point she might have at least picked up a Golden Razzie. (She is one of only three actors in history who've been nominated for both awards for the same performance. Talk about dividing people!)

Olivia Colman, *The Father*

Colman won Best Actress for 2018's *The Favourite*, but her role here is mainly to look concerned a lot about daddy's dementia.

Amanda Seyfried, *Mank*

As starlet Marian Davies, Seyfried brings a kind of benevolent glow to old Hollywood. Seyfried fits the pretty youngish thing with talent that this category often favors, though *Mank* never gave her a big Oscar scene.

Maria Bakalova, *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*

Playing Sacha Baron Cohen's endlessly naïve daughter in a film that hilariously uncovers the hate at the heart of the heartland, Bakalova is wildly game and deserves prizes simply for setting up Rudy Giuliani for one more humiliation. This is not your usual Oscar-type performance a la Peggy Ashcroft in *A Passage To India*, but hey, times have changed.

But the winner will be:

Youn Yuh-Jung, *Minari*

"The Meryl Streep of South Korea," Yuh-Jung is great as the offbeat granny who doesn't mind her grandson's mean stunts—and she also gets to indulge in some pathos, which always helps in the voting. Further aiding her chances, the Oscars feel guilty about not even nominating Zhao Shu-zhen, who played Awkwafina's wacky but loving grandma in *The Farewell*. Or maybe I'm overthinking things.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Paul Raci, *Sound of Metal*

Raci plays a guy who runs a camp for the hearing impaired, where they don't treat deafness as a disability, they simply work on how to mentally move forward. His kind but direct characterization is a revelation.

Sacha Baron Cohen, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

In this great ensemble, the real standouts are Mark Rylance as lawyer William

Kuntsler, Frank Langella as a crotchety judge, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as Bobby Seale, and Eddie Redmayne as buttoned-down activist Tom Hayden, but Cohen is sweeping all the awards attention because it was stunt casting, he's high profile, and there's goodwill stirred up by the Borat sequel. Fortunately, his performance as unyielding Yippie Abbie Hoffman is fine.

Leslie Odom Jr., *One Night In Miami*

The Tony winner for *Hamilton* eases right into the role of singer Sam Cooke, who's learned to work the system, though Malcolm X and others advise him to be way more radical about it. Odom's flawless vocal recreations seal the deal.

LaKeith Stanfield, *Judas and the Black Messiah*

LaKeith is quite good as the FBI informant who infiltrates the Black Panthers while wrestling with his conscience.

The winner is going to be:

Daniel Kaluuya, *Judas and the Black Messiah*

Having two nominees from the same movie wasn't a problem just three years ago, when *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*'s Sam Rockwell prevailed over the same film's Woody Harrelson. In the case of Kaluuya, he was nominated for Best Actor for 2017's thriller/comedy *Get Out*, and now, as Fred Hampton, he has a fiery, anti-police speech that is award-worthy in itself. He got the Golden Globe and looks set to nab the Oscar, too.

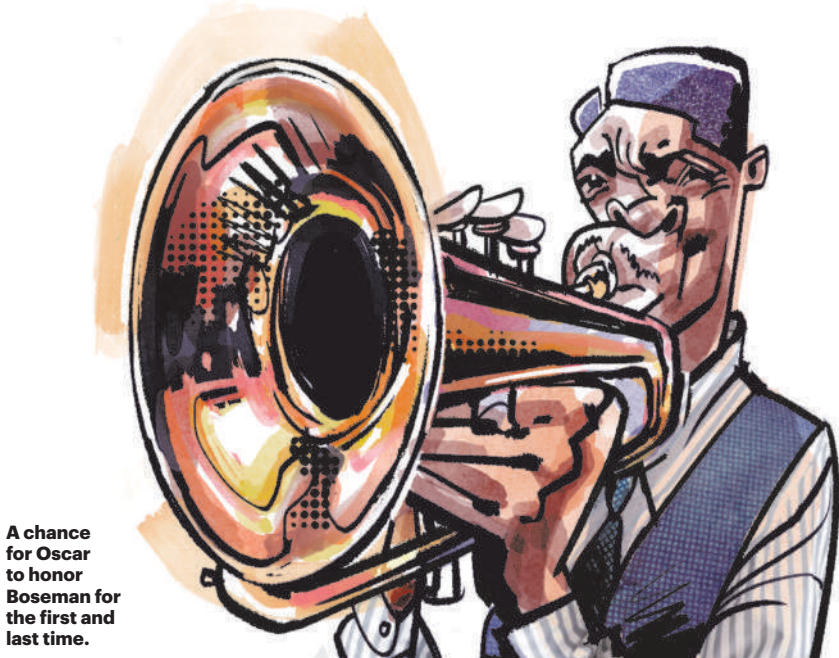
BEST DIRECTOR

The winner:

Chloe Zhao, *Nomadland*. The movie exudes directorial vision in its calm, humane portrait of wanderers who've been betrayed by the American dream but don't gripe about it much. Zhao will be the second female Best Director winner, the first being Kathryn Bigelow for 2008's *Hurt Locker*. And if Emerald Fennell wins for *Promising Young Woman*, it's the same deal!

BEST SONG


Who cares? See you on April 25th.



A chance for Oscar to honor Boseman for the first and last time.

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Live performances and touring are Jesse Malin's lifeblood.

Ehud Lazin

Nightlife

BACK IN THE NEW YORK GROOVE?

The return of live music in NYC—being safe without being sorry

By Katherine Turman

The leather-jacketed throng at the Bowery Electric surged toward the low-slung stage, nearly eye-to-eye with the thrumming musicians, the room resounding with raised fists and excited, off-key singalongs of “Baby I’m born to lose” and “I’m living on a Chinese rock.” The stench of spilled beer and sweat hung in the air as beanie-clad punk roustabout Handsome Dick Manitoba leapt into the packed revelers, throwing his arms around audience members as he spewed the MC5’s incendiary “Kick Out the Jams.”

That was then—November 16, 2016—this is now, April 2, 2021, to be precise. Jesse Malin—rock ‘n’ roll king of below 14th Street and proprietor of clubs the Bowery Electric, Lola, and Berlin, also performed at that iconic L.A.M.F. (for the Heartbreakers’ *Like a Mother F*cker* album) tribute gig in 2016, a show celebrating the power of live, dirty, dangerous rock ‘n’ roll.

For the past year, rock has been dangerous for another reason—a highly contagious disease that until fairly recently had no vaccine and still has no cure. On this very first

night that live music is legally allowed back in New York City’s five boroughs, Malin is on the Bowery Electric stage again, doing his level best to bring music back to the (socially distant, masked) masses.

If being safe means numerous plexiglass room dividers hanging by chains from the ceiling, separating the (brand-new) tables and chairs for the limited-capacity, masked audience (who face higher ticket prices and mandatory drink and food purchases)—and it does—Malin’s on board. It appears the sold-out crowd, presumably at their first live show in more than a year, is down with it as well.

That said, there are music fans and musicians alike who are definitely not ready to congregate en masse, and still others who grouse that real “live” music can’t be constrained and government-mandated.

In any case, on April 2, around 7:30 p.m., Malin and Co. descended the stairs to the stage to the triumphant strains of Ace Frehley’s “New York Groove,” and through song and personal tales about the city and the past year, Malin eased tensions, despite the awkward audience restrictions.

In March 2020, like thousands of other musicians, Malin was on tour. He was in the U.K., promoting his recently released *Sunset*

Kids album, produced with Lucinda Williams and Tom Overby. He had another six months and about 100 shows and festivals ahead of him.

Or so he thought. Voicing the disbelief of literally every other musician in the world at the time, Malin says, “I could never in my wildest years ever have imagined that I’d come home and my tour would be done. Or that every venue I’m involved with would be shut at once.”

The numbers on that, just for Malin, were staggering: He laid off somewhere over 200 people from his clubs, and canceled shows for the upcoming weeks ... then months, then the rest of the year. “I never looked at how many acts, between all the stages, we had,” he mused. “But when the music plug was pulled and silenced—rightfully so—we found it was something around 90 shows a week.” (Malin says he currently has only about 25% of those people back at work.)

Multiply those numbers across the city, state, and world, and it’s almost too much to comprehend. If you need the stats, Ariel Palitz has them. The senior executive director of the NYC Office of Nightlife, and a longtime club proprietor herself, said on a recent panel that at the start of 2020, New

York City's five boroughs had about "27,000 entertainment and hospitality venues." This translates to a "\$35.1 billion dollar industry, with 300,000 jobs."

Then came the saddest toll: COVID-19-related deaths in the close-knit NYC rock music community. The Arrows' Alan Merrill, Stephen B. Antonakos of the Blue Chieftains and New York Loose, esteemed record and concert producer Hal Willner. For starters.

"Then of course, someone close to me, Adam Schlesinger from Fountains of Wayne," Malin says somberly. Schlesinger was 55, and died almost a year to the day that we're speaking.

It seems simultaneously like a million years ago and just yesterday.

Live music venues, called "the first to close and the last to open," are now legally, with myriad restrictions, allowed to open up again, though it's not an overnight process. The return of live music—congregating in rooms with like-minded fans to pay homage to and experience the artists who help give voice to our souls—can be a sublime experience. And, to the minds of many, a necessary one.

So the question has been, since easily the summer of 2020: When and how could that live music experience be codified again, at venues both small and behemoth? A February 2021 episode of the online "Conversations" series presented by the Recording Academy's New York Chapter had a panel of music professionals discussing the return of live music in the city. NYC Office of Nightlife's Palitz stated, "We can no longer wait for the virus, the pandemic, to be over. We have to figure out ways right now to get open for our mental, economic, spiritual health."

Over the past year, many people fled New York. Musician Camille Trust had to give up her city apartment, put her things in storage, and decamp to her family home in Florida, a living situation she terms "hilarious."

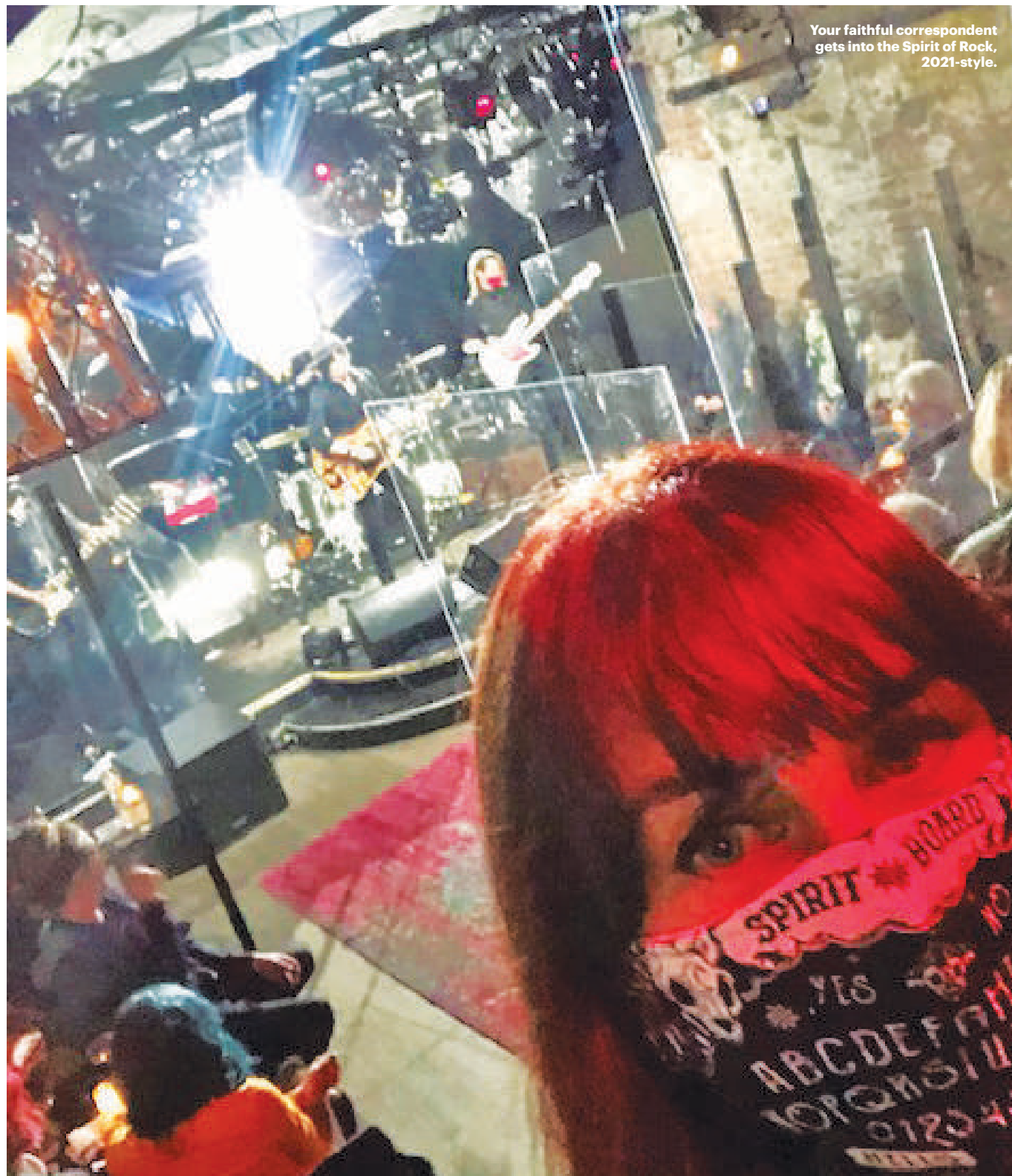
Since 2018, Trust and a few friends have run a monthly all-female-led jam session at Brooklyn's C'Mon Everybody club. Every other month, they would donate half the door earnings to a local charity of their choice.

Now, she says, "Two of four of us are not even in New York at the moment, one of them being me.... You pay to live in New York and New York is not New York," she adds, of 2020.

Trust, who does wedding gigs and more, says, "I lost all my income. I'm collecting unemployment, I do some commercial jingles and things; I did get a few. But nothing that would sustain me."

That said, she and others have been creative and productive, even if inspiration often arrives between days of shuffling around in pajamas in a pandemic overwhelm.

"I actually just released a single last week, called 'Florida,' Sort of as a love letter to my home state. I'm working on an album that is going to be completely written over Zoom. It's called *New York to Florida* and sort of tells about this time."



Your faithful correspondent gets into the Spirit of Rock, 2021-style.

Katherine Turman

Another local musician, multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter Jake Pinto, stayed hunkered down in his tiny Brooklyn studio apartment for most of the pandemic, doing livestreams, cooking, learning new ways to record without a live band, and diving into Ableton Live, a digital audio workstation used for studio work as well as live performance. He continues to closely monitor COVID infection rates in New York, and stays double-masked in public.

"I felt lucky relatively speaking," he says, during a walk in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. "Even before COVID I wasn't relying on live gigs as my primary source of income. I had, over the course of a few years, found some

success as a songwriter, and recently landed a movie trailer for The YeahTones with Position Music—movie trailer money. I wasn't really in the green yet, but I wasn't in debt either."

Pinto planned for 2020 to be his breakout year, the culmination of building skills and contacts. But as advertising budgets dwindled, even these revenue opportunities pretty much ground to a halt. He received unemployment and \$1,000 from Music-Cares, but only one of the three stimulus payments. He has no idea why.

Since graduating NYU in 2012, Pinto has been touring and performing around NYC, and even as a 24-year-old was making "an

estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year via music." He would fund tours with his band, the YeahTones, Airbnb-ing his apartment—back when it was legal—while he was on the road. He had planned to release the first single for his debut solo record in mid-March 2020; after agonizing over whether to debut a new record in the middle of a global pandemic, he went ahead with an independent single campaign, releasing four singles over about six months.

"The second single, 'Home,' was my most successful independent release to date. For a natural growth, without any sync components [such as film, TV, or video games], I was happy." Pinto's *Sad Songs for*

Happy People LP will be out in the fall, and he's looking forward to writing rock songs for the YeahTones again, which he found virtually impossible without being able to play with the band and "feed off their energy."

Live performances and touring are Malin's lifeblood, though he's diversified via numerous music and club arenas. All that went away in 2020, and he says that in the past year, he "probably lost 80% of my income. As an artist, none of us really saved for this kind of rainy day. Because I could always go play a show somewhere."

One saving grace is the newly formed group NIVA (National Independent Venue Association) and its Save Our Stages movement, which have been instrumental in organizing venues nationwide. Malin calls independent venues "the petri dishes for the next Lady Gagas and Duke Ellingtons and Madonnas. New York is already, in my opinion, too corporate and too much into the chains. If we lose the little-guy clubs, the only people going to survive are big companies, the Live Nations and such. For little bands, the way I grew up at CBGB or A7, where you could be off the grid and figure it out—build your audience, build a scene—where someone's gonna let you get

up [onstage], that was great."

Even in the best of times, the compensation for bands and musicians on the small-venue level is notoriously low, and there's no standard or union to advocate or offer a united front. As one musician notes, "As a

Onstage for the first time in more than a year, Malin looks around the re-jiggered Bowery Electric: "It feels like some kind of hope is happening."

bandleader, your whole life is unpaid hours, which is something sidemen also need to understand."

Malin notes that the pandemic brought

club owners together. "I was on some really wonderful group calls with everybody from the Blue Note to Birdland in Midtown to people on Avenue C like Nublu—a real mix. At City Winery, Michael Dorf is always very knowledgeable, him and Shlomo [Lipetz] there."

As of April 2, Berlin, Malin's underground venue at Avenue A and 2nd Street, is open, along with the storied bar Niagara. But with operating costs prohibitively high, it's not easy to break even, much less make a profit. "I mean, the rents are high, in the \$40,000 [per month] range for all these businesses," he says. "Landlords, commercial leases don't want to give a break. Sales tax, insurance, the electricity—the rent being a huge one—the liquor license yearly. There are so many [expenses]."

Lola, which used to be Coney Island Baby, and before that, Brownies, is not open at all. "Lola doesn't have room for a sidewalk café; there's a bus stop," Malin says. "We only can operate inside. So we're really hoping we get some help from the city's Shuttered Venues Operating Grant. They say you're qualified by being 70% closed, or 90% closed in some cases. Well, Lola has been 100% closed. We can ease into it now, I guess."

While 2020 was a roller-coaster of emotions, Pinto still believes that when it comes to his career, "It'll all work itself out, which is basically how I've lived my life so far. I have assets: music, which hopefully will make money. But I lost all the little things that helped keep the ship afloat, a couple nights of doing live sound and things like that helped me not dig into debt."

Onstage in front of a live audience for the first time in more than a year, Malin looks around the re-jiggered Bowery Electric and observes, "It feels like some kind of hope is happening." Riding that wave, he has released a new single, "The Way We Used to Roll," from his upcoming September LP on Little Steven's Wicked Cool label.

But although Trust will be fully vaccinated by next month, she says, "I think that upon my [return] to New York in May, I will definitely be having some hesitation before entering a live concert venue."

"It's still a weird thing," she muses. "It's like you're uncovering an old wound. There's been so much emotion toward gathering in a space together and enjoying music and having a good time. So now how is it possible, on a spiritual level and on a human level, to reconfigure that to just like, 'Okay, no, we're good now?'" ▮



Jake Pinto hits the road.



Amanda and Akir celebrate his birthday.

Feature

GETTING BEYOND AN UNTHINKABLE YEAR

Tulips, new guitar strings, dreadlocks, and taxes—Spring is here!

By Morley Musick

Just over one in three hundred New York City residents died of COVID-19. In a city of approximately 8 million, around seven times more people died than in China, population 1.4 billion. Wealthier people caught the virus first, as it was carried in by world travelers (early in the pandemic, COVID-19 was called “the rich man’s disease”). At the start of the spread, “New York was the primary gateway

for the rest of the country,” said Nathan Grubaugh, an epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health, and most of those leaving the city were people with the resources to do so. Additionally, before lockdown, tourists from all over the country were still packing attractions and taking the virus home with them.

More people died here than in any other U.S. city: mothers and fathers and grand-

parents, all manner of people who loved and were loved, died alone and gasping for breath in hospitals defunded over many years by the disgraced “Love Gov,” our very own Andrew Cuomo.

Their bodies were carried onto ice trucks. Sirens rang out like nightmares in the daytime.

Schools closed, child abuse went up, more people died from drug overdoses—ex-addicts

raised the nearly dead like the saints of old, administering Narcan on public sidewalks.

Restaurants closed and undocumented workers were thrown into dire poverty without resources; city rats lost their usual food source of restaurant trash, grew hungry and brazen, and fought out in the open on Park Avenue.

To talk of reopening as some politicians do, as some insurance advertisements do, in sentimental tones, with eyes full of stagey hope, is a little mendacious. We need a period of mourning in the Sioux fashion, with all of the city gathering each week in order to outdo each other’s grief, wailing louder and louder until we reach a pitch commensurate with this bitter, broken year.

That the city seems to be leaping into motion is nonetheless a cause of irresistible happiness. One cannot help but feel joy at getting a haircut again, joy at people playing craps on Sugar Hill, at drag shows resuming, at children running through schoolyards.

Tension between the need to remember and the desire for freedom characterized many of the interviews I conducted with New Yorkers throughout the city, about the pandemic and the reopening. The following interviews have been edited for length and clarity.



Kotaro Irishio:
“Here there is more respect for artists.”

Amanda Musmacher and her boyfriend, Akir Stuart, sat hand in hand on a bench in Washington Square Park, playing the soundtrack to *Twin Peaks* on a portable speaker. Amanda had plucked yellow tulips from the lawn, tucking one behind her ear and the other behind Akir’s. It was Akir’s birthday.

Akir: It feels like the city is going back to normal.

Amanda: And that’s not a good thing.

Akir: It’s really scary that we’re going back to normal. Fair warning, we’re young, I’m at NYU, and we’re, you know, youth super leftists. And it was just, like, heart-wrenching to go from four years of Trump presidency to the trial of Derek Chauvin to ... it’s just like we’ve never taken a time to step back and analyze how we run the country. Like what does it mean for us to go back to normal? And yeah, I don’t know, I kinda got disillusioned with some of the politics from 2020.

Amanda: We’re constantly being told to raise awareness, raise awareness. That’s all we’re told to do. Now we’re all hyper-aware, but we’re stuck. We need better healthcare, we need housing to be a human right, we need food and shelter and like, plain decency for people. I think it’s just too far gone at this point. I think Biden is a pretty moderate candidate, but after all we’ve seen it’s like, how is anything in this world supposed to be moderate?

Akir: I know this is the idealistic young person thing to say, but we really need radical change. The earth is deteriorating at a rapid pace.

An English teacher at a Harlem high

Ira Solom



school reflected on reopening, having just seen his students for the first time a week ago. He wished to remain anonymous.

“For education, reopening is not a return. It’s basically like a natural disaster occurred. For us, reopening is like the crew that comes in to repair right after that disaster. The people who had to care for downtown after Sandy, that’s like what we have to do with children.

“Whole families became dis-regulated. It wasn’t just that the kids were going to bed at 4 a.m. and waking up at 4 p.m., it was like the whole family was going to bed at 4 a.m. and waking up at 4 p.m. People were terrified and traumatized and they heard the sirens all the time, their relatives dying, and they try to numb it with TV, and maybe they’re drinking a little bit, and everyone stays up watching TV and you don’t want to ever close your eyes because of the horrible things that start to float in front of them when they’re closed.

“So many kids who did so well in person just disappeared, fell off.

Photos by Morley Musick



Cheila Rochez

“Teaching kids in a classroom, it’s just so different ... I was trying to explain what teaching is to my therapist.

“And I was like—imagine that you had all of your patients in one room and had to do therapy with each one of them at the same time. But you have to get them all there, and do therapy with every one of them, and then you have to teach them Capoeira [laughs].

“But I love it. It’s so much fun. It’s so much fun. It’s like really the most fun. There’s so much life in a school. My days are so filled with life. I missed it so much.”

Kotaro Irishio, stage name Osaka Vagabond, moved to New York from Japan because he didn’t have to pay to perform in venues. He said, “Here there is more respect for artists.

“When all the venues closed down I really didn’t have the opportunity to perform. I used to have an open mic event in Chinatown, called Yosemic, at the Silk Road Cafe. It closed. I lost many gigs. I lost money. My drummer lost his granddad to COVID.

“My friends—one is a painter and one is a dancer—started performing here [in Washington Square Park], and I was like, can I join you guys? And they said, “Oh, welcome!” So I started performing here. I didn’t perform like this before the pandemic.

“There are different types of joy and excitement in the street. Here I can see people smiling, different facial expressions.

“Once, when I was playing on a rainy day, a guy who was collecting cans stopped to watch me for 10 minutes, in the rain, and gave me a wrinkly bill, a five-dollar bill. He told me, “Buy new guitar strings.” I know how much those cans are worth.

“I don’t know how to describe it, but I had emotions that I had never felt. It gave me so much courage. I had more passion.

“Even when the venues reopen, I’ll still perform in the street.”

Cheila Rochez and her business partner, Adela Díaz, got hit hard when their combination salon and tax service closed for four months. But as customers come back, they already have plans to expand their unique business model to another location.

Cheila: When we reopened, we did lots of promotions for customers, and made everything safe for them. We wear masks. We take a few customers at a time. They are starting to come back. But it’s hard. We didn’t get no help from the government.

Adela: They still don’t help! I do taxes in the back of the shop, and my business really fell off. I know they was giving out loans for the businesses. The people that really needed it didn’t get it and the people that didn’t need it did. They probably lied a little on their applications [laughs].

Cheila: The big shops was getting the help, but barbershops, beauty salons, braiding shops, we wasn’t getting no loans.

What’s the good thing about us is we are the only shop in the Bronx dedicated to dreadlocks. They have more in Brooklyn, in Manhattan, but not the Bronx. So almost everybody in the Bronx comes here.

Little by little, our customers are coming back. I do their hair, and then I tell them to go back to do their taxes.

I think it’s gonna go good. We’re ready, we all ready for it. We’re trying to open a second shop, Dreadlocks by Cheila and Taxes by Adela.

Ira Solom began his career at Kirby Forensic Psychiatric Center on Randall’s Island, and later became the chief medical officer at a hospital on the Rosebud Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Now he visits homebound patients throughout New York City.

“I’ve been working more because of COVID. At one point, I was working seven days a week, 12 hours a day, every day of the week, all over the city. But it’s a fascinating job.

“There was one day when the first visit was with a 90-year-old woman in a fifth-floor walk-up in Chinatown. The building was built before 1900. The hallways are two-and-a-half-feet wide, there’s five people in one room, the grease on the walls is 80 years old. At the end of the day, the last



Apatrim Sahay

“How are you doing?”
And they would play music all day from the loudspeakers. When somebody got COVID and was able to go home, they played “New York,” by Alicia Keys. So if you heard that, that was a relief, it gave you some hope. They would play it over the whole hospital.

Mabel: The other one was if someone survived and went off the ventilator, they would play this other song, what was it?

Enid and Mabel together: “Don’t Stop Believing”!

Enid: When they were taken off the ventilators they would play that. But you would never know if someone passed, they didn’t play music to that.

Now things are going back to normal. Morale has gone way up. The vaccinations, the testing. At first it was crazy but now everything is moving smoothly.

Just the fact that most people are back now, that patients are COVID-tested, and everybody has to wear masks 24/7. Just seeing everybody back. The park is open, the back is open. We can sit outside. Life is better.

Bootsie Lefaris is a drag queen who has performed regularly in New York City for 16 years. She said she expected a “drag renaissance” in the coming months.

“I had so many shows—solo shows, choreographed bar shows, singing shows. I went from eight shows to absolutely zero. I went from all of that to, you know, being confined to the apartment.

“It was hard because you have drag family, you have relationships with your co-workers. You know, it’s like, “Girl, can you help me zip up this outfit?” Or, “Where did you get that hair? Can you help me with this mix?” We lost some drag queens, some security guards, people who worked the bars.

“But I think this chance to just reset as a human population, to be forced to be by yourself, it can be a good thing. I believe we’re coming into a drag renaissance. I feel like it’s gonna be a complete rebirth.

“I added so much more love to the show. There’s some shows where I was being a sassy drag queen. I didn’t totally drop that, but I just started saying, “Y’all are so beautiful. I see so many beautiful faces, I’m so thankful to all of you.” Spreading love instead of judgment.

“Just last week at Playhouse Bar, I was with one of my guests, Vinnie Gaga. Her father and her two sisters came to the show, just to support her. And she introduced me to her dad and I was like, “Hey daddy,” and he was like, “No, I’m actually her daddy.”

“We all started laughing and laughing. Just seeing the support, that to me was totally beautiful.”



Bootsie Lefaris:
“I added so much more love to the show.”

patient—I’m not exaggerating—had a penthouse on Park Avenue South, with a German maid. It looked like Nick and Nora Charles’s place from *The Thin Man*!

“You see quadriplegics, people who have no other visitors. I’m sometimes the only one they see—they’re so grateful. There’s a lady who after I see her always says, come in, come in, have tea, have biscuits.

“So reopening means something else to homebound people. The window they see the city through is different from yours and mine. They only have a few points of contact. You know the story of the blind men and the elephant, one feels the leg, one feels the trunk. They see the world through different... peepholes. Through TV, through family, if they have any left, through the radio, through home health aides. The view from a walk-up in the Bronx is different from a penthouse.”

Apatrim Sahay, senior policy manager at the Green New Deal Network, advises cities on environmental and health policy. He followed the pandemic closely, in dialogue with scientists around the world.

“You know that famous *New Yorker* magazine cover—there’s the city, and then everything else is terra incognita. That’s New York’s mental image. It sees itself as the city of the world.

“But the very things that make it unique and powerful and rich and hyper-connected are the same things that led toward the pandemic spreading very rapidly. New York will get maybe 5,000 flights from Europe, 1,000 flights from Asia, daily. There was a very brief window of time to act and we didn’t.

“The numbers I remember are: If we were active, shut down world travel, tested and



Enid Caballero and Mabel Rosario: “At first it was crazy, but now it’s moving smoothly.”

traced two weeks earlier, we might have had 90% fewer deaths. That’s fucking Cuomo and de Blasio, but obviously not just them.

“I was very struck by the reporting in *The New York Times* when the U.S. death count hit 100,000 people. Names of the dead were listed, how old they were, a line about them, and the newspaper ran on and on.

“For the half-a-million deaths mark, the front page was just a series of dots. It was the famous Stalin line: ‘One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.’

“This crazy collective experience shouldn’t just be happening on, you know, the pages of a newspaper—it should be a physical place, a memorial for people to mourn together.

“The city is recovering, of course, and I think we’re going to see huge outbursts of energy everywhere—social, economic, and erotic energy, parties on every corner, sex with strangers in bars, everything. But that same energy might cause this experience to vanish from memory.

“New York can’t just be living high off the rewards of being the center of the world. We have to use our resources, our research-

ers, everything that makes it special and beautiful and a place we all want to live—we have to use it responsibly.”

Enid Caballero and Mabel Rosario are pediatric dental assistants at Bellevue Hospital. They worked throughout the pandemic on emergency cases.

Enid: During the pandemic, we saw just the worst cases, like very little kids, a five-year-old who doesn’t understand why he’s in pain. But it was scary. We didn’t know what was going on. Even for a simple exam, a simple X-ray, we found COVID could be transmitted.

Mabel: It was spooky, too. It was so empty. It didn’t look like New York. It looked like one of them towns....

Enid: It looked like a ghost town. Half the people that work here are clerical, and they worked at home. You wouldn’t see people in the hallway. We all had to stay in our rooms, not see our colleagues.

Mabel: I was so anxious one day I couldn’t sleep at all—just up in my bed till 5 a.m., a full 24 hours without sleeping. I couldn’t go to work. Everything was changing so fast, the cases were going up so fast, the rules were changing constantly, the bodies on top of bodies.

Enid: We had a lot of trucks back there. A lot.

But they did stuff to make us feel better. We had free televisits. Me and Mabel would listen to relaxing music, like meditation music. They would ask us in the mornings,



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From the Archives

Originally published June 9, 1998

DRIVING WHILE BLACK

Fear & Loathing on the New Jersey Turnpike

By Peter Noel

It is a 148-mile stretch of asphalt that some black motorists refer to as “White Man’s Pass.” In their journeys along this dreaded roadway, which connects New York City with New Jersey and other points on the I-95 corridor, these motorists complain they are often catapulted headlong into an explosive collision with race, crime, and the law.

Since 1988—and possibly long before that—state police have been “engaged in a program of racial targeting” on the New Jersey Turnpike, according to court documents in a pending case against 19 black men and women who, in a joint motion, claimed they were illegally targeted, stopped, searched, and arrested by troopers on the turnpike in Gloucester County between January 1988 and April 1991. Allegedly, the troopers target blacks, especially those driving luxury cars such as BMWs, Mercedes-Benzes, and Lexuses. The state police assert that it is a trumped-up conflict and deny they practice such a policy: if anything, they insist, their actions amount to nothing more than aggressive enforcement of traffic regulations. But for blacks, who experts say are nearly five times more likely than whites to be stopped on the turnpike, it is a case of constantly being picked on for DWB—Driving While Black.

O. J. Simpson attorney Johnnie Cochran and other civil rights leaders maintain that this racially selective policing resulted in two white troopers firing 11 shots at four unarmed minority basketball players in a late-model Dodge Caravan they had stopped on the turnpike on April 23 near Exit 7A in Mercer County. Seriously injured in the April 23 incident, which attracted national attention, were Rayshawn Brown, 20, and Leroy G. Grant, 23, both of Manhattan, and Danny Reyes, 21, of Queens. The driver, Keshon L. Moore, 22, of Queens, was not hit. No charges have yet been filed in the incident, which is being investigated by a state grand jury.

A startling development in the case last Friday seemed to cast doubt on the assertions of discrimination made by Cochran, who is representing three of the men. Wayne D. Greenfeder, the white attorney for Rayshawn Brown, who was shot twice, told the Associated Press he is not sure racial profiling led to the traffic stop.

Seeking to reinforce the contention that overt racism is responsible for wide disparities between minorities and whites in police stops, the Black Ministers Council of New Jersey last week reached a tentative accord with New Jersey state police superintendent Colonel Carl A. Williams to have video cameras mounted in all state police cruisers to monitor stops. Asking troopers to police themselves, however, may strike a raw nerve with the New York City-based 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement and the New Jersey-based Black Cops Against Police Brutality, whose members have been threatened with arrest by the Turnpike Authority if they violate “restrictions on filming, photographing and videotaping on the Turnpike.”

“State Police will fully enforce these regulations,” Turnpike executive director Edward Gross warned in a May 22 letter to Black Cops Against Police Brutality.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, a defiant Eric Adams, who heads Blacks in Law Enforcement, and his partner Michael Greys left behind their NYPD-issued Glock 9mm pistols, armed themselves with video cameras, and took to patrolling the New Jersey highways in Greys’s Mercedes-Benz, looking for troopers who stalk innocent black motorists. Fifty other off-duty NYPD officers linked up with black cops and corrections officers from Trenton and Philadelphia and positioned themselves along suspected DWB checkpoints. “We notified these troopers that if we found anything suspicious we would film it, so I guess they were on their best behavior,” said Adams, adding that the black cops will conduct unannounced random patrols in the future.

TWO YEARS AGO, New Jersey Superior Court judge Robert E. Francis found that racial profiling “was tolerated and in certain ways encouraged at the highest levels in the State Police hierarchy, according to lawyers for the 19 blacks who consolidated their cases in 1990 to fight the charges. Declaring that the state police practiced “selective enforcement” during that period, Francis ruled that if the troopers had any evidence against the defendants it had been obtained illegally and must be suppressed. Many of the defendants, supposedly stopped for speeding, were in cars in which it was al-

leged that drugs, guns, and other contraband were found. Prosecutors are fighting to reinstate charges, and the case is now before the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey.

“Indeed, this wrong decision has already encouraged many other defendants to pursue similar motions regarding stops on other highways in this state,” the New Jersey attorney general’s office complained in court papers. “[The] defendants utterly failed to prove their pernicious and baseless allegations of racially motivated selective prosecution.”

In legal papers opposing the state’s appeal, William H. Buckman and Justin Loughry, who represent four of the motorists, claim that “to this day the State Police attempts to justify its actions and record ... on the Jim Crow notion that at least on the Turnpike blacks are inferior, that they drive worse, and that they therefore attract disproportionate police attention.”

The lawyers argued that state police wanted Judge Francis to “believe that blacks drive worse because they are stopped more. This ‘logic’ is ... morally repugnant. Yet it is the essence of the State’s case. Without a shred of evidence it seeks to blame en masse the victims of a State Police scheme to target blacks ... on the Turnpike.

“Refusing to acknowledge [the judge’s] proven and morally reasonable conclusions, the State Police would rather return to a time when such repugnant assumptions were accepted as justification for discriminatory police action ... The State’s retreat to stereotype proves ... that this is an organization whose culture and values have allowed abuses of power to thrive. It is troubling that the State Police possess the arrogance to ask a court to adopt this throwback to a racist legacy.”

It was just such profiling that allegedly led troopers to pull over the minivan carrying the young basketball players. The troopers said that they flagged down the driver for speeding and opened fire when the van rolled backward and struck one of the troopers and a cruiser. It turned out that the men were on their way to basketball tryouts at North Carolina State University. The troopers recovered a Bible in the backseat.

In the wake of the shooting, scores of blacks, including retired NYPD cop James Powell, have come forward with stories about being demeaned and brutalized during traffic stops on the turnpike. Powell, 56, is suing New Jersey for \$5 million for injuries to his back, spinal cord, knee, and wrists and “negligent infliction of emotional distress, shock, humiliation, embarrassment, pain, and suffering.” (The state attorney general’s office declined comment.)

Last December 5, according to Powell, he was on his way to North Carolina when he noticed two cruisers with red lights flashing behind him. (A state police official once testified in another case that a common technique is to follow a vehicle for a significant distance. When the driver keeps checking the mirror, it causes the car to weave.)

Powell pulled over his 1992 Cadillac Seville, but while waiting for the troopers to approach, he heard a booming voice from the cruiser’s loudspeaker order him to put his hands in the air or he would be shot. Powell said he threw up his hands and was told to get out of the car and “make no sudden moves” or he would be gunned down. “I had no doubt that if I had made some type of out-of-the-ordinary move I’d be shot,” said Powell, who was one of New York’s Finest for 14 years.

The troopers allegedly ordered Powell to place his hands over his head, get on his knees, and, for the third time, threatened to shoot him. “He said after dropping to his knees, his arms were twisted by a trooper, he was handcuffed behind his back, and placed in one of the police vehicles,” explained Powell’s attorney, Pace University law professor Randolph Scott-McLaughlin. He added that the troopers searched Powell’s car without his consent and continued to mistreat him even after they discovered his ID, which indicated that he was a retired

“Powell pulled over his 1992 Cadillac Seville, but while waiting for the troopers to approach, he heard a booming voice from the cruiser’s loudspeaker order him to put his hands in the air or he would be shot.”

police officer.

According to Scott-McLaughlin, the troopers had not stopped Powell for any traffic-related infraction but to interrogate him about an earlier dispute in which he was alleged to have threatened some gas station attendants. Powell, who denied threatening the attendants, was arrested, taken to the Moorestown state police barracks, and placed in a holding cell. Scott-McLaughlin argued that the troopers violated Powell’s civil rights by stopping his car “without a reasonable basis to conclude that he had committed a crime or was about to do so.”

PERHAPS THE NEW JERSEY troopers didn’t think they needed to have a reason for stopping James Powell. Former state troopers Kenneth Wilson and Kenneth Ruff testified during a 1996 hearing to suppress

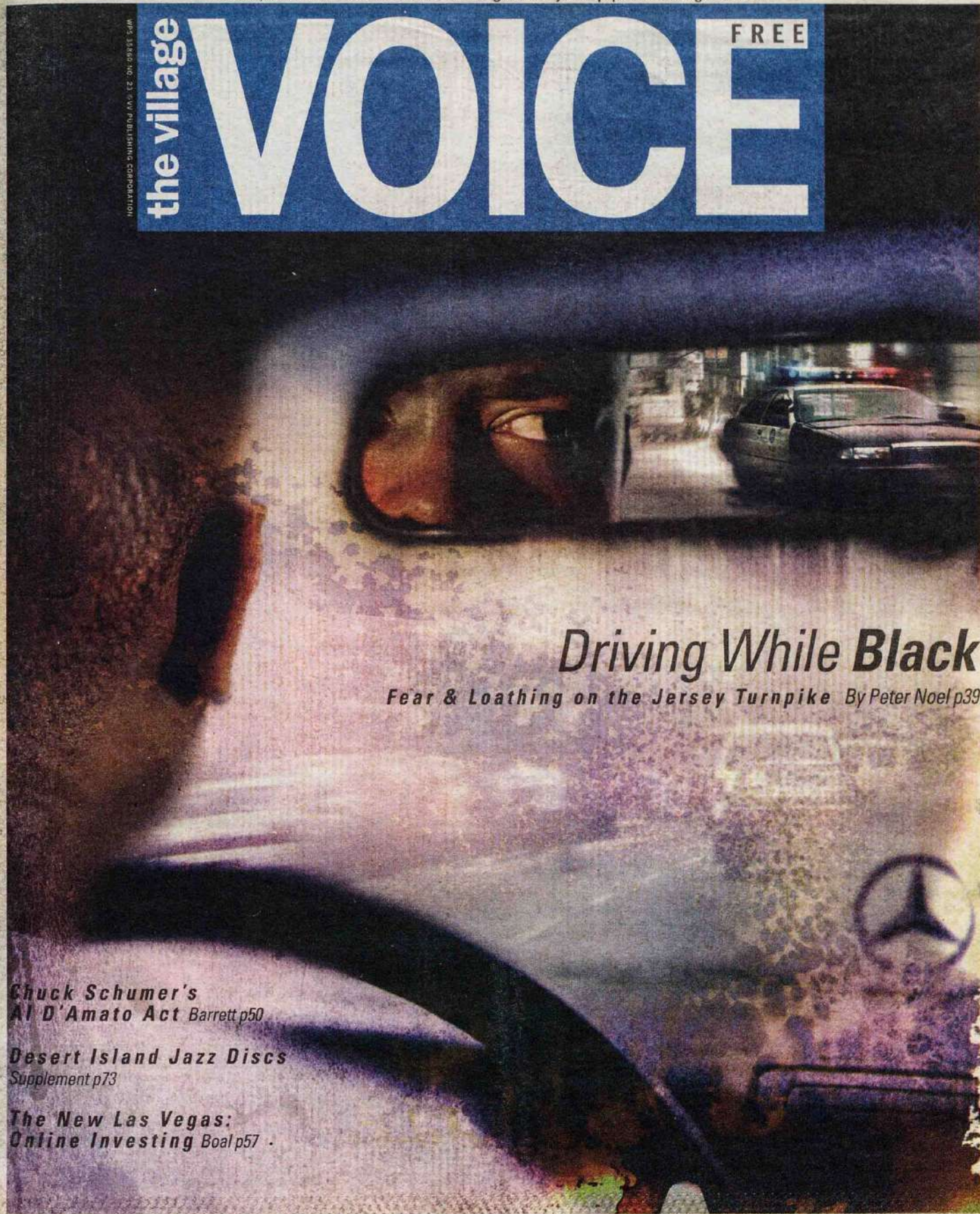
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Driving While Black

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the charges brought by the 19 blacks that they were trained to target blacks on the turnpike.

Wilson testified that his instructor, Detective Uke Mannikus, told him that he had determined that Wilson would not, as attorneys Buckman and Loughry put it, “have a problem stopping blacks ... He explained that Wilson would find that blacks were the ones primarily trafficking in drugs. He helped Wilson acclimate himself to looking for cars with southern license tags and young black male passengers, preferably two or three in a vehicle. He taught him to look for reasons to stop a car and for probable cause to ‘get into a car.’ Wilson testified that a trooper can find a motor vehicle violation for just about any car on the road.”

Mannikus denied ever telling Wilson to single out young black men, and prosecutors insisted that they “presented extensive testimony about the repeated training and instruction” given to troopers, who also had been warned that “racial profiling was strictly forbidden.”

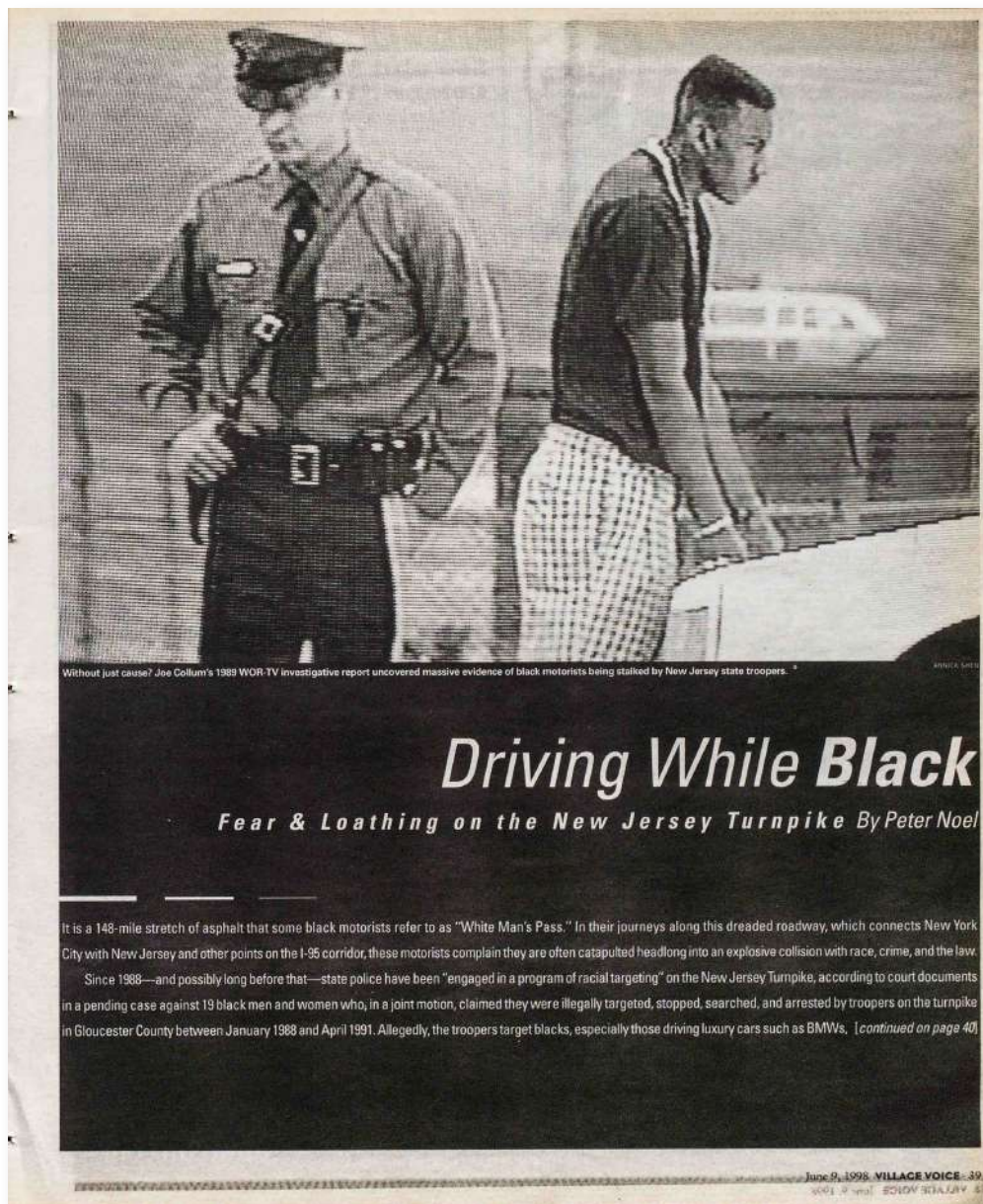
Wilson was one of three troopers indicted in 1989 by a state grand jury in Trenton for allegedly assaulting and stealing money from a group of men stopped by one of the officers on the turnpike. Wilson plea-bargained with prosecutors and turned against his colleagues, who were later acquitted. He testified that he was questioned by two white internal affairs officers who ignored his allegations of racial profiling by fellow troopers.

“When he tried to tell them about racial profiling, he was told to stick to the case at hand, that he was telling them more than they wanted to know,” asserted Buckman and Loughry in recounting Wilson’s testimony.

Ruff testified he was told to always “look beyond the motor vehicle stop [when it involved] a Black man. However, Ruff did not have a strong interest in criminal enforcement and declined to engage in profiling,” according to the lawyers.

“While on patrol, he often observed troopers [parked] perpendicular to the road ... with the high beams or spot-lights on and trained on the turnpike,” Buckman and Loughry wrote. “He often saw a car pulled onto the side of the road by another trooper, with the occupants out of the car, and could tell from the radio transmissions that the stop had not been called in. Sometimes he would stop to render backup in these situations, only to be waved off ... In some of those situations he would observe a trooper known to engage in profiling pull up to assist and not be waved off.”

In the fall of 1989, after WOR-TV investigative reporter Joe Collum’s Without Just



Without just cause? Joe Collum's 1989 WOR-TV investigative report uncovered massive evidence of black motorists being stalked by New Jersey state troopers.

Driving While Black

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Cause uncovered massive evidence of state police racial profiling on the turnpike, Clinton Pagano, a top state police official, compiled an internal report claiming that “black people of American, Jamaican, and Nigerian background, and Hispanic people ... are the people bringing drugs into and transporting them through New Jersey.” A major portion of Pagano’s report, which wound up in the hands of troopers throughout the state, was devoted to so-called intelligence on Jamaican posses. (Pagano, who served at the discretion of the governor, was replaced in 1991.)

According to Buckman and Loughry, troopers in training were shown a video of Jamaicans that one state police official “admitted was an unsubstantiated and fictionalized presentation intended to impart ... that Jamaican posse members are violent. Without attribution or disclaimer, the ‘training’ film featured scenes from a sensationalized, fictional motion picture entitled ‘The Harder They Come.’”

“One such scene portrayed a Black man slashing another Black man with a knife,” the lawyers wrote. “Other portions of the training video showed ... news footage of political rioting in Kingston [that had] nothing to do with drug trafficking. The video also showed a likeness of a Black man with dreadlocks in his hair wearing Jamaican-like garb followed by shots of the same black man with short, well groomed hair and business attire. The voice-over warned that Jamaican posse members can disguise themselves to be indistinguishable from a professional black man.”

Racial profiling for black “drug couriers” may have resulted in the arrest of another police veteran on the Florida Turnpike. The key evidence in the case against Miami-Dade County police major Aaron Campbell was a videotape of Campbell’s April 9, 1997, encounter with overzealous white sheriff’s deputies. Campbell’s apprehension for resisting arrest and battery of a police officer was shown on national TV. He would later

tell a jury he felt he had been unfairly targeted and stopped by the deputies because he was a black man. The 27-year police veteran maintained that the incident occurred only because the deputies were using a drug-courier profile when they pulled him over for changing lanes without signaling. He said that once they stopped him, the deputies used excessive force, and that he resisted them only in self-defense. A six-member jury convicted Campbell of resisting arrest, but cleared him of a felony charge of using violence.

THE PRACTICE OF RACIAL PROFILING on the New Jersey Turnpike allegedly has been finessed by some inventive troopers. If a vehicle is headed north, the profiler assumes the occupants are Colombian drug dealers ferrying their contraband to New York. If it’s southbound, it contains crack headed for the Carolinas.

Yet even the best racial profilers frequently miss their mark. From 1984 to 1988, Dr. Elmo Randolph, a black dentist from East Orange, New Jersey, who drove a gold-colored BMW, testified on behalf of the 19 blacks that he was stopped by the state police approximately 100 times on the turnpike.

“He was never issued a ticket or a written warning on any of those occasions,” according to the attorneys, who recount the doctor’s travails in their case histories. “While traveling the Turnpike he would see the troopers sitting perpendicular [to the road] in a cutout where Route 80 feeds into the Turnpike ... to observe traffic. After dark, troopers would train their headlights and/or spotlights onto the highway so that they could look into cars.

“Dr. Randolph frequently observed troopers stop black motorists at night using that method. Most of the times that he was stopped, the trooper would obtain his ... credentials and go back to the [cruiser]. He would return shortly with the credentials to the passenger’s side of the vehicle. Dr. Randolph would lower his window to be handed the credentials, and the trooper would ... look around inside his car. He would be allowed to go on his way, after brief questioning, in most of these instances.”

On several of the stops, however, the officers asked Randolph to open the trunk of his car. “The troopers never asked to search his trunk, but rather they asked him to open it or if they could look in ... On one occasion, when he refused to allow the trooper to [look in the trunk], the officer returned to the [cruiser] and sat there with his credentials for 15 or 20 minutes before returning them ... and allowing him to go on his way. Dr. Randolph learned that it was easier to simply allow troopers to look in his trunk than to assert his constitutional rights. He could not afford to be late for his patients.”

Feature

SHE GETS YOUR P.A.I.N.

Nan Goldin Talks Activism, America's Opioid Epidemic, Toxic Philanthropy, and Her Upcoming NYC Exhibition

By Christian Viveros-Fauné

Flashbulb memory. The words came to me on a deserted New York street in March as I waited for an Uber ride to meet Nan Goldin. A term coined by psychologists James Kulik and Roger Brown in 1977 to describe remembering in the wake of collective traumatic events—think the Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations, the mid-air disintegration of the Challenger Space Shuttle, the global infarction produced by 9/11—the idea fits the virtuoso New York image maker like one of her popular collaborations with the streetwear brand Supreme.

The memoirist of several bohemias and multiple generations affected by the twin plagues of AIDS and drug addiction, Goldin's exceptionally vivid snapshots have long crystallized whole eras while keening in accents belonging to, among other dirgeists, Marianne Faithfull and Charles Aznavour. Her images burn with soul-singeing immediacy—those animating her legendary slideshow *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986–2021), which hit the zeitgeist of the 1980s with the strength of a revelation, and newer photos she routinely shuffles into her scored projections (which she calls “films”) and books.

Three of these audiovisual works, along with some 40 photographic prints, will be featured in a museum-size show at Marian Goodman Gallery, opening April 27, her first New York outing since 2016. Their cumulative effect is as stirring as a Joan Didion dispatch, as sweeping as an Andrei Tarkovsky long-take. Just like flashbulb memories—which routinely kick off with the phrase “I remember when”—you can never really get Goldin's pictures out of your head.

I visited Goldin's elegant Clinton Hill walk-up the day *The New York Times* first published the word “coronavarsary.” I was there to talk timely topics: her new exhibition, life during lockdown, toxic philanthropy, and the headlines she has made since beating drugs in 2017 and becoming the leader of an astoundingly effective global anti-addiction movement. The activist group she founded, P.A.I.N. (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now), has drawn a bead on the numbered Swiss bank accounts of pharmaceutical giant Purdue Pharma, along with those of its owners, the billionaire Sackler family, unrepentant profiteers of the Oxycontin scourge. The “most evil family in America”—according to Tennessee Congressman Jim Cooper—is currently mired in bankruptcy court, thanks in no small part to Goldin. Its members stand accused by two dozen U.S. state attor-

neys general of having cravenly fueled a runaway opioid epidemic that the CDC says has caused more than 450,000 deaths since 1999.

Goldin and her team of staunch allies—“There's ten of us, maybe,” she says—have fought with the strength of thousands: They've mobilized public opinion against Purdue and the Sacklers by exposing the rank hypocrisy attendant to the family's seven- and eight-figure gifts to museums, universities, and hospitals. As a consequence, those accepting dirty money have had to return gifts or rename galleries and buildings. P.A.I.N. has protested or won concessions from the Louvre, London's National Portrait Gallery, the Tate, the Serpentine, the Smithsonian, the Guggenheim, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among other institutions.

(Elizabeth A. Sackler, founder of the eponymous center for feminist art at the Brooklyn Museum, has come out publicly against Purdue Pharma; her father, Arthur M. Sackler, died in 1987, before Oxycontin was produced. Goldin's take: “She's not off the hook.” Arthur Sackler developed the firm's marketing prowess for another Purdue Pharma drug, Valium.)

Even in post-George Floyd America, it's rare to see a successful artist like Goldin step into the ring as an activist. Given the potential political and financial conflicts, one can't help but wonder how her activism influences her art. The answer, it turns out, is very much in line with her convictions. After organizing against the opioid epidemic for four years and testifying before Congress last October, she recently told the *New York Post* that she plans to vet which local venue, if any, will receive her upcoming European retrospective. “I told the director [of the National Portrait Gallery in London] that he cannot offer my show to MoMA as long as Leon Black is there,” she said. “How can MoMA stand by Leon Black, a man aligned with Jeffrey Epstein, who was responsible for the sex trafficking of teenage girls?”

For those avoiding business and culture news during lockdown, Leon Black is the co-founder and ex-CEO of Apollo Global Management. He was forced to relinquish his position as CEO in January after it was revealed that he paid sex offender Jeffrey Epstein \$158 million, effectively bankrolling his activities after he pled guilty to soliciting prostitution from a minor in 2008. In March, hundreds of art world notables—among them artists Ai Weiwei, Nicole Eisenman, and Goldin—posed a troubling question: How is it that Black was forced to



“Best friends going out, Boston” (1973)

Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman gallery

step down from one of the world's largest private equity firms yet remains chairman of the board of the Museum of Modern Art?

“I've written statements demanding Leon Black step down,” Goldin says to me, leaning back on a white ottoman while drawing on the first of umpteen cigarettes. “Museums are supposed to be a salvation from all of this corruption, they're supposed to be repositories of learning and beauty, places where you go to escape the horrors of the world. They're not supposed to be deeply ingrained with a den of thieves. I would love to show at MoMA, but you have to stick to your ethics.”

Sixty-seven years old and slight of build, the legendarily empathetic Goldin routinely shows flashes of steel: She looks like she could crush, or at least properly shame, a posse of Proud Boys if roused to do so. The idea comes to mind as she scrutinizes New York's increasingly conservative museum environment. “That's the problem with

showing in a New York museum right now,” Goldin intones from behind a puff of smoke. “None of them are very clean, to say the least. I guess the Whitney has a little better reputation right now, but only because they fired Kanders.”

The embodiment of the museum world's previous boldface adventure in toxic philanthropy, Warren Kanders served as vice chairman of the Whitney Museum of American Art until 2019. He resigned after months of protests over his ownership of Safariland, a manufacturer of law enforcement supplies that includes tear-gas grenades; these were used by the Trump administration to repel migrants at the U.S.–Mexico border, and later against Black Lives Matter protesters. (Kanders divested himself of the parts of his company producing “crowd-control solutions” in June 2020, less than a year after leaving the Whitney; on March 26, Leon Black told MoMA that he would not stand for reelection as chairman

of the board in June.)

On the eve of the fourth anniversary of her newfound sobriety, Goldin resembles what she has become: a survivor who is also a renewed artistic and activist dynamo. Quick-eyed under a ginger top, she wears her resolve confidently, with an honesty that is alternately jagged and vulnerable. Her forthrightness, and no small amount of self-deprecation, is reflected in two of her more visible tattoos: her right forearm proclaims, “I’m sorry” in crayon colors; her left reads, “Invisible,” which she definitively is not.

“For me, being in quarantine is not so different than the last 20 years of my life,” she says, after telling me that the *Village Voice* was the first publication to write about her work, in 1983. (“It was just a tiny little blurb by J. Hoberman,” she adds impishly, “but I was more thrilled by that than I was by any long piece since.”)

“I was only out of rehab for a couple of years before the lockdown started,” Goldin says, while introducing her friend Thora Siemsen, the trans woman writer who became her live-in companion during the COVID quarantine. “She came to interview me and never left.” Goldin credits Siemsen for inspiring her to pick up her camera again. “Fortunately, she came to stay and now lives here, otherwise I would have gone insane.

“I’ve been very prolific during quarantine,” Goldin explains, as she torches another American Spirit Orange. “I started taking pictures again, which I hadn’t done in a long time. P.A.I.N. raised money for ourselves and other charities: I’ve done six major print sales since the pandemic started. We’re also part of another group called Oxyjustice, which helps opioid victims file claims against Purdue Pharma; we’re following the Sacklers in bankruptcy court right now. There were also congressional hearings, you might want to watch those....”

Goldin’s relationship with the Sacklers and Oxycontin, their pharmaceutical hellspawn, began in 2000 after she “fell into a swimming pool in India and broke every bone in [her] wrist.” She was prescribed Oxycontin after surgery; then again in 2014 following a second operation. Her experiences with heroin in the 1970s and ’80s, she says, left her unprepared for OxyContin’s dangers. Goldin has spoken candidly about the lure of illegal drugs—she “dreamed of being a junkie” in her teens and later acknowledged her difficulties “getting off drugs and staying off drugs”—but few things readied her for the grip of prescription Oxycontin.

“They sent me to a pain clinic and they put me on Oxy. They kept prescribing it and telling me, ‘You can’t get addicted because you’re in pain.’ They actually told me that!” For emphasis, she adds a clincher: “It’s basically a bag of dope in a pill.”

Three pills a day turned into 18. Goldin jumped from purveyor to purveyor: first in Berlin, then in New York, where she found a dealer who “never ran out and delivered 24/7.” “I got a private endowment and spent it all,” she says, while underscoring how “all work, all friendships, all news took

place on my bed.” She adds, “Like all opiate addicts, my crippling fear of withdrawal was my guiding force.” Eventually, Goldin ran out of money and “ended up snorting Fentanyl,” which led to an overdose. As shadows invade the room, one thing becomes abundantly clear: The strength of her resolve manifests in direct proportion to the narrowness of her escape.

Coming out of treatment months later in suburban Massachusetts, Goldin began the tough process of reengaging with the world

“They sent me to a pain clinic and put me on Oxy. They kept prescribing it and telling me, ‘You can’t get addicted because you’re in pain.’ They actually told me that!”

on its own terms. She knew nothing of the opioid crisis, she says, “because I was having my own opioid crisis.” Not long after rehab she came across “The Family that Built an Empire of Pain,” Patrick Radden Keefe’s

barnburner of an article about the Sacklers, published in *The New Yorker* in October 2017. The essay’s subhead identifies a family of “modern Medicis” who made billions from the suffering of “millions of addicts.”

“Patrick’s book is coming out in April,” she says, pointing to an open copy of Radden Keefe’s article on her coffee table (the upcoming book is titled *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty*). “That piece is my bible,” Goldin explains. “I read it when I was on my way to Brazil to give a talk. I got so upset. I told myself: I’m going after them and their museums, that’s where they live, that’s what they care about. Sometimes you have these resolutions and you never go through with them. But when I got to Brazil I voiced that resolution out loud to a streaming audience of six thousand people. So then I had to do it. Once you make it public, you have to do it.”

Back in New York, the editor of *Artforum* got in touch. Goldin agreed to contribute a “letter” to the January 2018 issue. The missive, equal parts denunciation and trench confession, begins with the sentence: “I survived the opioid crisis.” It ends with a demand that the Sacklers and Purdue Pharma be held accountable and be forced to “use their fortune to fund addiction treatment and education.” Accompanying the article are two dozen photographs; among other things, they illustrate Goldin’s relationship to Oxy in ways painfully personal and trenchantly political.

“We published portraits of me high,” Goldin reveals with a sideways smile. “I’m high in all of them. The photos show the drugs, they show the Sackler-branded mu-

seums, they show their names all over them. After the article was published I decided to start P.A.I.N. It began with friends and assistants and then it just grew.”

According to a recent tweet from Radden Keefe, the powerful Sackler clan appears eternally “poised to get a release from liability from any misconduct,” raising the specter of justice miscarrying. Perhaps the Sacklers—millionaires who became billionaires by causing a national tragedy—are too big to be punished?

When I ask Goldin what she wants to see happen to the Sacklers, she answers firmly: “I don’t want their name on anything, except the Sackler Act [the proposed bill introduced by House Democrats in March would prevent the Sacklers from evading lawsuits and shielding their assets]. We do want all their money, we want it to go to the communities they’ve devastated. We want transparency, we want their documents released, we want them to face the same jail time as El Chapo or at least small-time dealers... and we don’t want them walking away with immunity.”

Goldin’s remarkable anti-Big Pharma campaign is not her first stab at political activism. In 1989, after emerging sober from a lost weekend that lasted nearly a decade, she curated *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* at the Manhattan venue Artists Space. The show was pivotal in the history of New York art and AIDS advocacy. It included work by, among others, Kiki Smith, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, and Peter Hujar, who had died of the disease in 1987. Also included in the exhibition catalog was a searing essay written by David Wojnarowicz, downtown’s own

“My horse Roma, outside Luxor, Egypt” (2003)



Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman gallery



"Salome, Carmelo Bene," still from "Sirens" (2019-20)

Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman gallery

Rimbaud. Titled "Post Cards from America: X-Rays from Hell," it read in part: "when I was told that I'd contracted this virus it didn't take me long to realize that I'd contracted a diseased society as well."

Wojnarowicz died of AIDS in 1992. The elegiac note his death and that of others sounded has helped coalesce the elements that make up Goldin's movable celebration of life in diseased America: her early bout with drugs, photographs from the 1970s and '80s, the *Witnesses* show, her activism with AIDS advocacy group Act Up (which she describes as "close . . . but not close enough") and P.A.I.N., and the work she has

prepared for her upcoming exhibition at Marian Goodman. As I consider the requiem-like power of Goldin's oeuvre—the photos, the slideshows, the books, the tunes she borrows to score different eras—I'm reminded of the title of a fearsome print by Francisco Goya: *Great deeds against the dead*.

"I invited 12 friends to do that show," Goldin says ruefully about the *Witnesses* exhibition, "many of whom are now dead." Minutes later, as we discuss one of the slideshow works that will go on view at Marian Goodman—it stars trans performers she befriended and photographed in cities such as

Boston, New York, Berlin, Manila, and Bangkok—she delivers herself of what can only be called a eulogy.

"I was standing on Second Avenue and 2nd Street one night three years ago and I heard someone call my name: 'Nancy'—because that was my name in the 1970s before I moved to New York. And it was one of the queens I'd lived with in Boston 40 years ago. She is the star of the black and white photos and the only one left alive of all the kids in the slideshow. It was AIDS, almost entirely AIDS."

Titled *The Other Side* (1994-2021), the slideshow in question contains old and new images that the artist weaves into an ongoing, unspooling work whose genesis casts back nearly three decades. First published in 1993, *The Other Side* is also a book. Reedited in an extended version in 2019 by the German publisher Steidl, it reveals Goldin's penchant for updating projects others might consider finalized. About her best-known work, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, the artist once said that she considered it to be her "*Leaves of Grass*, constantly updated and revised."

"I re-edited *The Other Side* last year and included a whole new chapter. I'm not planning to touch *Memory Lost*," she says about the central work at Marian Goodman. "For me, *Memory Lost* is the most important thing I've done since *The Ballad*."

A 24-minute summa on the lure and depths of addiction in projected film and slides, *Memory Lost* (2019) is, put cinematically, Goldin's *Stalker*. Like Tarkovsky's moody movie, it describes, in word and image, a "Zone" full of wonder and untold dangers; like *Stalker's* foretelling of the Chernobyl disaster, it also portrays 20th-century drug dependency in ways that anticipated the opioid addiction of the 21st. Goldin's image continuum—it includes

snaps of almost all of yesterday's parties interlaced with crepuscular landscapes—is also punctuated by taped conversations featuring voices belonging to the artist and her friends. "I wouldn't leave my house," one voice says, "the beautiful leaves turning; it was, like, mocking me."

Memory Lost is dedicated to P.A.I.N., "my group fighting the pharmaceutical companies whose inhuman greed ignited the opioid crisis," as well as to "all the people in the photos who sustained me through my years of addiction." The work earns those dedications. In the words of one of Goldin's voices—the philosopher Gabor Maté—it represents addiction as "totally sane, totally desirable, totally human."

If *Memory Lost* is the show's masterwork, its shorter companion film, *Sirens* (2019-2020) is, as Goldin puts it, "an accompaniment," but no less mesmerizing for that. It is composed entirely of found footage, much of it featuring Donyale Luna, the world's first Black supermodel. Forty years dead from a heroin overdose, Luna inspired Goldin after she saw her in the 1972 Italian film *Salome*. "I could tell Donyale was really high," Goldin says, "so I decided to make something about that euphoria."

"*Memory Lost* is about the darkness of addiction," Goldin continues, "and *Sirens* is about the ecstasy of being high, so they're complementary pieces. *Sirens* was fun to make and *Memory Lost* was absolutely heartbreaking."

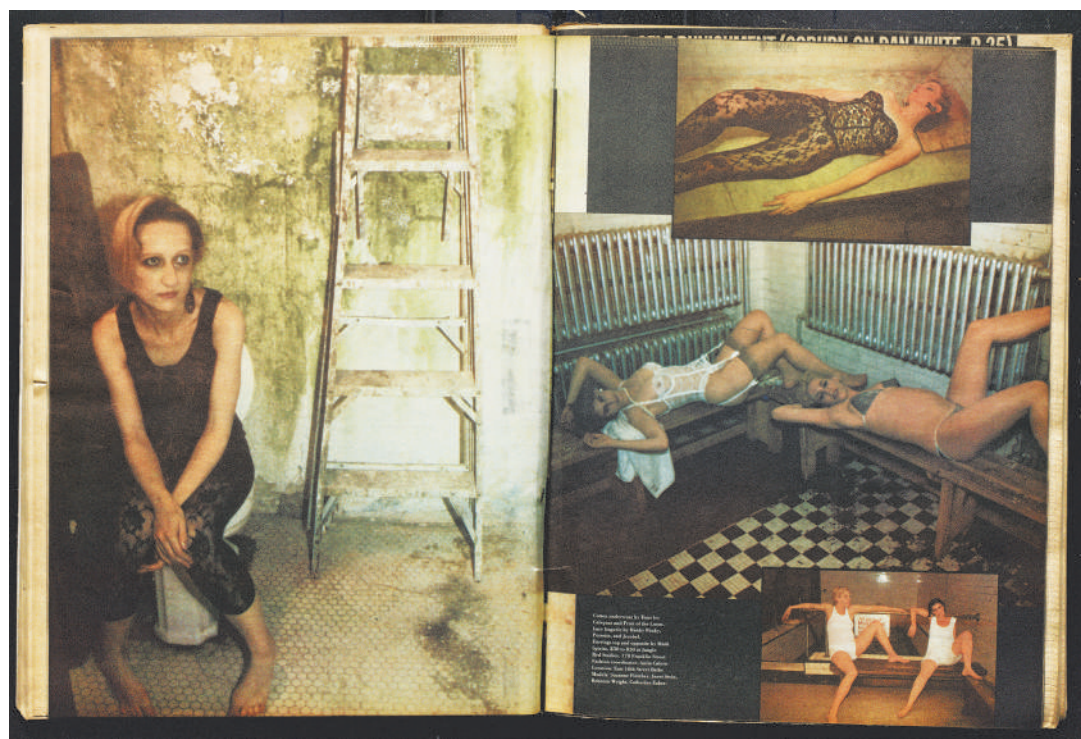
As the afternoon draws down, I'm tempted to wind up all the things that make Goldin's images and activism and biography not just fun or tragic or heartbreaking but instantaneously memorable, but I can't—there isn't a nutshell that does it justice. The truth is that it's not enough to say that Goldin is a great artist. Her work is the reason the camera was invented. ▣

From the Archives



CONTROVERSIAL ENOUGH

In 1985 the *Voice* began a short-lived fashion insert called *VIEW* (which became *Vue* for the remaining five issues in 1986). The art director, Yolanda Cuomo, wanted it to be as much about photography as fashion. When Goldin delivered her pictures of women in the Russian baths on 10th Street, the publisher was worried that the photos were "really controversial." Cuomo said, "Look, if the *Voice* can't do controversy, who can?" The pictures ran.



RESTARTING THE PRESSES

From Lou Reed to *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*—the *Voice* in America's Consciousness

By R.C. Baker

Hello. Back in September 2017, I announced on these pages that we were closing up shop on the *Village Voice* print edition. It was a shame, I told our then owner, because the *Voice* had been calling BS on Donald Trump since the late '70s—our historical insights might've helped the nation better understand the 45th president's grifter instincts.

Well, it turns out that, like Joe Biden, we just needed a few years off—and at 66 years old, we're still a decade younger than the 46th commander in chief. Besides, we never completely left—we've been showcasing highlights from the *Voice* archives on our website all along, and will continue doing so.

But print? In 2021?

Sure—why not? This is New York, a town where few pleasures are sweeter than sitting in a café or on a park bench with a cup of king-hell coffee and a sheaf of prose that sets the mind to musing—and also rubs off on your fingers.



In January of 1955, before this paper even existed, one of its most prominent future contributors wrote a letter to a one-year-old men's magazine: "As a writer, I peruse some fifty odd magazines each month and *Playboy* is one of the finest. I read every single story. [Signed] Fred W. McDarrah, NY, NY."

Even then, *Playboy*—that pioneering arbiter of all things sybaritic—had a penchant for pulling the pipe out of its editorial "we" mouth to deliver a bit of snark: "Didn't know there were that many odd magazines being published, Fred." But what neither slick publication nor hopeful writer knew then was that a sui generis newspaper was coalescing from the free spirits of Greenwich Village. This new tabloid would certainly have its odd aspects, but it would ultimately be more like another great American creation: jazz. There might not be a lot of profit in this new venture, but it was going to be adventurous, original, soaring—when not guttural—and the province of highly dedicated, skilled, innovative, and provocative practitioners. Three World War II vets bankrolled it—novelist Norman Mailer, psychotherapist Ed Fancher, and a struggling writer named Dan Wolf, who divined the zeitgeist of the Eisenhower years in a phrase that still resonates today: "The vulgarities of McCarthyism had withered the possibilities of a true dialogue between people."

Indeed, the *Voice* would begin a dialogue with America that has never abated. Typically pugnacious, Mailer's byline first appeared in 1956, in "QUICKLY—a column for slow readers." A writer at the *New York Daily News* drolly responded, "In his new column in the *Village Voice*, Norman Mailer



I read the news today, oh boy! Abe Weissman is getting a new job.

Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video

calls Hemingway a 'windy' writer. Mailer's first novel was almost 700 pages."

Chicago-based *Playboy* couldn't get enough of what it termed, in the late 1950s, "the unofficial organ of Greenwich Village," noting with approval that it was read by "the beatnik set." And although he wasn't yet on the masthead, by early 1960 McDarrah was placing ads in the *Voice* for his venture capitalizing on the county's alternating fascination with and revulsion at a nascent counterculture: His "Rent Genuine Beatniks" service promised "Badly Groomed But Brilliant" raconteurs of either sex.

McDarrah would eventually appear on the masthead in 1962, as "Staff Photographer." Over the decades, it would become more accurate to say, "world-famous photographer."

But there was someone unknown on that first masthead who was destined for fame: Nell Blaine, listed as "Art and Production."

Blaine began a mutually beneficial tradition at the paper: artists of all stripes doing paste-up as their day job. It was Blaine who designed the elegant logo gracing the first issue, one that appeared on newsstands across the city (and eventually around the world) every week until a more modern, sans-serif logo replaced it in 1969. Blaine was a committed artist, and in 1959 she traveled to Greece to paint, where she contracted polio on the island of Mykonos. After months in an iron lung and years of recuperation, she taught herself to paint with her left hand, creating dynamic canvases that are now in the Met, the Whitney, and other major museums.

Digging into numerous newspaper archives from before 1955 reveals no hits on the search term "Village Voice." But later in the decade, its alliterative moniker, if not its ethos, could be found in America's heart-

of Scotch. Chill, drink, then put out several more editions."

Once the Sixties shifted into high gear, the *Voice* was known as much by its readership as by its writers. In 1965, photographer Bob Adelman followed **Andy Warhol** around town, snapping the Pop maestro buying a *Voice* from an overflowing newsstand and later reading it on the fire escape of his Silver Factory. (When we printed the photo as a spread in the February 22, 2012, issue, we got the date wrong in the caption. Warhol was actually reading the June 24, 1965, edition of the paper.)

Conservative commentator **William F. Buckley** was also keeping an eye on his ideological opposite. In one of his syndicated columns, from February 1968, he quipped, "The Village Voice is a little New York journal which energetically does its iconoclastic push-ups...." He went on to dismiss it as

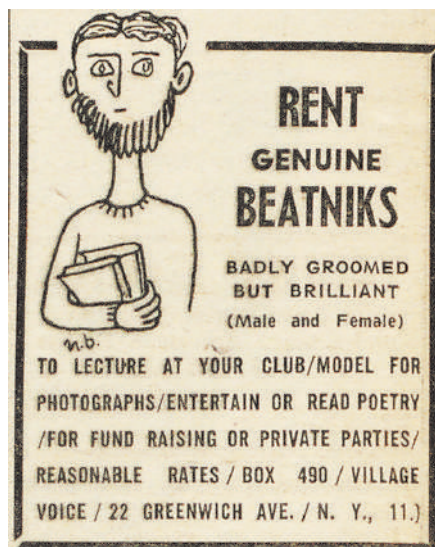
land. In 1957, a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, daily reported that a local trailer park had its own newspaper, *The Village Voice*. By 1966, a women's club's newsletter in Cincinnati had also taken up the name. Where was a slick New York copyright lawyer when you needed one? In the 1960s and '70s, singing groups also took notice, such as the "Village Voices," 12 students from Utah State University who were "ready to share their bright, springy style with the soldiers stationed around the Caribbean."

"Bright" and "springy" were perhaps not the first notions that leapt to the minds of *Voice* readers back in its hometown. A cocktail, though.... In 1963, *Esquire* magazine came up with "All the News That's Fit to Drink," imagining potables for newspapers ranging from the *Chicago Sun-Times* to the *Atlanta Constitution*. For the *Voice*, they envisioned "a Martini with gin and dry vermouth, but make it seven to one. Add a dash

"the critic did Thomas Hardy, commenting that his work was the village atheist talking to the village idiot." And yet Buckley, who began publishing his own *National Review* a month after that inaugural *Voice* in 1955, couldn't resist expounding on a Jack Newfield essay in the *Voice* that took a deep dive into the political calculations of Robert F. Kennedy, speculating on whether RFK, certainly one of Buckley's last choices, would be able to ride the rising youth vote into the White House in November. Or would a *Voice* endorsement instead land Kennedy in the "Freak House"?

No one can ever know, since a few months later Bobby Kennedy, along with Martin Luther King Jr., was fresh in his grave, and the *Voice* printed a McDarrah photo of RFK that captured the pathos of a nation losing its way.

That same year, four chums in director Sidney Lumet's *Bye Bye Braverman* set out



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From the February 10, 1960, *Voice*.



Voice: Fred W. McDarrah
NELL BLAINE'S landscapes, still lifes, and portraits will be exhibited through Saturday, April 23, at the Poindexter Gallery. As its first staff artist, Miss Blaine designed The Village Voice's logo and the original format. She was an eminent student of Hans Hofmann, and launched Larry Rivers on his career.

Nell Blaine photographed by Fred McDarrah; from the February 10, 1960, *Voice*.



Bolivia: Guerrilla in Custody - page 5

the village **Voice** 15c

Two Minutes to Midnight: The Very Last Harrah

The Stone's at the Bottom of the Hill

The June 13, 1968, *Voice*.

to attend the Brooklyn funeral of a writer friend. They circle Sheridan Square in a red Volkswagen Bug, twice passing the huge sign, mimicking Blaine's logo, for the *Voice*'s offices. The quartet squabbles among themselves, gets lost, and ends up attending the wrong funeral. Lumet, who grew up on the Lower East Side, was a fan of his local paper, featuring it in a number of his films. Was this a metaphor for the well-known infighting among *Voice* writers?

The *Voice* veteran put it succinctly, "Standing naked in public is probably the easiest way to become famous."

A few years later, **John Lennon and Yoko Ono** wrote an expletive-not-deleted missive to the editor in answer to a letter published in the *Voice* a week earlier, in which a reader dismissed Yoko as a "semi-failed and rather incompetent 'avant-garde' artist who married a man rich enough to afford her expensive filming equipment."

Over the next month, letters appeared in the paper by turns decrying and defending the star couple, and the contretemps spilled onto a **Dick Cavett episode** in September 1971. An audience member queried guests John and Yoko: "You wrote a letter to the *Voice* in defense of Yoko as an artist ... It was a rather strong letter, and I wondered if you've regretted it since, especially in the light of the strong reaction that it has provoked."

John leapt to his wife's defense again: "I don't mind if a few fat liberals got excited about my letter.... One of the replies to the letter I wrote was, 'It's nice to see how well John and Yoko take to criticism.' The letter wasn't criticism.... He's never seen her work, read her books, or seen any of our films.... I'm not an intellectual. I'm not articulate. I'm working class, and I use few words. I use the words that the people around me used when I was a child. I talk like that. So if somebody's going to say a lot of [deleted by broadcasters], I'll say a lot of [deleted]. It's as simple as that." [Applause.]

A year later, the blaxploitation hit *Superfly* employed a copy of the *Voice* to more pragmatic ends. During the stylish montage sequence of drug dealers processing and then delivering their wares to their ever-higher clients—set to Curtis Mayfield's bopping "Pusherman"—one dealer, striding up the subway steps, uses a folded *Village Voice* to conceal his key of cocaine from prying eyes. Sharp viewers might've spied one cover subject—that happiest of hookers, Xaviera Hollander.

In occasional issues ranging from September 1973 through February 1975, artist **Adrian Piper** bought ad space in the *Voice* as a component of her "Mythic Being" project, in which she asked, in part, "What would happen if there was a being who had exactly

The Turd Degree

Dear Sir:

To Shithouse Carlton ("Yoko No No," *Voice* letters, August 19)—listen you tight mouthed english shit liberal, Yoko had her leather hot-pants since before "Give Peace a Chance." So we sang "All You Need Is Love," "Give Peace a Chance;" so fucking what, it's not inconsistent as far as we're concerned. Yoko is still a peacenik"; maybe I/we have radicalized some—it's our fucking life you turd. We make good films and it has nothing to do with our names. Amos and Jonas are very old dear friends of Yoko's—they dug her work then, and they do now, so put your little green prick back in your mouth and ring your mummy and daddy and shout at them you no talent Anglo turd. If you can read, read "Grapefruit" (Yoko's book) and come back in a few years. By the way—have you seen any of our films you fascist cunt. I bet you're a big *Godard* fan (fuck you). Power to the People.

—John & Yoko Lennon
New York City

From the August 26, 1971, *Voice*.



Hentoff: The Politics of Privacy—p. 29

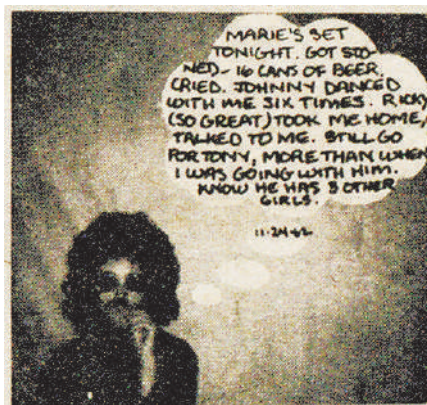
the village **VOICE** 20c

WBAL tapes: The jailing of Goodman

You should live and be well

Up the gangplank: methadone ahoy!

As seen in *Superfly*: the March 9, 1972, issue of the *Voice*.



Adrian Piper's ads in the *Voice* are now part of MoMA's permanent collection. From the December 2, 1974, issue.

my history, only a completely different visual appearance to the rest of society?" Seventeen tearsheets from the *Voice* have found their way into the collection of the **Museum of Modern Art**, yellowed newspaper capturing an art world in constant flux.

In 1975, Sidney Lumet again turned to the *Voice* for inspiration, this time not to get exterior shots of the offices but as background fodder for *Dog Day Afternoon*, which was based on a real-life event. As investigative journalist Arthur Bell wrote in the August 30, 1972, issue of the *Voice*, he had received a message the week before that "a couple of homosexuals are holding up a bank in Brooklyn and they're holding people hostages." He wrote that he tracked down the Chase branch's phone number, and called: "Hello, this is Arthur Bell from The Village Voice. Can you tell me what's happening?" The voice at the other end replied, "Arthur, am I glad it's you. This is Littlejohn." "Littlejohn, what the hell are you doing down there?" "I'm one of the robbers." "Jesus Christ!" Bell knew the perp from meetings of the Gay Activists Alliance and, a dogged reporter, he covered all the angles: Was it a heist to pay for a sex change operation for John "Littlejohn Basso" Wojtowicz's lover, or just a standard-issue mob heist? Bell chose the mob angle, pinning it on the Gambino crime family. Lumet, though, knew which would make for a better screenplay.

In the spring of 1976, the *Voice* made headlines across the nation when we published the Pike Papers, an exposé of "dangerous government adventures." Leaked by journalist **Daniel Schorr**, the disclosures recalled the battle between the federal government and whistle-blowers during the Pentagon Papers controversy a few years earlier. Needless to say, the *Voice* did not endeavor itself to the powers that be.

Two years later, it seemed that **Lou Reed** was no happier with the *Voice* than ex-president Gerald Ford had been. On his *Take No Prisoners* live album, the acerbic rocker launched into a rant about the Consumer Guide feature: "Critics—what does Robert Christgau do in bed? You know, is he a toe fucker? Man ... Christgau's like an anal retentive. Nice little boxes. B+. Can you imagine workin' for a fucking year and you got a B+ [for *Street Hassle*] from an asshole in the *Village Voice*?" [Audience cheering and applause]

Shortly thereafter, Christgau rated *Prisoners*—"essentially a comedy album"—a C+, and graciously thanked Lou "for pronouncing my name right."

Perhaps channeling Reed's sardonicism, the *Voice* was voted #67 in a "BOTTOM 100" readers' poll in the June 1979 issue of *Punk* magazine. For the record, "Disco" topped that particular chart.

Also that year, the *Voice* was there firstest with the mostest to cover the scion of an outer-borough real-estate-empire family who already had a rep for shady dealings and mendacious boasting.

In 1981, the *Voice* was again in national news, this time for coming in second—but then, first—for the **Pulitzer Prize**. Papers across the country initially reported on the *Washington Post* winning for a feature on an

8-year-old heroin addict—a tale that turned out to be fabricated. Once informed, the Pulitzer committee awarded the prize to Teresa Carpenter, for her compelling story on the life and death of Playmate and budding actress Dorothy Stratten. (In 1983, Bob Fosse adapted Carpenter’s feature for his movie *Star 80*.)

Lumet was back on the *Voice* beat again with his 1982 *Deathtrap*. Christopher Reeve, looking to avoid the typecasting that doomed an earlier actor too closely identified with Superman, plays a conniving, murderous wannabe playwright who tells his lover, portrayed by Michael Caine, that it is basically greed, lust, duplicitousness, and power that make life—and Broadway plays—go around: “Come on, don’t be such an old Nellie. I mean just look around you, Jesus Christ, you don’t have to read *Hustler*, you know, just read, uh, *Village Voice*.”

Such cynicism was simpatico with Reagan’s dominance of a decade that would prove a forerunner of our current “own the libs” moment. In 1983, *Bloom County* cartoonist Berke Breathed sent Milo and his grandfather, The Major, out to hunt liberals: “Whadya use for bait?” “A back issue of the *Village Voice*.” In the last panel they carry away their bound quarry, who pleads, “Couldn’t I just read the ‘Feiffer’ cartoon?”

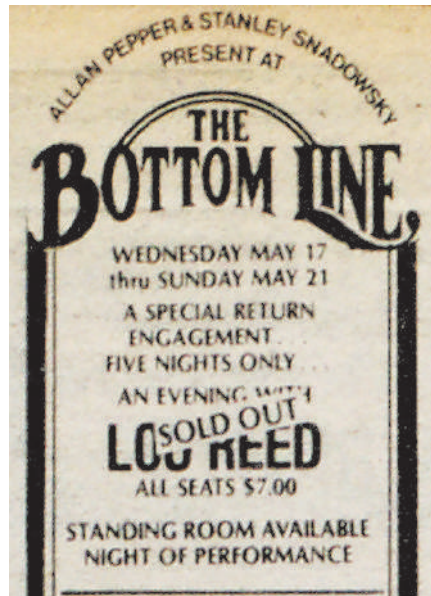
In that same year’s iconic film *The Big Chill*, Jeff Goldblum sports a *Voice* T-shirt as he despairs over a journalistic profession he feels cares most about sensationalism, dieting recommendations, and self-promotion: “Don’t knock rationalization—where would we be without it? I don’t know anyone that doesn’t get through the day without two or three juicy rationalizations. They’re more important than sex.”

Of course by the ‘80s, many people were saying that the *Voice* was losing influence (as others had already said in the ‘60s and ‘70s). But U2 frontman Bono was having none of it. In 1987, as he accepted the Album of the Year Grammy for *The Joshua Tree*, the singer intoned, “Soul music, that’s what U2 wanted to make,” adding that without soul, performers “like Bruce Springsteen would be nothing more than a great storyteller, but he’s much more than that. Without it, U2 would probably be getting better reviews in the *Village Voice*. [Audience laughter] That’s a joke. Sometimes they don’t understand.”

Sashaying into the ‘90s, Madonna was causing outrage with her metal-bound *Sex* book. Gossip columnist Michael Musto was a Madonna fan, and decided to go full monty for the sincerest form of flattery.

A year later, *Esquire* magazine tapped Musto to demystify “the strange circumstances that catapult mere non-achieving humans into overweening celebrities.” The *Voice* veteran put it succinctly, “Standing naked in public is probably the easiest way to become famous.”

And there was *Playboy* again, in its Baseball preview special, singling out the *Voice* for the **Best Headline** award, one which assessed both local teams’ chances in 1992: **THEY’RE HERE, THEY SUCK, GET USED TO IT.** (The Mets ended that benighted year 70–92, and, like the Yanks at 76–86, landed fifth in their division.)



Lou Reed sold out the *Bottom Line* and recorded a live album back in May 1978. Robert Christgau didn’t think much of the disc. From the May 22, 1978, *Voice*.



January 1979: Wayne Barrett was already digging into the Trump family’s sleazy real estate dealings. It only got worse.



November 5, 1980: A tragic story leads to a Pulitzer Prize for the *Voice*.

The ‘90s was just another decade that the *Voice* had plenty of detractors. Even *Mystery Science Theater 3000* took a shot at the paper, when the crew deconstructed the 1964 Ann-Margaret vehicle, *Kitten With a Whip*. As the camera pans across newspapers scattered over a suburban front lawn, Crow T. Robot quips, “Ah, nobody reads the *Voice* anymore.”

Seinfeld, too, was questioning the *Voice*’s point of view. In one episode, the gang separately attends a screening of *Rochelle, Rochelle* (a recurring joke in the series, an unseen movie reminiscent of the soft-core porn flick *Emmanuelle*), each not knowing the other is there until they hear each other groaning about the movie, with Elaine summing it up—“Does this movie stink or what?”—and Jerry concluding, “Let’s get outta here.” The voiceover for the trailer before the movie had declaimed, “The *Village Voice* called the film a masterpiece.”

Not everyone, however, felt the *Voice* was off the mark. In 1994, **Quentin Tarantino**, still basking in *Pulp Fiction*’s win at Cannes, told Charlie Rose that, contrary to press speculation, his youthful job at a video store had not been his “... film school. It was kind of—a closer equivalent would be—it was like my *Village Voice*. And I got to be J. Hoberman. I got to be Andrew Sarris at the store ... putting films in people’s hands and arguing my points of why this movie was good or why that movie was bad.”

Another behemoth of pop culture, *Sex and the City*, was one TV series that couldn’t avoid its hometown paper. In a 1998 episode, “Three’s a Crowd,” Carrie opens a red *Voice* box and pulls out a paper while the voiceover intones, “But the bigger question remained, if Charlotte was actually considering a threesome, who wasn’t? The *Village Voice* had more ads looking for threesomes than it did for small rat-infested studios running for \$1,000 a month. But who actually answered these ads?”

The Aughts brought *The Devil Wears Prada*, in which Anne Hathaway’s character shucks fashion world sophistry in favor of resolute journalism at a downtown paper. As the *Wall Street Journal* put it in their review, “Andy wants to write about serious things, and she is dressed for success—but

success as a journalist at, say, the *Village Voice*; her sensible shoes, skirt and sweater bespeak her cluelessness about haute couture.”

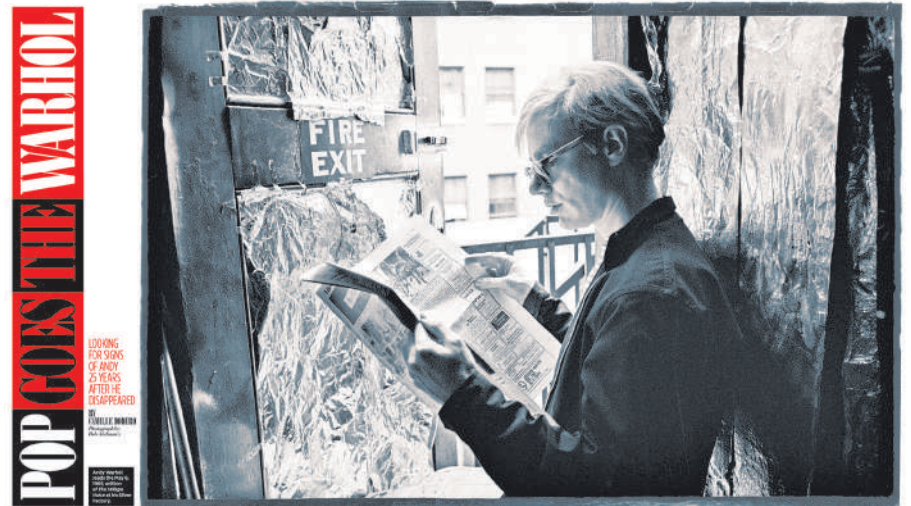
When Julie Delpy directed and starred in *2 Days in New York*, her search for accurate locations brought the film crew to the *Voice*’s offices, which were then at 36 Cooper Square. As the paper’s review of the movie points out, Delpy and her co-star, Chris Rock, “meet cute in the offices of the *Village Voice*.” Despite the onscreen love, Nick Pinkerton’s coverage pulled no punches in assessing Delpy’s attempt to evoke life’s innate messiness: “If life is a jumble, that doesn’t mean art necessarily should be.”

In 2017, Zoey, on *Blackish*, is wondering if she should go to NYU; her father tries to discourage her from leaving L.A. with a homemade snowball, warning, “They throw snowballs at your face. If this was Brooklyn it would have been tires.” However, little sis Diane (a precocious fan of SATC), pumps for the big Apple: “There’s a magic in New York. Like, walking out of your building in a strappy Manolo, hailing a cab, covering your hair from the rain with the *Village Voice*.”

Well, 2017 hadn’t exactly been magical for the *Voice*. In fact, WBAI’s **Peter Bochan** included the paper in the obit section of his annual aural mashup, *Short Cuts*. Halfway through, we hear **Lenny Bruce** telling an audience, “This is a newspaper I’m reading. It’s brilliant. It’s called the *Village Voice*, and it has a very brilliant editorial staff, plus some very erudite contributors. Let’s see, we’ve got Nat Hentoff...” You can just picture the legendary comic turning the pages of one of those early *Voice* editions.

It’s a bit of serendipity that local radio fixture Bochan found a clip of Bruce to bid the *Voice* farewell, since, over the past few years, actor Luke Kirby has been nigh-resurrecting the outlaw comedian on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

Fans of the wildly successful Amazon comedy/drama/occasional Busby-Berkley-like phantasmagoria are probably aware that Abe Weissman, father of rising stand-up star Mrs. Maisel, will have a new job in Season 4. His upcoming gig was foreshad-



In the ‘60s you could judge a paper by who read it: Andy Warhol peruses the June 24, 1965, issue of the *Voice*. This spread is from the February, 22, 2012, issue, which featured an overview of Andy’s life and achievements 25 years after his death.

owed late in Season 3 when, after a midlife crisis has driven him from academia to search for his youthful activist roots, he writes a freelance article for *The New York Times* and later discovers that his daughter is supplementing her comedy income by doing commercials, rehearsing one for right-wing, anti-Semitic demagogue Phyllis Schafly. Midge has no idea who Schafly is—"It's a paycheck." Abe sighs, and responds, "If you're going to have a voice, you better be careful what that voice says."

Fast-forward to the season finale: In one scene, Abe, strolling through the theater district, is pelted with tomatoes by the irate subject of his *Times* piece. Back home, still in his splattered suit, Abe tells his wife, Rose, how thrilled he was at the reaction—"My words incited theater people—people who make a living sitting down. It incited them to get up and commit an act of physical violence.... The written word—it's going to change the world."

Indeed, in the season's penultimate scene, Abe gets a phone call in a house full of family: "Hello? Yeah from where? The village what? I can't hear you—I live in a lunatic asylum." Cut to the foyer, where Midge is preparing to leave for a European tour. Abe strides in as if across cloud nine: "That was someone from the *Village Voice*." Rose: "What?" Abe: "It's a newspaper." Rose: "We don't need a subscription." Abe: "They were not selling subscriptions! They want *me* to be their theater critic!"

For the Maisel bunch, it's 1960—they don't know the triumphs and tragedies yet to come.

For us, it's 2021, and although Donald Trump has been demoted from POTUS to poster boy for white supremacy, he and his most extreme followers remain a clear and present danger to democracy. And I still have faith in the *Voice* to fight on the side of our better angels. In fact, I never lost it, and although my education in Catholicism has come mostly through art history studies, I know from proofing decades of *Voice* Bulletin Board pages that St. Jude can bring the heavy intercession just when you need it most. So in that "last" issue, back in 2017, I bought a classified ad similar to so many I'd seen over the years:

Notices

**THANK
YOU
St.
Jude**
for these first
62 years!
—VV

The wording lets you know that I just knew the paper would have a second act. You're holding it in your hands.

Midge's

Madonna Louise Musto

Dear Humous,
I like my penis. And my penis
likes my left nipple. But my
penis and my right nipple don't
get along very well, especially
when my finger's in my butt. My
penis is like my fourth leg. My
third leg is my bellybutton — an
outie that protrudes so far it's a
wonder my penis isn't jealous of
it. With four legs, I kinda look
like a horse, and since I'm
definitely hung like one, sex
with another horse seems al-
most natural. I wish someone
would get rid of this dog between
my legs. Can you help me?

love, Pita

VOICE November 10, 1992

A shortcut to fame: Michael Musto does not let it all hang out in the November 10, 1992, issue of the *Voice*.



Courtesy the artist

Above: James Borges's "Untitled"
Below left: Birdie Hall, "Cracked Egg Girl"
Below right: Patricia Rush, "Woodlawn Cemetery, No. 10"

Visions From the Plague

ART'S DOMINION

Schadenfreude and LOL'ing as we looked at art during the pandemic

By R.C. Baker

A lockdown dragged on and art lovers couldn't go to galleries or museums, we sent images to friends: Check out this artist's take on these crazy days; did you see that virtual show? Being an artist can be a tough life, so maybe perspectives skew a bit to, if not always optimism, then at least doggedness. Artists reacted to the past year in myriad ways, but they never stopped capturing the zeitgeist on canvas, paper, and fabric. These are some of the visions I bookmarked on my computer, to always remember this strange and distorting year.

Instead of just one Day of the Dead, 2020 at times felt like 365 of them, so of course the buskers on the subway with James Borges were all skeletons.

And what do we do when claustrophobia becomes the national malaise? We look to break on through to the other side, as in Birdie Hall's *Cracked Egg Girl*.

Or, like Patricia Rush, you could escape to the naturally socially distanced beauty of Woodlawn Cemetery, in the Bronx—after all, the inhabitants there are always at least six feet away.

Joanna Beall Westermann died in 1997, but I could not get enough of wandering through Venus Over Manhattan's virtual exhibition this

past January. The world was going mad around then, but her phantasmagoric landscapes were an escape I allowed myself over and over again.

Madness? Did somebody mention our former president? When I came across Gerald Collings's scabrous rendition of Donald Trump, I first burst out laughing and then, as I delved into the nooks and crannies of his hallucinogenic colors, I thought, This is the perfect portrait for the future Trump library.

Cheryl Gross's masks captured the surreal drudgery of having to wrap our faces every time we went out into the world. On her website, she echoed something every one of us said at some point: "Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought we would be living in a sci-fi film."

David Kramer took us on a tropical vacation instead, but his sentiment chimed with what most of us were feeling.

It was a year when many of us took to reading *The Plague*, by Camus, or maybe the *Decameron*, wallowing in tales of previous pestilences.

As Edgar Allen Poe put it at the end of one of his short stories, "And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."

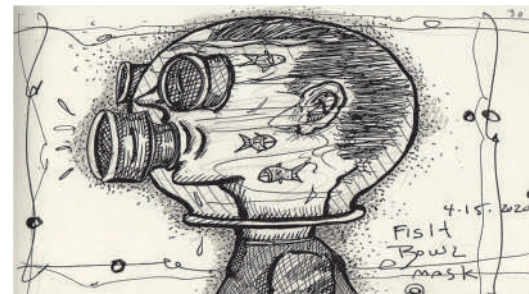
Well, as persevering artists demonstrated this past year, not this time. ▣



Courtesy the artist



Courtesy the artist



Courtesy the artist



© 2020 Dunbarton Arts LLC / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of the Estate of Joanna Beall Westermann, and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.

Above left: Joanna Beall Westermann, "Seascape" (1967)
Above right: Cheryl Gross, three drawings from her "MASKS 2020" series



David Kramer
"Until Tomorrow"

Courtesy Freight and Volume

Gerald Collings
"Untitled"



Courtesy the artist

A PROTEST ANTHEM IS BORN

Cuba's Artists And Rappers Blast Dictatorship in Cuba (and Everywhere Else) With "Homeland and Life"

By Christian Viveros-Fauné

Words are things, like ink / falling like dew on rhymes / making thousands, even millions think.

My freestyle paraphrase of Don Juan, Canto III, by 19th-century rapper George Gordon Byron, aka Lord Byron, these words contain the seeds of every protest verse ever sung or uttered since. To the canon of heart-stoppers like Reverend Charles Tindley's "We Shall Overcome," Dylan's "Masters of War," and Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" we can now add another anthem: the Spanish-language rap and reggaeton number "Patria y Vida." Translated as "Homeland and Life," the song's viral catchiness and free-speech message has little uniformed men around the world quaking in their black lace-up boots.

Written and performed by an all-star lineup of Cuban rappers Yotuel Romero,

Gente de Zona, Descemer Bueno, El Funky, and Maykel "El Osorbo" Castillo, "Homeland and Life" flips the script on late Cuban dictator Fidel Castro's morbid mantra "Patria o Muerte"—in yanqui English, "homeland or death." Instead of merely rejecting the 1960s Cold War-era slogan, the song turns its necrophilic message on its head, while blasting the desperate economic, human rights, and free-speech situation on the island. Directed by Cuban filmmaker Asiel Babastro, the video has spread to Cuba's remotest hamlets—aided by hand-distributed flash drives and a recent expansion of nationwide internet coverage—and racked up more than 4.6 million views to date on YouTube.

"Homeland and Life" brings together artists from the U.S., Spain, and Cuba for the first time. Bueno, a Miami resident, is

a Grammy winner; ditto for Romero, a Spanish resident and member of the platinum-selling group Orishas. El Osorbo, notably, lives in Havana, along with Luis

Under the draconian decree, "all artists, including collectives, musicians and performers, are prohibited from operating in public or private spaces without prior approval by the Ministry of Culture."

Manuel Otero Alcántara, the leader of the artist-activist coalition the San Isidro Movement, a civic group on the front lines of protest against Cuba's 349 Decree (another prominent free-speech group, 27N,

is led by Tania Bruguera, New York's Office of Immigrant Affairs first artist-in-residence). Under the draconian decree, "all artists, including collectives, musicians and performers, are prohibited from operating in public or private spaces without prior approval by the Ministry of Culture," and must refrain from activities the government might find "obscene," "vulgar," or "harmful to ethical and cultural values."

Otero Alcántara, the young Black face of a protest movement that has gone global, makes a cameo in one scene in the video, holding a Cuban flag behind El Osorbo and El Funky. Photographer Anyel Troya secretly filmed all three in Havana, then sent the material to Babastro in Miami. The director combined their footage with takes of the other singers while adding documentary clips from recent artist protests. Were Babastro to remake the video, he might feature recent footage of Otero Alcántara and El Osorbo leading an inspired impromptu street rendition of "Homeland and Life" while evading police.

Images of El Osorbo pumping his fist in the air, handcuffs dangling from one wrist, have gone viral—this after hundreds of friends and neighbors intervened to help him avoid arrest on April 6. The lyrics to the new Spanish-language scorcher have hit the streets and are making millions inside and outside Cuba think: "No more lies! My people demand freedom. No more doctrines! / Let us no longer shout 'Homeland or Death' but 'Homeland and Life.'" An anthem is born. **V**

The lyrics to the new Spanish-language scorcher have hit the streets and are making millions inside and outside Cuba think: "No more lies!"



TRASH IS FOR TOSSERS: HOW TO LIVE A ZERO-WASTE LIFE IN NYC

From composting to simple ways to change your lifestyle, here are some tips for living green in the Big Apple

By Lauren Singer and Tara Finley

Throughout the city, it seems like unnecessary waste can be found everywhere. From one-use plastic containers to superfluous packaging on everything from corner fruit stands to Amazon deliveries, trash is accumulating when it really doesn't need to be.

It may seem hard to live a zero-waste lifestyle, but we're here to tell you it really isn't. After the story of Lauren Singer successfully fitting years and years of trash into a single mason jar went viral, we were shown just how possible living sustainably is.

Singer knows a lot about trash, and how to break free from it. Here is her advice on how to achieve a more Earth-friendly lifestyle.

Nearly a decade ago, I realized that there is a difference between talking about sustainability and living sustainably. I studied environmental science in college and discovered that while I was so passionate about combating climate change, my daily decisions were in direct opposition with that. I was still using single-use plastic, buying fast fashion, using toxic cleaning products, eating packaged/processed food and meat, and was actually contributing to the systems I was deeply opposed to, so I decided to make a change.

I stopped using plastic, and ultimately started reducing my waste to align my day-to-day actions with my values for environmental sustainability. I created my blog, *Trash is for Tossers*, to document my journey reducing my waste almost 10 years ago. I then started my company, Package Free. Our mission is to make the world less trashy—we sell products that are replacements for single-use products or products that are packaged in plastic that you use in your everyday life.

I created Package Free with this exact question in mind: how to make it easier for people to start to lead a zero-waste or lower-waste lifestyle. We have lots of great kits, including our new Earth Day Kit, which come with a variety of items like reusable straws, beeswax food wrap and stainless steel food storage containers so consumers can start with a few key staples and gradually get closer to a zero waste life.

Leading a zero-waste lifestyle is not

something you can make happen overnight, but it's actually not as challenging as you might think.

The first step is to look at your trash and determine where it's coming from—for me, it was primarily food packaging, product packaging and organic food waste. Then, you can start to make small, everyday swaps to reduce the amount of trash you're creating. I bring my own jars and bags to the store to fill with bulk or package-free items, buy fruit and vegetables from farmers markets, shop secondhand clothing, compost and make my own products like laundry detergent at home. I totally under-



stand that it might not be realistic for individuals to do all of these things, but every effort you make to reduce your waste does make a positive impact on the environment!

The reaction people have to the idea of living a zero-waste lifestyle is often incredulity.

I think when people hear the phrase “zero-waste lifestyle,” it sounds completely overwhelming because it's such a broad idea. The average American makes 4.5 pounds of trash per person per day, so the thought of eliminating all of that waste can seem like a lot!

However, once you break it down into

smaller pieces – e.g. bring your own bags to the store, avoid packaged products, compost – it's much more achievable. Before you know it, you'll be taking out the trash less and creating some great positive environmental impact at the same time!

If you want to remove the mystery and sense of hardship from a zero-waste lifestyle, don't overthink it! Start small with something easy and approachable, like paying attention to what you're throwing away and considering what you could've swapped to avoid creating that waste in the first place. Once you've made one simple change, like bringing bags to the store, you'll have

the confidence to try something else, like using a bamboo toothbrush, or a bigger and more impactful action, like composting.

Composting is a great way to live a zero-waste life. In fact, composting is one of the BEST actions you can take to have a more positive impact on the planet, primarily because it significantly reduces methane emissions that are released when food is thrown into landfills. The average American wastes about one pound of food every day, which adds up to a lot of waste over the course of 365 days. When food is thrown into landfills, it can't decompose properly and releases greenhouse gases. Long story short: composting is more important now

than ever before to decrease our contribution to landfills and to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions wherever possible.

Even though we New Yorkers may not have as much space as those living in other parts of the country, you can definitely still compost in the city! One of my favorite Package Free products is our stainless steel compost bin, which comes with a replaceable Cotton and Activated Charcoal Filter so that your home stays smelling fresh. If you're not sure where to bring your food scraps, check out GrowNYC, look for private composting pickups (it's actually not very expensive, especially if you partner with your neighbors, or convince your landlord to do it), or even just google “composting services near me.”

NYC is filled with community gardens, farmer's markets, volunteer groups, CSA programs and even offers commercial pickup services with composting bins anyone can use. I'm also a big fan of GrowNYC, a local nonprofit that offers Food Scrap Drop-off sites and textile recycling throughout the city. LES Ecology Center and Build it Green also do incredible work in our community.

Make an effort to simply be aware of the trash you're creating in your everyday life, and do whatever is easiest for you to reduce it. Once you realize how many simple swaps you can make on a daily basis to reduce the amount of waste you're creating, it's much easier to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle. It's not something that will happen overnight, but every small change makes a big difference! **V**



Trump's Hot Bot: A Graphic Political Thriller

Trump's Hot Bot is an original book of illustrated political fiction about Donald Trump, his curious rise into the public eye and his absurd, reality show-like presidency. Think of the book as a cross between 1970s Playboy Magazine articles and MAD Magazine where the sordid tale of Trump is reimagined with provocative imagery and broken down into easy-to-read, palatable, bite-sized morsels.

A sample chapter of the book is presented here. Enjoy.

The book is available for pre-order on May 1st

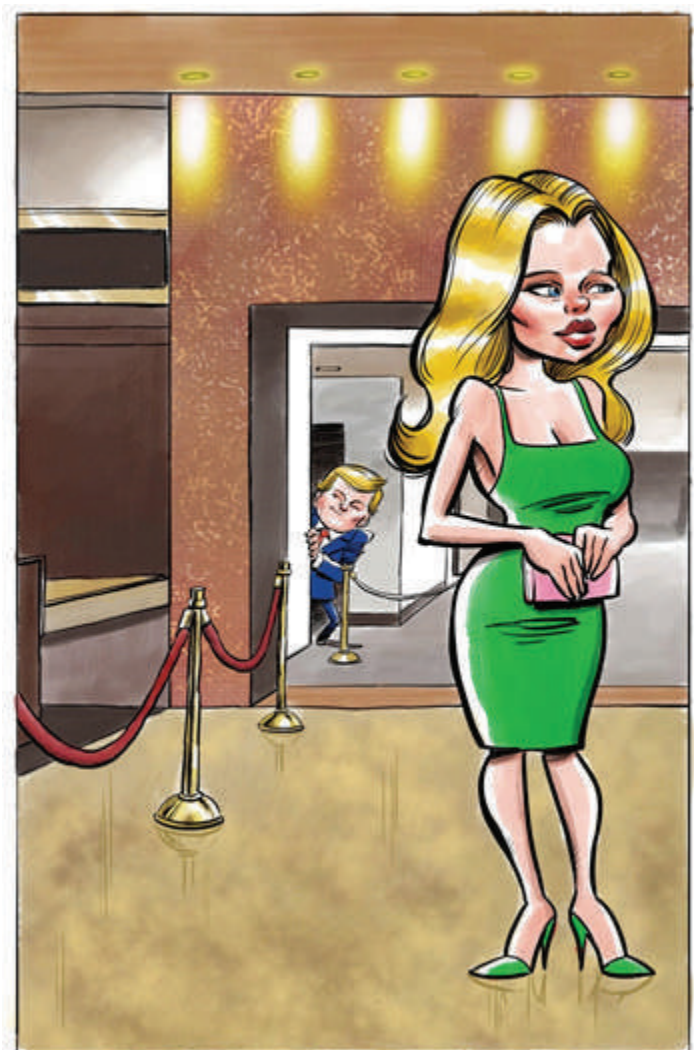
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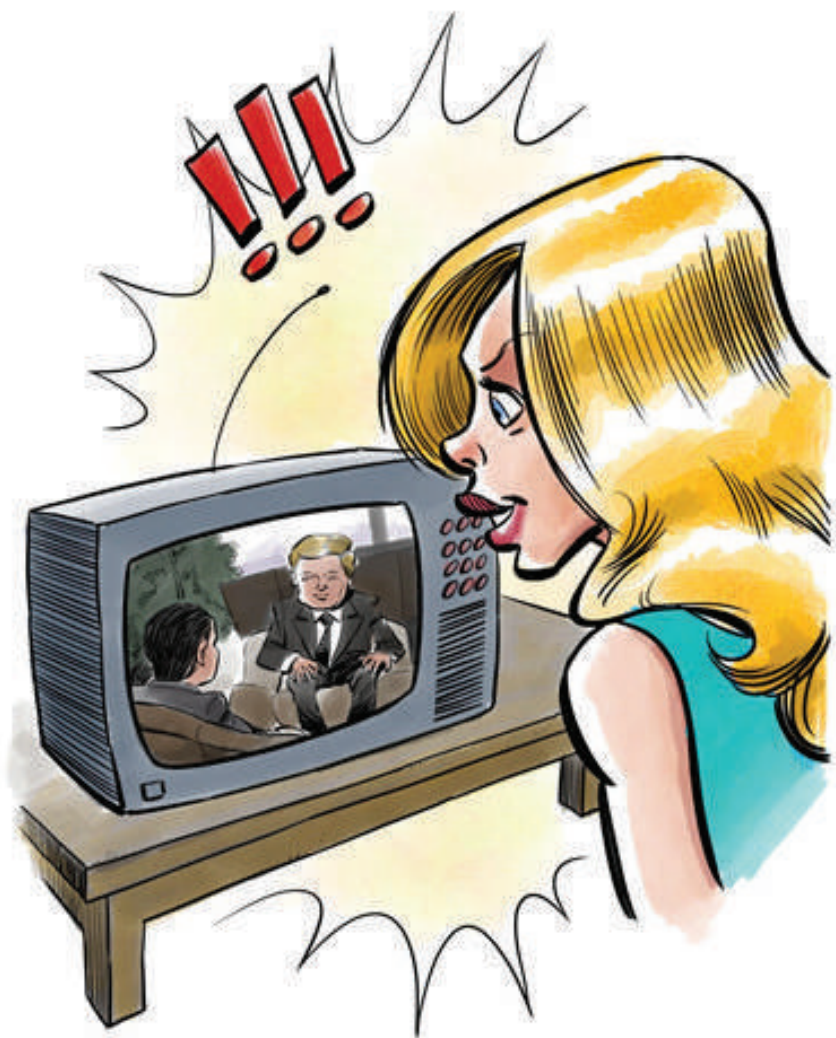
CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE: PETRA IN NEW YORK CITY

In 1984, NYC was the center of the world markets. All big financial roads passed through the city. Nothing compared to it, and we knew it. I had to go there.

Once there, I bought a two-bedroom condo in Trump Tower. It was an obvious choice; the location was mid-NYC on 5th Avenue, the belly of the beast. The richest people in the world passed by. I could see them walking, sit next to them in fine restaurants and observe.

That was when I first noticed Donny. He often wandered Trump Tower accompanied by someone he was trying to impress, pointing and talking a mile a minute.





He saw me too, gawked and flirted. Thinking he might be worth cultivating, I returned the attention, but it was with reluctance. There were too many other extraordinarily powerful people in NYC on which to focus.

There was a funny thing though. Almost everyone in NYC visited Trump Tower. They wanted to see the golden atrium for themselves, and they came away impressed. They may not have liked the gold-gilt theme, but it was unabashed and it attracted tourists from around the world. It was like The Empire State building and The Donald was becoming a noted person.

What I wanted – we bots wanted – ultimately was access to the President of the United States. It would be through that person we could cull the Earth's population. Slowly it dawned upon me that Donny could go places – maybe all the way. The more I saw Donny work the media, the more I was impressed.

Then in November, 1985, I saw an interview with the famed Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes*, the TV show. It was a revelation. Donny had purchased a building on Central Park South and wanted to evict the rent-controlled tenants. Mike Wallace interviewed them and got their side of the story. It was ugly. Donny treated them like dirt.

Wallace related their comments to Donny, who true to Roy Cohn tactics, attacked back. Donny said, he was the aggrieved party, the tenants were trying to take advantage of him.

When Wallace asked if it bothered him, Donny shook his head, “Nothing too much gets under my skin.”

Something about the blank callousness behind his eyes reminded me of the type of psychopath we wanted as President.

It was then I decided to maneuver myself into his life. It would be difficult. He was married to Ivana, and I couldn't be a random fuck.

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By Ross Wetzstein
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HELLO? IT'S THE FUTURE CALLING. YEAH, THE JETS STILL SUCK AT DRAFTING

A sage from the year 2022 tells us what went wrong

by Vincent Velotta

The New York Jets are just weeks away from an April 29th NFL draft that will surely alter the course of the franchise's history for years to come. They're going to get it wrong.

Trust me, I've already seen the draft and the ensuing season. But I came back to 2021 in order to drop some wisdom on eager Jets fans who just can't wait to see who Gang Green selects. The same fans who are mired in a decade in which their team has finished with a winning record just twice (2010 and 2015; 70–106 overall), who haven't seen their squad in a Super Bowl since 1968, and who have witnessed drafting ineptitude that transcends regimes since the 1980s.

Misplaced as it is, I've got to admire your faith.

Right now you're probably yelling, "Who'd the Jets take with the second overall pick?!" Oh, and you want to know if he's the future, right?

There's that faith again.

Of course, considering my omnipotence, I could answer all of your questions about the upcoming season. But first, I'll divulge a more vital piece of information: It doesn't matter who the New York Jets select in the draft. It has rarely ever mattered, in fact.

Simply put, the Jets do not draft well. Their history is plagued with first-round busts and missed opportunities to draft better players. Jets fans know it. Most of them admit it. The rest have no doubt buried the knowledge deep in their subconscious in order to continue their fandom after more than a half-century of misery.

A lot of that heartache can be attributed to New York's inability to find elite long-term options through the draft, especially at the quarterback position. You have to go back a couple decades to find the last QB who started for the Jets for more than five seasons: Chad Pennington. The 18th overall pick in 2000, Pennington showed flashes of promise as a starter from 2002 to 2007. However, 2008 saw the Jets cut the oft-injured quarterback in favor of veteran Brett Favre. Later that year, a once-hopeful campaign would be stomped out in the final game of the season by the Miami Dolphins. Miami's quarterback was Chad Pennington.

The next—and last—period of "stability" at the position came in 2009, when the

Jets drafted Mark Sanchez fifth overall. Though mostly powered by their defense, New York made it to two straight AFC Championship games (2009 and 2010) with Sanchez under center, losing both. Sanchez spent four seasons with the Jets, throwing more interceptions than touchdowns and becoming best known by NFL fans for his part in the notorious "Butt Fumble," in 2012.



Stadium photo by Isaac Crayton; crystal ball photo by Chris Grafton; both via Unsplash; RCB VV collage

New York's inability to find a quarterback through the draft doesn't begin or end with the 2000s, though. Who could forget the 1983 draft, where college star Dan Marino miraculously fell to the Jets at 24th overall? Well, they opted for quarterback Ken O'Brien instead, who had a few decent seasons with the team during his nine-year run. Marino went to Miami three picks later

and is considered one of the greatest quarterbacks ever to grace the sport.

Still excited for the draft? How about their most recent investment? 2018 saw the Jets take Sam Darnold with the third overall pick. Four selections later, the Buffalo Bills pounced on Josh Allen. Allen is now a top-five QB in the NFL. Darnold was just recently traded to the Carolina Panthers as New York is poised to take another swing at drafting a quarterback.

But this time around, it'll work, right? Don't bet on it, because the horrors range beyond the QB position. In 1995, New York took tight end Kyle Brady ninth overall despite an apparent lack of need at the position. Three picks later, defensive lineman Warren Sapp went to Tampa Bay. Brady played four uninspiring years for the Jets.



Sapp became a Hall of Famer.

Since 2010, the Jets have used first- and second-round selections on the likes of Kyle Wilson, Quanton Coples, Dee Milliner, Calvin Pryor, Stephen Hill, Jace Amaro, Devin Smith, Geno Smith, and Christian Hackenberg. Only one of them spent more than four

years with New York. Most were purged from the NFL shortly after leaving the team. The Darnold deal marked something of a milestone for the Jets: of their ten first-round selections from 2010 to 2018, none remain on the roster.

I mean, even in the rare instances where they get it right, they get it wrong! Look at the 1985 draft, for example. The Jets took wide receiver Al Toon. Great player, right? Now he's in the Jets' Ring of Honor. Six picks later, the San Francisco 49ers selected wide receiver Jerry Rice. Rice more than tripled Toon's career output, got into the real Hall of Fame, and is considered the best player at his position ever.

Other times, New York drafts well but just gets rid of the player. Exceptionally talented picks like safety Jamal Adams and defensive lineman Sheldon Richardson were both traded before their rookie contracts were up. Even sophomore standout Quinnen Williams was mentioned in trade rumors in 2020. It's a vicious cycle!

I could dig into the 2003 draft, where New York passed on 17 future Pro Bowlers in the first two rounds, or the 2005 draft, when they selected a kicker with their first pick, but I won't. Most of the picks are terrible. The good ones are either traded or overshadowed by better selections. But every team makes these kinds of mistakes. . . right? You keep telling yourself that. In 2000 Tom Brady was picked in the sixth round by the Patriots, 199th overall. And yep, that was the year the Jets used their third pick—after they chose defensive ends Shaun Ellis and John Abraham 12th and 13th overall—to scoop up Pennington. They passed a total of seven times on the

man who would dominate their division for the next 19 years. Oops.

So, no, I won't reveal who the Jets take with the second overall pick in 2021, because while the names and positions may change, the results rarely do. It will not work out.

You don't need to be from the future to know that. **V**



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