

FREE PANDEMIC EDITION



REAL CHANGE

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RENTAL CRUNCH

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Real Change exists to provide opportunity and a voice for low-income and homeless people while taking action for economic, social and racial justice.

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ON THE COVER

From inside your apartment, it may seem like the world is closing in on you. Real Change Staff Reporter Ashley Archibald looks into the rights of renters during the pandemic. There’s a moratorium on evictions, but how is this working, and what happens when it’s lifted? Story on page 4. Illustration by Jon Williams.

Homeless Rights Advocacy Project issues call to action for COVID-19

Seattle University School of Law’s Homeless Rights Advocacy Project issued this call to action on April 3 to protect the lives of unsheltered people and the entire community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are in the throes of a pandemic. COVID-19 may infect millions of Americans and kill over 100,000. People experiencing homelessness are at a greater risk of contracting the virus because they lack access to hygiene, sanitation facilities and space to socially isolate or quarantine. COVID-19 will likely infect and kill thousands of people experiencing homelessness, and hundreds of people experiencing homelessness across the country have already tested positive for COVID-19. If a pandemic teaches us anything, it is that we are only as strong as our most vulnerable neighbors.

State and local governments must immediately ensure people experiencing homelessness are protected during this outbreak. Policymakers must take immediate action to (1) stop harmful actions and offer basic support to unsheltered people; (2) build systemic capacity for successful outreach; (3) stop using congregate shelters or at least radically thin out and improve safe shelter space; (4) dramatically increase temporary individual housing units; and

(5) aggressively scale up permanent supportive housing capacity.

1. Stop harm and offer basic support

Unsheltered people must be brought inside immediately. Until that time, policymakers must (1) immediately mitigate harm to unsheltered people and (2) offer basic hygienic support to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

First, cities should immediately halt homeless sweeps, move-along orders and the impoundment of vehicle residences. Breaking up encampments and asking people to move along significantly increases the chance that COVID-19 will spread as people disperse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that governments leave encampments alone unless individual housing units are available. Similarly, cities should stop ticketing and impounding vehicles being used as residences. It is not sufficient for cities to merely reduce sweeps or displacements; for example, Seattle has limited sweeps, but its guidance needs to match the CDC’s requirement that encampments be removed only if appropriate individual housing units are available.

Second, policymakers should ensure people living in encampments have tents and 24-hour access to nearby restrooms or portable latrines stocked with hand hygiene materials, per the CDC. Because

of the pandemic, many libraries and meal programs are closed or severely restricted, and cities must make up for this lack of services by increasing the number of handwashing stations and bathrooms. Los Angeles has deployed at least 100 additional handwashing stations for 44,214 unsheltered people who live in the county. San Diego and Berkeley have placed 66 and 28, respectively. San Diego is home to 3,626 unsheltered people and Berkeley 813. As of March 27, Seattle announced plans to offer only six handwashing stations and, as of March 25, distributed 735 “hygiene kits.” But 5,228 people live unsheltered in Seattle. These efforts are small steps in the right direction, but action must be much more urgent and ambitious. Cities should also consider supplying dumpsters, vermin abatement and water. Ideally, cities should also distribute tents to unsheltered individuals as a minimum of protection from the elements and from one another.

By ceasing sweeps and move-along orders to disperse, as well as increasing hygiene supports, policymakers not only help to protect the health of unsheltered people, but also the surrounding community. Mitigating harm and minimizing displacement will also create opportunities for cities to better systematize the delivery of health and hygiene services and

See **RIGHTS** Continued on Page 11

Maybe now more than ever, we can understand the fear that homeless people face

By **PATRICK O’CONNELL**
Guest Writer

If you have a well-stocked pantry and you’re able to work from home right now, you are in very good shape to stay safe from the virus. Thousands of people in the Seattle area who may not have homes or may not have stable employment cannot necessarily say the same. I work for Millionaire Club Charity, a nonprofit staffing agency that serves people experiencing poverty and homelessness, and our hundreds of workers find themselves in a precarious situation.

The majority of workers on our payroll, over 60 percent of whom self-identity as unstably housed, rely on wages to survive. For some, the pay helps maintain rent and feed their families. For others, the money is their ticket to escaping homelessness and finding stability in their lives. With the state-ordered ban on non-essential workplaces, most of our workers’ job opportunities have vanished, along with a way out of poverty.

While many of us are scrambling for toilet paper and hand sanitizer, the people we serve may be staring down a return to living outside or being stuck in crowded shelters where they can’t reasonably protect themselves. This isn’t just some temporary scare or a hit to a retirement fund; this pandemic could be life or death for otherwise healthy people. Based on hundreds of conversations and surveys, we know that once a person loses their home, it becomes harder to avoid things like de-

pression, addiction and loss of dignity. The longer people experience homelessness, the more difficult it is to escape.

One Millionaire Club Charity worker, Sabrina, has already been laid off since her employer did not have enough customers to stay open. Sabrina lives in Millionaire Club Charity’s apartment building, Kasota, and she’s now concerned about being able to maintain rent moving forward. She says she’s trying to file her taxes and claim unemployment benefits, but the websites are overwhelmed and she can’t get through.

“I feel like I’m in a crunch and just so frustrated,” Sabrina told me. “My gravest fear is becoming homeless. I’m trying to stay hopeful, but with the claims site not working, I just don’t know what to do.” She says that the opportunity to have an apartment at Kasota has been a godsend, and she is hoping that rent will be reduced until we know when this will all end.

Normally, Millionaire Club Charity provides a wide range of services to help people become ready for work. That includes a hygiene center, laundry facility, job training workshops and uniforms (for no charge). We also work with partners to provide meals, a vision clinic and mobile medical and dental vans. Once a person is enrolled, we connect them with appropriate job opportunities in our network of over 700 local employers. That includes everything from food prep and hospitality at Seahawks and Mariners games to landscaping, warehouse work, housekeeping, moving help and more.

In this trying time, we have not simply

shut our doors and gone home. We are vigilantly reshaping our commitment to offering daily care to hundreds of people for needs spanning hygiene services and income. To protect our workers and staff, we have reduced work opportunities to a few employees who have strict safety protocols and whose operations are essential. We also had to suspend our job trainings, which is a major loss because some of the courses lead to professional certifications for livable-wage jobs.

Many people in the Puget Sound area endure homelessness and unstable housing, and they are now more vulnerable than ever. This virus could easily cause the homeless crisis to balloon out of control, regressing or ending our work against it.

Like everyone else, we are determined to make it through and recover with the help of our fellow community members. Maybe now more than ever, our society can appreciate the fear and loss of control that homeless people face every day.

Everyone is making difficult decisions now, and many people are experiencing significant financial loss as our workplaces close. We all must do our part to stay healthy and support those in need. Many have stepped up and made significant contributions already, but the need is still great. If you would like to help Millionaire Club Charity get aid and resources to the people we serve, please consider donating at MillionaireClub.org/Donate. ■

Patrick is writing on behalf of Millionaire Club Charity, for which he is the marketing and communications director.



Shelters and encampments keeping things clean, staying close and social distancing

By **ASHLEY ARCHIBALD**
Staff Reporter



Camp Second Chance in West Seattle isn’t allowing nonresidents in to the camp. They have plenty of food. Site coordinator Eric Pattin said, “... if anything, it’s brought us more together.”

Real Change file images, 2017

Joseph Stinson doesn’t like to stay in one place for too long.

When he leaves the Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE) where he’s staying, he takes two buses — routes 65 and 70 — to get to Sacred Heart, where he eats the one meal he’ll have that day. They have the best soup in the city, in his opinion, and serve enough food to last him.

Sometimes, he walks around Lake Union, where there is plenty of space between people.

“Food is still an issue and we don’t want to get cabin fever,” Stinson said. “When you’ve been homeless for a while, you’re so used to roving from place to place just to get the simplest things done. It’s hard to halt that.”

But going out in the age of coronavirus can be an unsettling experience when people clock you as a potential threat: One woman screamed at Stinson at the bus station and continued to harass him on board.

“She was saying that I’m the reason, and she was calling me cuss words,” Stinson said. “I just shut her down. I put in my headphones and started listening to music. I didn’t want to give in to the fear.”

As long as there is food, the 20 people at the shelter don’t have to spend too much time outside if they don’t want to. SHARE operates out of churches, which the governor ordered shut in March. It’s expanded the hours that people can stay inside, rather than making them leave promptly in the morning and come back in the evening.

It’s one of many adjustments people in self-managed encampments and their hosts have made to adapt to the killer disease that is circulating throughout the

community and the world.

Every two hours, the residents go through the facility with a bleach solution, wiping down frequently touched surfaces in the kitchen and counters. They check temperatures; if someone is running a fever, that person goes into isolation until they can get checked out.

So far, no one has gotten ill, Stinson said.

“But every time someone sneezes or coughs ...” he said, trailing off. The location has enough space to give each resident at least 8 feet between them when they sleep — an improvement over traditional, mat-on-the-floor shelters, where beds can have as few as 6 inches between them.

But despite all of the precautions, Stinson is worried about the day that someone contracts COVID-19.

“It’s just a question of when it’s going to happen,” Stinson said. “That’s part of the stress of being homeless.”

Authorized encampments have made changes as well.

Camp Second Chance, in West Seattle, no longer allows visitors inside the premises in order to control potential infection. Volunteers who build tiny house villages go through the back, said Eric Pattin, the site coordinator.

“You never know who you’re going to get out there,” Pattin said. “We wanted to limit contact with people as much as possible.”

So far, things feel strangely normal, although they do have to sanitize surfaces every three to four hours. There’s plenty of food for the camp — unlike at Stinson’s shelter — but getting some more garbage bags, paper plates and bowls would be

welcome.

“Despite what’s going on, nothing’s really changed here in camp,” Pattin said. “No one is panicked. If anything, it’s brought us more together.”

People without shelter are in a very different position.

Rev. Canon Britt Olson preaches at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Ballard. The church used to have a meal program and a SHARE shelter, but both are shut now — SHARE closed its shelter there of its own accord and moved the five people staying there into other shelters. The church had to stop the meal program because many of their volunteers are older and vulnerable to COVID-19.

Three parishioners had already fallen ill with COVID-like symptoms in March, Olson said. The community doesn’t want to have any more. Until churches are allowed to reopen, they’ve been broadcasting their services online, which has been a learning curve for everyone.

“The first week, we were sideways,” Olson said.

While the church and its congregation are adapting, Olson can see that others are suffering. A large group of people experiencing homelessness gather in the Ballard Commons Park, but the meals are gone and so was the Portland Loo, a public toilet. The city closed the loo for roughly a week to deep clean it out of concerns about a Hepatitis A outbreak.

It’s gotten bad, Olson said, but the church is ready to take care of people again as soon as possible.

“We have a kitchen. It would take us three minutes to ramp up serving again if we had the meals and the volunteers,” Olson said. ■

REPORTER’S NOTEBOOK

Hep A diagnoses grow

The coronavirus is the most recent infectious disease that public health officials are fighting, but it isn’t the only one.

According to Seattle & King County Public Health, 101 people have tested positive for Hepatitis A since January 2019, with 25 diagnoses in the month of March alone. Eleven reported that they had experienced homelessness in the Ballard area, but public health officials have not discovered a link, according to the department.

The outbreak led the city to temporarily shut down one of the few public toilets for nearly a week for deep cleaning to prevent further transmission, right as people are being told to wash their hands frequently in order to stop the spread of coronavirus. Handwashing and hygiene are also key to beating back Hepatitis A.

Public health is performing outreach to encourage people living outside to accept vaccinations against the disease.

“The most important strategy for addressing Hepatitis A outbreak is vaccination, and we’ve mobilized several clinics in the Ballard area in March and continuing into April, and doing street outreach and vaccinations as well this week,” said James Apa, public health spokesperson, in an email.

Since January 2019, more than 2,000 Seattleites have been inoculated against Hep A at 300 free vaccination clinics that were part of a push that began in 2017. In 2019, King County Executive Dow Constantine allocated \$375,000 to fund the effort.

COVID continues

University of Washington leaders say that they expect to handle as many as 750 additional patients at UW hospitals related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

To prepare, the hospitals began drive-through testing for staff and patients and opened up beds by canceling elective surgeries. There are currently four drive-through testing sites open at regional hospitals, and UW Medicine plans to open a fifth site at a neighborhood clinic in Issaquah, said Lisa Brandenburg, president of UW Medicine hospitals and clinics, in a press release.

The hospitals have also created emergency department entrances on four campuses, where they’ve set up tents for extra capacity and space to separate patients showing respiratory symptoms.

So far, UW Medicine has enough personal protective equipment (PPE) to manage the 120 confirmed COVID-19 patients at the hospital, but as the numbers of patients are increasing, the stockpiles of PPE are going down.

That means getting more gear is an important focus, Brandenburg said.

Community members can support the staff by not getting sick — consistently washing hands, practicing social distancing by maintaining 6 feet between yourself and other people and staying home as much as possible. ■

— Ashley Archibald

Senator pushes for nationwide vote-by-mail as emergency looms

By ELLENA ROSENTHAL
Street Roots

As the coronavirus crisis upends elections in several states this primary season, Oregon's U.S. senators want to take the state's vote-by-mail model nationwide.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) has introduced a bill that would make that option a requirement if 25 percent of states declare an emergency related to COVID-19, another infectious disease or a natural disaster. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), the state's other senator, has praised Wyden's push for mail-in voting during a COVID-19 emergency.

Under Wyden's Resilient Elections During Quarantines and Natural Disasters Act of 2020, governors who declare a state of emergency would also have discretion to enact the provisions of the measure in their states even if the 25 percent threshold isn't met.

As of this week, 15 states and one territory have postponed their primary elections because of the pandemic. The New York Times reported. Six of these states postponed their primaries until June 2. The Democratic National Committee has June 9 as the deadline by which states must hold nominating primaries. Yet, Kentucky and New York officials delayed primaries to June 23. Wisconsin, to much local and national dissent, went ahead with its April election, leaving many voters behind.

Only five U.S. states, including Washington, vote entirely by mail. Oregon became the first state to conduct mail elections in 2000. Washington adopted vote-by-mail in 2005.

Washington's 2020 presidential primary culminated March 10, as coronavirus grew widespread. Beginning a week earlier in March, the Washington Department of Health used a slogan asking voters

not to lick the envelopes for their ballots: "Whether healthy or sick, please don't lick!" Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman [tweeted](#).

The ease of voting is credited as one of the reasons that the states that have vote-by-mail systems consistently rank well above the national average in turnout. Vote-by-mail could bring more equity to America's voting process, Wyden said.

"Vote-by-mail, by its nature, means that you don't have communities of color and low-income communities having to wait in long lines and being told by poll watchers that their poll is somewhere else," Wyden told Street Roots.

"We have \$400 million in the package to expand vote-by-mail and absentee voting, and we're going to do it by mail," he said.

The bill would give voters in all states 20 days of early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee vote-by-mail. It also ensures states begin processing — but not counting — votes cast during early voting or by mail 14 days before Election Day to avoid delays.

The bill would also:

- Offer all registered voters the ability to vote by absentee ballot. Currently, 34 states and Washington, D.C., either allow any voter to request an absentee ballot or vote entirely by mail

- Offer voters the ability to submit electronically a request for an absentee ballot rather than having to do so in person
- Accept absentee ballot requests up until five days before an election for blank ballots sent to the voter and one day before the election for electronic print-at-home ballots
- Accept ballots that have been post-marked by Election Day. ■

From Street Roots, with additions from Real Change.

What happens to renters after the moratorium on evictions ends?

By ASHLEY ARCHIBALD
Staff Reporter

Recent reports show that the Puget Sound region is turning the tide against the coronavirus through vigilant self-distancing and the hard work of medical professionals, grocery store employees and other workers now deemed "essential" who were under-appreciated before coronavirus quarantines.

But much of that response depends on people staying at home in a city where the majority of people pay rent every month. The Seattle City Council passed a moratorium on evictions due to non-payment of rent on March 16, stalling evictions but not rent payments, which continue to accrue.

As jobs disappear and unemployment claims mount, it begs the question: What will happen to tenants and landlords when the moratorium lifts?

Tenants will be better protected than they were even a year ago, said Xochitl Maykovich, political director at the Washington Community Action Network (Washington CAN!).

"If our previous eviction process was in place, I think people would be fucked," Maykovich said.

Landlords have to give tenants a 14-day "pay or quit" notice, meaning they have to pay their rent or leave the apartment to avoid eviction. Before the 2019 legislative session, that window was only three days.

The current moratorium isn't a pass for tenants to stop paying rent, as some fear, Maykovich said. Instead, think of it as a brief pause to allow other forms of assistance to come into effect.

The United States recorded 10 million first-time unemployment insurance applications in two weeks, shattering previous records from the financial crisis of 2008-2009. State and federal systems have been overwhelmed with applicants, causing technical delays. Money from the \$2 trillion stimulus package will be a while in coming, but it will give people who make under \$75,000 individually a \$1,200 financial boost, as well as an extra \$600 bump in their unemployment checks if they lost their jobs.

That money will take time to come through, but the moratorium will give people breathing room to wait for that extra cash to flow in, Maykovich said.

"Folks need to keep in mind: The moratorium is buying time for multiple things," Maykovich said. "One is keeping people housed, and it's also buying time for the government to start setting up rent relief programs.

"We've never had to do rent relief on this scale, and even before this there wasn't enough to meet the need for rent relief that existed," Maykovich said.

Rent relief, in this case, means the government steps in to pay rent when people faced with an economic collapse cannot. That will be hard to do without significant federal support: To pay for aspects of the coronavirus response, Gov. Jay Inslee slashed \$445 million from the state budget.

Without rent relief, tenants who were recently fired could find themselves thousands of dollars in debt when the moratorium is eventually lifted — and with little standing between them and a 14-day eviction notice.

That was the scenario that concerned Edmund Witter, an attorney with the Housing Justice Project, just a couple of weeks ago. That's changed, Witter said.

"Now, my biggest fear is egregious illegal conduct," Witter said.

The Housing Justice Project hotline has received reports about a landlord who tried to require that tenants give over their entire stimulus check — \$1,200 per adult, \$500 per child — to stave off an eviction that was not yet possible.

A lot of possible problems come from the fact that many people do not know what is legal and what isn't in the face of rapidly changing laws. For instance, the federal government, state and Seattle have all passed eviction moratoriums of a sort, but they apply to different people and initially had different end dates.

The federal government's prohibition only applies to government-insured properties, roughly 40 to 50 percent of the market, Witter said. That patchwork of regulations means a lack of clarity for landlords and tenants alike.

Marilyn Yim and her husband are landlords in Seattle. They live in a triplex that looks like a single-family home from the outside, renting out the basement and another floor of the house. They also own another rental property where every member of the family lost their livelihood.

Yim said she wants to keep her tenants but worries because the fact that they lost their livelihoods doesn't impact whether or not her mortgage payment comes due.

The landscape of governmental actions and prohibitions changes constantly, Yim said.

"Every single day is different. It's hard to keep up," Yim said.

King County deferred payments on property taxes, but that doesn't help her situation. Property taxes are paid out of an escrow account held by her mortgage company, not her family. She hopes for a mortgage freeze as well as the eviction moratorium, so she can stay afloat.

"We're going to need some sort of relief, as well, in order to extend that relief to our tenants," Yim said. ■



Photo by Dan Keck

Shelves of bottled water were emptied during the coronavirus pandemic in an Ohio supermarket. It's natural for people to hoard supplies during a time of crisis.

WHY THE SHELVES ARE BARE

Our brains evolved to hoard supplies and shame others for the same

By STEPHANIE PRESTON
The Conversation

The media is replete with COVID-19 stories about people clearing supermarket shelves — and the backlash against them. Have people gone mad? How can one individual be overfilling his own cart, while shaming others who are doing the same?

As a behavioral neuroscientist who has studied hoarding behavior for 25 years, I can tell you that this is all normal and expected. People are acting the way evolution has wired them.

Stockpiling provisions

The word "hoarding" might bring to mind relatives or neighbors whose houses are overfilled with junk. A small percentage of people do suffer from what psychologists call "hoarding disorder," keeping excessive goods to the point of distress and impairment.

But hoarding is actually a totally normal and adaptive behavior that kicks in any time there is an uneven supply of resources. Everyone hoards, even during the best of times, without even thinking about it. People like to have beans in the pantry, money in savings and chocolates hidden from the children. These are all hoards.

Most Americans have had so much, for so long. People forget that, not so long ago, survival often depended on working tirelessly all year to fill root cellars so a family could last through a long, cold winter — and still, many died.

Similarly, squirrels work all fall to hide nuts to eat for the rest of the year. Kangaroo rats in the desert hide seeds the few times it rains and then remember where they put them to dig them back up later. A Clark's nutcracker can hoard over 10,000 pine seeds per fall — and even remember where it put them.

Similarities between human behavior and these animals are not just analogies. They reflect a deeply ingrained capacity for brains to motivate us to acquire and save resources that may not always be there. Suffering from hoarding disorder, stockpiling in a pandemic or hiding nuts in the fall — all of these behaviors are motivated less by logic and more by a deeply felt drive to feel safer.

My colleagues and I have found that stress seems to signal the brain to switch into "get hoarding" mode. For example, a kangaroo rat will act very lazy if fed regularly. But if its weight starts to drop, its brain signals to release stress hormones that incite the fastidious hiding of seeds all over the cage.

Kangaroo rats will also increase their hoarding if a neighboring animal steals from them. Once, I returned to the lab to find the victim of theft with all his remaining food stuffed into his cheek pouches — the only safe place.

People do the same. If in our lab studies my colleagues and I make them feel anxious, our study subjects want to take more stuff home with them afterward.

Demonstrating this shared inheritance, the same brain areas are active when people decide to take home toilet paper, bottled water or granola bars as

when rats store lab chow under their bedding — the orbitofrontal cortex and nucleus accumbens, regions that generally help organize goals and motivations to satisfy needs and desires.

Damage to this system can even induce abnormal hoarding. One man who suffered frontal lobe damage had a sudden urge to hoard bullets. Another could not stop "borrowing" others' cars. Brains across species use these ancient neural systems to ensure access to needed items — or ones that feel necessary.

So when the news induces a panic that stores are running out of food, or that residents will be trapped in place for weeks, the brain is programmed to stock up. It makes you feel safer and less stressed and, actually, protects you in an emergency.

More than a fair share

At the same time they're organizing their own stockpiles, people get upset about those who are taking too much. That is a legitimate concern; it's a version of the "tragedy of the commons," wherein a public resource might be sustainable, but people's tendency to take a little extra for themselves degrades the resource to the point where it can no longer help anyone.

By shaming others on social media, for instance, people exert what little influence they have to ensure cooperation with the group. As a social species, human beings thrive when they work together, and have employed shaming — even punishment — for millennia to ensure that everyone acts in the best interest of the group.

And it works. Twitter users went after a guy reported to have hoarded 17,700 bottles of hand sanitizer in the hopes of turning a profit; he ended up donating all of it and is under investigation for price gouging. Who wouldn't pause before grabbing those last few rolls of TP when the mob is watching?

People will continue to hoard to the extent that they are worried. They will also continue to shame others who take more than what they consider a fair share. Both are normal and adaptive behaviors that evolved to balance one another out, in the long run.

But that's cold comfort for someone on the losing end of a temporary imbalance — like a health care worker who did not have protective gear when they encountered a sick patient. The survival of the group hardly matters to the person who dies, or to their parent, child or friend.

One thing to remember is that the news selectively depicts stockpiling stories, presenting audiences with the most shocking cases. Most people are not charging \$400 for a mask. Most are just trying to protect themselves and their families the best way they know how, while also offering aid wherever they can. That's how the human species evolved: to get through challenges like this together. ■

Stephanie Preston is a psychology professor at the University of Michigan. The Conversation published this article, here with research links: tinyurl.com/hoardsupp.

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- Presentations from Seattle employers
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- Presentation on disability rights at 3pm by Kimberly Meck from the Alliance for People with disabilities





Photo by Aly Song, Reuters

Sha Jie, 10, a primary school student, attends an online Chinese class as he sits at home during the novel COVID-19 outbreak in Shanghai in early March. "I go out once a day at most, just hanging around our neighborhood. My parents told me to wear masks if going outside and to wash hands carefully after coming back home," said Jie.

OUR LIVES ARE ONLINE

From schools in Shanghai to picnics in Caracas, COVID is moving life to screens

By **ALEXANDRA HUDSON** | Reuters

Millions of people worldwide are having to embrace life under lockdown, confined to small spaces or neighborhoods for weeks on end as countries battle to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

This new way of living poses huge challenges. Teaching, working and socializing have ceased, then stiltedly resumed online as never before.

The lockdown has prompted some people to reassess their lives and what is most important to them, bringing unexpected realizations and touching moments inside, inward and with anyone nearby.

Sha Jie, a 10-year-old primary school student, is continuing his schooling online. He sits at the kitchen table of the 750-square-foot flat he shares with his parents and grandmother in Shanghai to follow a Chinese lesson on the television screen.

"I go out once a day at most, just hanging around our neighborhood. My parents told me to wear masks if going outside and to wash hands carefully after coming back home.

"I study, draw, watch movies at home ... and I build models. I even made a programmable LEGO model car," he said.

Asked what he would like to do most when life gets back to normal, he said: "Hang out with my friends and play games at Toys 'R' Us."

Thousands of miles away, in Milan, 14-year-old Italian Lavinia Tomassini is also

trying to study at home.

"I get up much later and I go to bed later than usual. I focus less when I am home. I like to go to school and study there more. I focus more when I am at school as I have less distraction.

"I hope all this will come to an end. ... I am really struggling to study from home as I have so many distractions here at home. And also, I really want to be able to go out again without being worried about catching a disease."

In the U.S., as in other countries struck by the virus, Dr. William Jason Sulaka has learned how to conduct consultations online as he can no longer meet his patients face to face.

"I would rather see a patient in the office," he said. "I prefer real visits to virtual visits."

But the 40-year-old, based in West Bloomfield, Michigan, has been staying at home with his wife and children as much as possible.

"I just miss the freedom of going out in general and not having to worry about the person next to me."

Using online consultations, Dr. Lisa Elconin, 57, also in West Bloomfield, is



"I just miss the freedom of going out in general and not having to worry about the person next to me."

— Dr. William Jason Sulaka

tice, reading — as well as her favorite: watching cartoons.

"After life returns to normal, I think the first thing for me is to have a big meal in a decent restaurant. My daughter's wish is definitely to meet and play with her best friends right away."

Musicians from the Beijing-based Chinese group The 2econd could not meet for weeks, but have now been able to come together and livestream a performance for their fans.

"I never thought that I wouldn't see my bandmates in nearly two months. As members of the one-child generation, we don't have siblings. We are best mates," singer Zhang Cheng, 30, said. "We share everything in life — joys and sorrows. I am used to meeting them every weekend for a drink or for a chat. Something felt wrong when that suddenly had to stop.

"I see this period as a double-edged sword. Although some performance plans have been postponed, it gave us more time to cool down and reflect on our work and to make it more mature."

Thomas Law Kwok Fai, a 70-year-old Catholic priest in Hong Kong, has also turned to livestreaming after the diocese temporarily suspended public masses at churches.

"It was a painful decision. However, it was a decision of faith, as we believe in God. God has given us the power to make sacrifices that make it a loving decision."

Rather than livestreaming, dance teacher Alessia Mauri, 34, who lives in Milan, is recording lessons for her students can watch and follow at home.

"I thought it would be interesting to give them some specific dance lessons. Not like the ones I am seeing being livestreamed publicly on Instagram. I think it's much more constructive for my girls to have a video of a teacher who gives them a dedicated lesson they can have at home and help them keep on training."

In the Venezuelan capital Caracas, 51-year-old Ana Pereira lives alone with her dog and cat. She is sitting down in front of her computer to a virtual picnic with friends, as they can't actually meet as they have done weekly since 2011.

It is a poor replacement.

"I need physical contact and I'm missing it a lot," she said. Asked what is the first thing she wants when life get back to normal, she said, "a hug." ■

Courtesy of Reuters / INSP.ngo



getting 10 times more communications from patients.

The closure of workplaces has given people time with their families they never had before.

Dino Lin, a 40-year-old who works in an auto-part manufacturer, was lucky enough to move into a more spacious apartment in Shanghai just before the virus took hold, allowing his 5-year-old daughter Wowo Lin

to have her own room.

"We have been staying at home mostly. We are not forced to do so, but believe this is the best way to keep our family away from infection. ... I occasionally go



Left, dance teacher Alessia Mauri records a lesson to send to her students during the pandemic in Milan, Italy, in early March.

Photo by Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters

Top, Thomas Law Kwok Fai, a priest, conducts Mass streamed online for people to mark the second Sunday of Lent, after the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong suspended public masses.

Photo by Tyrone Siu, Reuters

Above, Dr. William Jason Sulaka looks at his computer as Dorene Blain, an information technology support analyst, leads a tutorial session on virtual appointments in West Bloomfield Township, Michigan.

Photo by Emily Elconin, Reuters

downstairs for daily supplies and food. My wife and daughter don't get out of the front door at all."

Lin was previously commuting weekly from Shanghai to the city in central China

where he worked.

"Now I finally got a lot of time to spend with my daughter and wife. We help our daughter build her own daily plan, which includes English, maths study, cello prac-

BOOK REVIEW: 'Solitary: Unbroken by Four Decades in Solitary Confinement. My Story of Transformation and Hope'

By Albert Woodfox | Grove Press New York | 2019 | 448 pages | Paperback | \$18

ALL ALONE

After decades in solitary confinement, Albert Woodfox fights for a better humanity

Review by ADAM SENNOTT
Contributing Writer

Albert Woodfox walked out of Louisiana's St. Francisville jail in 2016 after serving more than 40 years in solitary confinement for a murder he says he didn't commit.

While the decades-long battle to secure his freedom was finally over, Woodfox wasn't done fighting. Today, he considers himself a committed activist and revolutionary and is working for "a better humanity" by educating people about the horrors of solitary confinement, which he said "serves no purpose."

"It is a vicious weapon used by prison administrations and security forces to invoke fear and intimidation and control within the prison population," Woodfox said.

Woodfox served more time in solitary than any other inmate in the United States. In 1972, he was serving a 50-year sentence at Angola prison for armed robbery when he and a fellow inmate, Herman Wallace, were accused and later convicted of stabbing and killing a 23-year-old prison guard named Brent Miller. Shortly thereafter, an inmate named Robert King was convicted of killing another inmate. All three maintained their innocence but served decades in solitary confinement. They later became known as the Angola 3.

Woodfox documented his experience in solitary confinement and his fight for justice in his 2019 memoir, "Solitary," which was a finalist for the National Book Award and was listed among former President Barack Obama's favorite books of 2019.

The Bloodiest Prison in the South

The Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, where Woodfox spent the majority of his sentence, is the largest maximum-security prison in the country, according to Angola museum's website. Angola was built on a former slave plantation, and in the early 1960s, violence was so prevalent that it was known as "The Bloodiest Prison in the South."

Woodfox did his first stint in Angola in 1965, according to his memoir. The prison looked like the slave plantation that it used to be, and Black prisoners were expected to do field work, such as picking peas, cotton or sugar cane.

Institutional racism also affected the guards, Woodfox said.

"Of course, Angola was segregated," he said, "so the white prison guard had an advantage.

"Black prison guards could not order white prison guards around, but white prison guards could order Black prison guards," Woodfox said.

Survival in Angola meant inmates

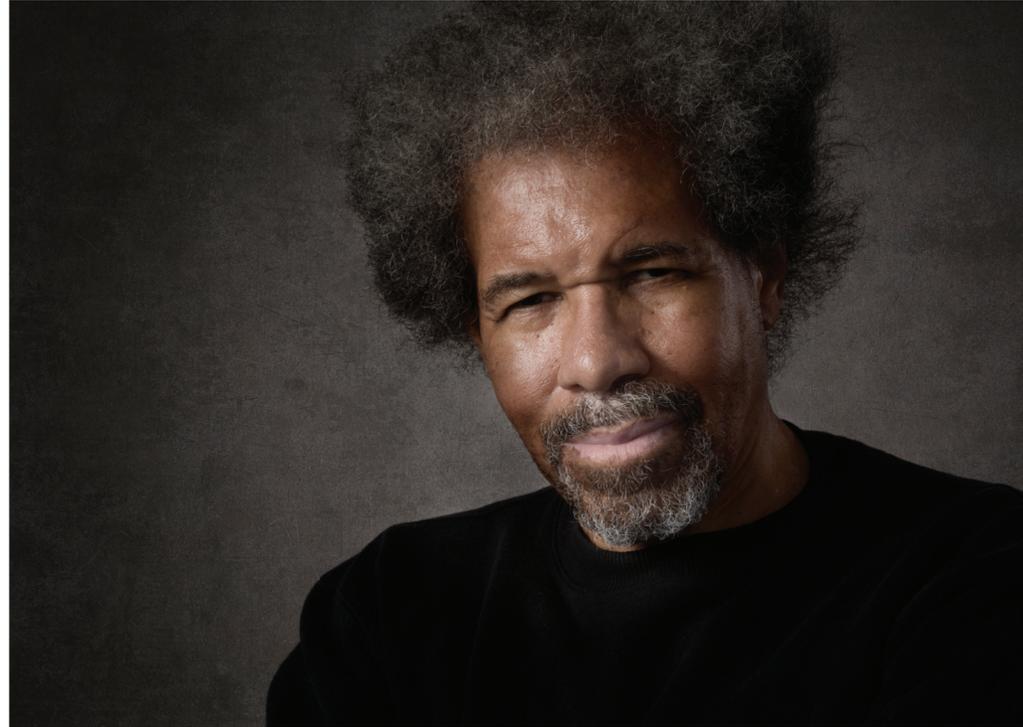


Photo by Peter Puna

Albert Woodfox served more than 40 years in solitary confinement for a crime he says he didn't commit. His book about the trauma, "Solitary," was released in 2019.

preyed on one another, and cases of rape and sexual slavery were rampant.

"It was a common practice where young kids — at that time they were locking kids [who were] 16-17 years old in state prison, Black kids — and so these kids, nine out of 10 times, were victimized" in prison, Woodfox said.

He said that the pimps were often protected by the prison security staff. "It's a practice that had been going on for who knows how long in Angola," Woodfox said.

Woodfox said he started standing up for victims of sexual violence at Angola after talking with an inmate who had been victimized.

"I had an encounter with a young man in the dormitory I was housed in who had been raped," Woodfox said. "I had accumulated enough self-education, enough wisdom, to recognize for the first time what a broken human spirit looked like."

Woodfox said that talking to the inmate and hearing his story made him realize that it could have been him, and he wondered what could have made a difference.

"It really had an effect on me," Woodfox said.

Black Panthers

Before his sentencing for the initial

robbery conviction, Woodfox escaped custody. He fled to New York and had his first encounter with members of the Black Panther Party, which taught inmates to read and become politically engaged.

"There was an extraordinary point in my life where a political organization of such magnitude, such power, [would] come into prison and say to me, 'Because of the way you carry yourself, because of the things you're involved with, you're a very worthy human being and we would love for you to be a part of us,'" Woodfox said. "To my knowledge, no other political organization in the history of the country had that kind of vision or had that kind of courage to do that.

"So, it was a very, very proud moment when I was asked to join the party right in the Orleans Parish Prison here in New Orleans," Woodfox said.

In his memoir, Woodfox said he learned the Panthers' 10-point program, which listed what members of the party were fighting for, including freedom, an end of police brutality, full employment and the release of all Black people held in the country's prison and jail system.

He said that being a member of the Black Panthers transformed him.

"For the first time, I realized that I was not born a criminal, that I had value

as a human being; I had a right to have dignity and pride and self-respect and that I could make a difference," Woodfox said. "But I just had to fight for it."

Woodfox said that being a Panther helped him, King and Wallace while they were in solitary.

"We had a political foundation that gave us an understanding, or an awareness, of what solitary was and the forces that existed that caused us to be in solitary," Woodfox said. "The first key to survival is knowing what you're being exposed to."

Solitary

Woodfox was placed in solitary confinement on April 18, 1972. While he never gave up hope that he would one day secure his freedom, he said he had no idea he would be locked away by himself for more than 40 years.

Under international law, solitary confinement may be imposed only in exceptional circumstances, and "prolonged" solitary confinement — in excess of 15 consecutive days — is regarded as a form of torture or ill treatment. Just last month, the United Nations' special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment, Nils Melzer,

"For the first time, I realized that I was not born a criminal, that I had value

SOLITARY Continued on Page 12

THE MIDDLE GROUND | By Sam Day



I'm just a poor country mathematician trying to add it up, like everyone else

Now: lockdowns within lockdowns.

Shelters are finding clients suffering from COVID-19. After getting them to hospitals, the shelters are locking down. Within a city that is already living under a lockdown order.

At Union Gospel Mission (UGM) in Pioneer Square, clients may leave but can't come back. So they must decide where they'd be safer: confined to a shelter where someone without symptoms could still pass the disease on, or outdoors, or trying to find another shelter that's taking new clients.

I'm no health expert, just a mathematician who grew up poor, chopping wood for a wood stove. I'm seeing the idea of confining homeless people in a shelter during a pandemic as a little bit odd. It seems to me if one person in the shelter is asymptomatic with coronavirus, you've got something like a lit wad of newsprint in a box full of kindling.

It's not as bad as I first feared. I originally thought that the shelter's staff were going to come and go as usual. Not so, according to clarification from UGM. Instead, the staff will consist of a crew who have all volunteered to stay on the premises 24/7 until the lockdown is lifted. So the only outside contact will be with people bringing supplies, and that is fairly manageable.

"Knock, knock!"
"Who's there?"
"Food delivery."
"Set it down outside the door, and go away!"

Still, the problem remains: The plague may already be in the castle. You Edgar Allen Poe fans out there know what I'm talking about.

Another way to deal with the danger



Adventures in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning

of coronavirus racing through shelters is to do what King County has started to do — namely, pay to put the clients into motels and hotels. This not only isolates the homeless people from each other, but it also serves as economic assistance for the motels and hotels. Which otherwise are doing badly because almost no one is traveling these days. This is being done for 400 homeless people — less than a tenth of the county's sheltered population, but it's a good first step.

Speaking of good news, the word is that rats are playing in parks left almost devoid of people. Isn't that great? Rats are happier now than they've ever been, and I'm happy for them.

Let's stick this out long enough to make other, more popular animals happy. I'm thinking of such as deers, bears, coyotes and mountain goats.

I look forward to seeing bears in Westlake Park. I'm enjoying having time to think. For example, I'm thinking, what am I going to eat, if and when either the grocery stores all close or I no longer have money to buy food at them? It's fun to speculate. Dandelions? Wood?

No worries, people. It will be at least four months before my food stockpile will have run out, and at least another month or two before I resort to cannibalism after having eaten all the string, cotton shirts,

Q-Tip ends and natural wine corks lying around.

For sanity's sake, I take frequent breaks from obsessing about survival. Last night while in bed, I worked out an algorithm for calculating the day of the week for any date between March 1, 1900, and Feb. 28, 2100. It wasn't the first time I've done this. This is not my first experience with prolonged social isolation. In fact, this algorithm is version 4. All you need to know is this one is twice as good as version 3. I'm not bragging. I'm only reporting the facts.

Until the internet shuts down, there will be endless amusement. My latest earworm is the Gold Digger's Song, AKA "We're In The Money!" Get the HD version on the YouTube. I'm also listening to a lot of the Statler Brothers' "Flowers On The Wall." "Playin' solitaire till dawn with a deck of fifty-one" — brilliant.

As of this writing, 10 million people in the U.S. have applied for unemployment benefits. There are probably another 5 million who haven't been able to make a claim for unemployment yet because the system is overloaded. By the time you read this, at least five days from now, the number of unemployed Americans per capita will likely exceed the peak number per capita during the Great Depression. They'll initially be granted 26 weeks of benefits.

By the end of October, more 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles will be completed than ever before in the entire history of humankind. Don't fear the future. Embrace the opportunities it brings. ■

Sound off to Dr. Wes: drwes@realchangenews.org

Table-Turning Theology



John Helmiere

Groaning and grounding

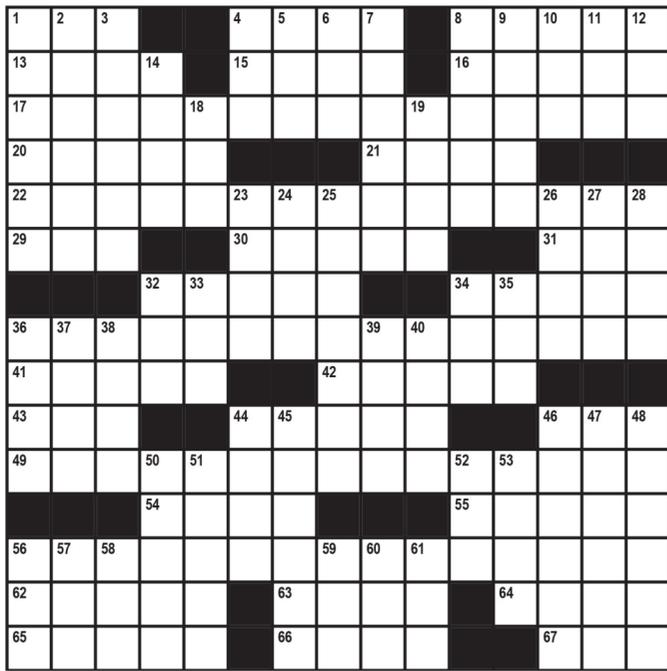
As the societal shutdown drags on, I find myself on tumultuous seas. I am tossed between troughs of despair and crests of equanimity. I do not think I am alone. All around, I hear groaning — expressions of fear, anger, helplessness, yearning and anxiety. And yet, I see grounding — people finding centering, calm, awareness and even awakening amid chaos. Everywhere, there is groaning and grounding.

I did my share of literal groaning at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, when I fell down a flight of stairs. I was running up to grab something with the hope that my children would not get up to mischief in the moment I was out of the room. My foot slipped on the top stair and I tumbled head over heels down the staircase. My head smashed a hole in the drywall where the stairs turn, and when I finally came to rest on the floor, I let out some mighty groans. At the sound, my children came running up to me, worry and wonder on their faces. My partner wasn't home, so I asked them to check if our housemates were around. When they came back with the report that it was just us, I took another look at them from my prone position on the floor. My pain was significant and the prospect of needing to go to the hospital for concussion, broken bones or bleeding seemed possible and dangerous since our city of Seattle was the epicenter of the national pandemic. But in that moment of groaning, I became grounded. My mind became clear and I knew what I needed to do, what to ask for, how to speak to the children and so on. Later, I was able to get the physical and emotional care I needed from the adults in my life, and I'm OK now.

I don't know how many of you have had a good cry, a freak-out, a raging lament over all this, but I bet it is a lot of you. I don't know how many have had moments of clarity and inner peace and wonder about the possibility for a different world. But I wager it is a lot of you. Groaning in pain and grounding in peace may seem like opposites, but in mystical spirituality, opposites are more often complementary than competitive.

In the mystical liberation story of Moses and Miriam leading the Israelites out of slavery under Pharaoh, the story begins with the "groaning" of the oppressed. The story repeatedly mentions that they "cried out" and "groaned." Their lamentation seems to pave the way for the spiritual grounding that follows from Divine encounter. When Moses and his people express skepticism that their position could ever really improve, God does not debate them. Instead, God reminds them that "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." This callback to their ancestors is a grounding move. It reminds them that they are not the first to live in anxious times.

In times of doubt and fear, may we find the courage to groan and the daring to be grounded. May we accept our own vulnerability and imperfection, and call upon the strength of our ancestors. May we live such that some day, those who come after us can remember our perseverance in these times and find grounding in their own. ■



All in It Together

Puzzle by Patrick "Mac" McIntyre

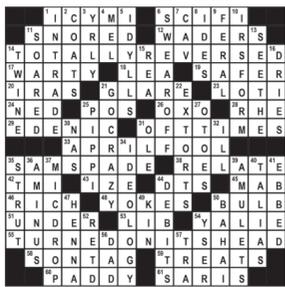
ACROSS

- 1 Chicago trains, briefly
4 Lowly worker
8 Hollywood Hawke
13 Tiny amount
15 Caspian feeder
16 As ___ as a \$3 bill
17 Important action step in corralling coronavirus (3 wds.) (2,5,8)
20 Oxnard, CA suburb whose name is Spanish for "the river" (2,3)
21 "Eso ___" (Paul Anka hit)
22 Important action step in corralling coronavirus (4 wds.) (4,3,3,5)
29 Texas-based low-cost carrier (Abbr.)
30 Lowest deuce toppers
31 Tony-winning Hagen
32 Evoks' home moon in "Star Wars"
34 Wood cutting and shaping tools
36 Important action step in corralling coronavirus (5 wds.) (3,2,4,2,4)
41 Country Music's LeAnn who won a Grammy at age 14
42 With all the ___ and whistles (enhanced to the max)
43 Common Market letters (Abbr.)
44 Prepare for winter takeoff, say
46 ___ Club (old televangelism grp.) (Abbr.)
49 Goal of 17-, 22- and 36-Across (3 wds.) (7,3,5)
54 "Peek-___!"
55 46-Down, as it is known to locals
56 Ultimate action step essential to corralling coronavirus (4 wds.) (4,2,7,2)
62 Character played by Gary Sinise in "Forrest Gump" (2,3) (incl. abbr.)
63 Jobs announcement of 2010
64 Vienna's land (Abbr.)
65 En ___ (all together) (Fr.)
66 "Nobody doesn't like ___ Lee"
67 Command for D.D.E. (Abbr.)

DOWN

- 1 As a verb, firmly plants... or, as a noun, some war correspondents
2 Stay out of sight (2 wds.) (3,3)
3 Breastbones (Lat.)
4 California's Big ___
5 Horse-and-buggy ___
6 Cheerleader's cheer
7 Male airplane pilot, slangily
8 Protestant denom. (Abbr.) (SPICE anagram)
9 Study of the nature of God and religious belief (Abbr.)
10 Sugar substitute?
11 Social/political activist and songstress DiFranco
12 Big Apple inits. (Abbr.)
14 Where to get off
18 Dress (up)
19 Metros and Prizms, originally
23 SeaTac flight data guesstimates (Abbr.)
24 Hot to ___
25 Huge memory storage unit (BIRETTA anagram)
26 Greek anise-flavored liqueur
27 ___ cell research
28 Comfort
32 Summer in France
33 1 and 1,000,000 (Abbr.)
34 U.S./U.K. divider (Abbr.)
35 Federal agency that oversees TSA (Abbr.)
36 Not kosher
37 Cambodian money
38 Village People's spelled-out disco hit
39 "Ugh; gross!"
40 Away from the wind, at sea
44 Actor Cole of TV's "black-ish" and "Angie Tribeca"
45 Small-capped Japanese mushrooms (ONE SKI anagram)
46 Czech Republic capital
47 Sajak or Trebek (2 wds.) (2,4) (incl. abbr.)
48 Rough shelter with a uni-sloped roof (4-2)
50 Spanish appetizers
51 Hearty steak (1-4)
52 Economic stat. (Abbr./Acron.)
53 Spiral or circular dot placed on the forehead of Buddhist images to symbolize a third eye
56 ___ Royal Dutch Airline (Abbr.)
57 Greek H
58 Op - ___ (some newspaper columns)
59 Antipollution org. (Abbr.)
60 Listening device
61 "Get a room" elicitor, for short (Abbr.)

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SOLUTION

Hosed Ya! April 1 Issue

Solutions to this week's puzzle will appear in the next issue.

Streaming to stay sane

Almost all King County events are canceled, so we're listing podcast and streaming options for optimal social distancing

Podcasts

"S-Town"

Serial and This American Life, 50-minute episodes

This podcast is probably one of the most enthralling you'll find. Brian Reed, the host, first connects with a man named John who absolutely hates his small Alabama town.

"The Daily"

The New York Times, 20-30-minute episodes

I'll be honest: I've been avoiding "The Daily" since the pandemic took hold. What's scarier than the news these days? Last week I decided to dip my toes in to see if I could handle the fright, and I was pleasantly surprised.

from personal experience).

"The Dream"

Stitcher, 40-minute episodes

Season 1 of this podcast explores a mysterious world that has probably affected someone we know - multi-level marketing (MLM) schemes (previously known as pyramid schemes).

TV

"Mad Men"

Netflix drama, 7 seasons

The 1960s "Mad" epoch is perfect for quarantine streaming for these reasons: (1) it transports you to a different time, (2) it doesn't shame you for having a casual drink in the afternoon and (3) it has the right amount of seasons to fuel a week (or more if you're patient).

around entertaining.

"Bon Appetit: Gourmet Makes"

YouTube how-to, 40 episodes

While this isn't technically a TV show, it is absolutely worth your viewing time. Claire Saffitz, a pastry chef in the Bon Appetit test kitchen, recreates classic snacks and treats from scratch.

"Tiger King"

Netflix docuseries, 1 season

After feeling like I couldn't escape the "Tiger King," I gave into the peer pressure. Believe me when I tell you this show is absolutely wild. It's hard to even recommend because it's almost impossible to know where to start, as evidenced by the lingo I'm throwing around: big cats, exotic animals, zoos, guns, murder, music videos, plural weddings - unbelievable!

see how the collective internet became obsessed with this show. Once you've seen it, it's almost impossible to avoid.

"Silicon Valley"

HBO comedy, 6 seasons

If you're looking for a laugh, "Silicon Valley" will get right to it. The show follows a company from its inception to its success/demise (no spoilers here).

RIGHTS Continued from Page 2

resources to our unsheltered neighbors.

2. Build systemic capacity for successful outreach

To meet these needs, policymakers should immediately facilitate the funding and coordination of systemic efforts to recruit and train more outreach workers. Outreach workers provide vital connections and services, including assisting unsheltered people with social distancing, hygiene and crisis management; outreach workers are a vital lifeline between unsheltered people and resources.

3. Convert congregate shelters to individualized units; ensure safe shelter space

Congregate environments are wholly inappropriate during an infectious disease outbreak, a fact that motivated 100 medical experts to urge San Francisco to make hotel rooms available to every unhoused person in the city.

4. Dramatically increase temporary individual housing units

The surest way to keep people experiencing homelessness from contracting and spreading COVID-19 is to provide individual spaces where they can isolate. Individualized units can be hotel rooms, trailers, RVs or other temporary units.

5. Aggressively bring permanent supportive housing to scale

Despite the present crisis, policymakers must not lose sight of the future. When

700 shelter beds and created 50 additional shelter beds. This growth is not to scale.

Most important, shelter staff need appropriate personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies. Shelters are spaces packed with people vulnerable to COVID-19, so shortages of personal protective equipment impact people at shelters as much as people in hospitals.

Policymakers must confront the grim reality that congregate environments will facilitate the pandemic. The only sound response to the crisis is to secure individualized units.

4. Dramatically increase temporary individual housing units

The surest way to keep people experiencing homelessness from contracting and spreading COVID-19 is to provide individual spaces where they can isolate. Individualized units can be hotel rooms, trailers, RVs or other temporary units.

Hotel rooms are especially attractive options. At least 11,199 people are experiencing homelessness in King County, while downtown Seattle has 14,000 empty hotel rooms. Nationwide, hotels are asking for a bailout of \$150 billion; instead, cities could use the hotels and pay them.

Securing hotel rooms through a competitive bidding process is a strong option. For example, hotels in San Francisco are bidding to allow the city to use empty hotel rooms for shelter spaces. San Francisco has already received offers for more than 11,000 rooms and signed leases for 300 rooms.

Policymakers can also rely on new federal dollars. The federal CARES Act designates \$4 billion for homeless Emergency Service Grants, \$5 billion for Community Development Block Grants and \$150 billion for general community relief funds, all of which could be used to secure hotel rooms for unsheltered people, and all of which allow any expense incurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis to be reimbursed.

COVID-19 is no longer a pressing concern, policymakers are still responsible for the over 20,000 people experiencing homelessness in Washington state. The number of people experiencing homelessness will likely grow because of social distancing's negative economic consequences.

Extensive research and practice shows that permanent supportive housing is the best intervention for people experiencing chronic homelessness. People are experiencing chronic homelessness if they (1) have been homeless for one year or longer or have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months in the last three years and (2) have a qualifying disability.

Permanent supportive housing is an evidence-based Housing First model proven to end chronic homelessness, increase housing stability and save taxpayer money. It's the kind of housing provided locally by DESC and Plymouth Housing, who are recognized nationally as leaders in this strategy.

Securing hotel rooms through a competitive bidding process is a strong option. For example, hotels in San Francisco are bidding to allow the city to use empty hotel rooms for shelter spaces. San Francisco has already received offers for more than 11,000 rooms and signed leases for 300 rooms.

Seattle and several other cities declared a homeless state of emergency years ago; the time to act boldly and urgently was then, but it is most certainly now. The steps outlined in this Call to Action will ensure the immediate and long-term health of our entire community.

Read this in its original form, with research links, at tinyurl.com/HRAPCIA. Learn about the Homeless Rights Advocacy Project at tinyurl.com/SUHRAP.

The Homeless Rights Advocacy Project (HRAP) is a research, education and advocacy program to advance the civil, constitutional and human rights of homeless people.

VENDOR PROFILE

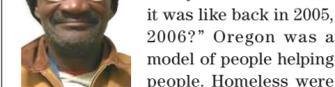
Gary says racism has become a problem, but Street Roots has been a bright spot

By ROBIN HAVENICK Street Roots

Not long ago, before the coronavirus epidemic took hold, Gary Barker was working the games at the Stanford Stadium in California, selling hot dogs. When Oregon fans were in the stands, he always noticed their joy.

Game after game, their happiness made him feel happy, too. So, he made his way up to Portland.

"This was back in the day when Oregon was Oregon," Gary said. "Can you remember what it was like back in 2005, 2006?" Oregon was a model of people helping people. Homeless were being helped by the entire community.



Gary Barker

After a departure to Arizona and with that "old Portland in mind," Gary rushed back to Portland in 2014.

"But it was a changed Portland, disappointing, upsetting, a place of sadness and violence and crime," he said. "To see Portland lost like that was shocking."

Gary believes that at its best, Portland was different from any other city. Diverse. Lovable. Now what he sees is racism.

"Racism started jumping out of the woodwork," he said.

To be called the n-word "is a total insult to Portland because it didn't used to be that way, people judging me by the color of my skin," he said. "This racism stands out. It's like going back to the '60s."

Born in Wichita, Kansas, Gary remembers racism of the 1960s from a Kansas perspective, a time of church burnings and riots.

He left Kansas at 16 to attend college in California, where he was enrolled at both the University of California-Berkeley and Laney Community College in Oakland. He was into theater and dance, acting and singing in a Black repertory theater in Berkeley.

He married his high school sweetheart, and the two moved back to Wichita, where he worked for Boeing as a tooling pattern maker. All told, he worked in the aerospace industry for 25 years.

The tragedy that turned his life around occurred Aug. 27, 1997, when he was robbed and hit in the head with a steel pipe.

"My cheek bone was shattered," he said, showing the 23-year-old scar. He could no longer work because of brain damage.

"It took me 10 years to recoup," he said. "I stutter. I have memory loss. I've forgotten my math skills. My writing skills have gotten better, but they were damaged."

Back in Portland, Gary began to "feel life again." He fell in love. While he can't shake the racism he encounters, Gary said his work with Street Roots makes him feel good. He appreciates his customers, people he calls his "advocates."

