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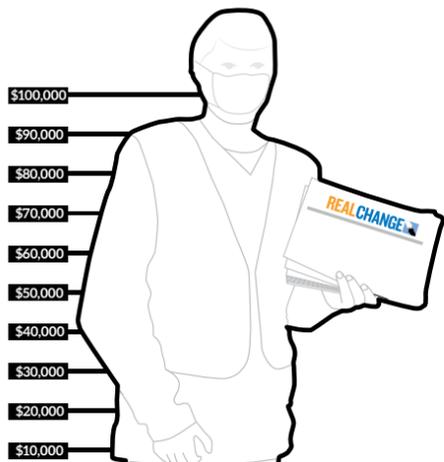
REAL CHANGE

MAY 20 - 26, 2020 ■ VOLUME 27 NUMBER 21 ■ REALCHANGENEWS.ORG

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LINE, COLOR AND CULTURE

Angelina Villalobos paints the world with wild, magical tones, p.6



SPRING FUND DRIVE

Your support will help us get through this rough time. Please contribute to help us reach our \$100,000 goal, **p.2**

FUNDING DOWN, NEEDS UP

King County is facing a \$79 million shortfall in the general fund, **p.3**

UNLIKELY ALLIES HATCH A PLAN

The Third Door Coalition proposes a \$1.6 billion recipe to end chronic homelessness, **p.4**

'NICKEL BOYS' ADDS UP

We review Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about an infamous boys school, **p.8**

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

Seattle artist Angelina Villalobos draws upon line, color and her heritage to create murals for commission and by donation all around the city. Story on page 6. Photography by Mark White.

SPRING FUND DRIVE

REALCHANGE
May 20 - 26, 2020



Longtime Real Change vendor Addis Michael Jr. speaks to a group of students in Occidental Park for the Homeless Speakers Bureau.

Photo by Jon Williams, 2015

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Your Spring Fund Drive gift keeps Real Change strong in uncertain times

It's been a rough few months for Real Change vendors, but hard times are always easier when you've got friends.

Your support has allowed us to distribute food, hygiene supplies and gift and cash cards while our vendors are out of work.

Your messages to individual vendors and continued volunteer work have told them they are loved and cared for, even when they need to stay home.

Now, we're asking for your help again. As suspension of street sales has eliminated circulation income from newspaper sales, meeting our \$100,000 spring fund drive goal is more critical than ever.

Your gift to the spring drive fuels opportunity, quality reporting, and effective advocacy during these unprecedented times.

Real Change transforms lives. Just ask Addis Michael Jr. Before he came to Real Change, Addis panhandled to feed his addictions.

"I was self-medicating then," he recalled. "As long as I could peacefully feed my habit, I felt I wasn't doing anything wrong."

At first, he said, selling Real Change was just another way to stay high. But before long, Addis wanted a better life for himself and the people he cared about.

"My customers made me feel like I was part of society. Despite the shape I was in, they lifted me up and encouraged me. Real Change showed me that people care. I found that I could escape the drugs."

Addis found sobriety, housing and a deepened faith in both God and community while selling Real Change.

He believes in a future where we all care for each other as much as people have cared for him.

Since late March, Addis and the rest of our vendors have stayed home and stayed safe. Your support has made that possible.

"When we pull together and stay together," said Michael, "there

is a bright light at the end of this tunnel. This world operates best when we help each other."

We have much work to do, and the stakes are high.

The coronavirus disproportionately threatens homeless people and communities of color, and recent progress toward adequate shelter and hygiene resources falls dramatically short of the need.

We're fighting for the basic needs and civil rights of Seattle's most poor. Your support makes that work possible.

Since Real Change suspended street sales to protect our vendors, we've reinvented our work to anticipate their shifting needs, and have:

- Moved our quality reporting online to keep the newspaper coming while street sales are suspended;
- Helped our vendors with unemployment claims, advocacy for stimulus checks and access to health care;
- Facilitated direct vendor payments through Venmo and provided cash and food support through the Vendor Relief Fund; and
- Kept our community safe by handing out masks, gloves and hand sanitizer.

Through it all, our vendors and staff have been overwhelmed by the generosity and caring of the Real Change community. Every gift, large or small, gets us closer to our critical \$100,000 goal.

A matching grant from the Lucky 7 Foundation means that gifts of \$150 or more will be doubled while funds last.

With your heartfelt support, Real Change will continue to be here long after this crisis has passed. We really are in this together. Thank you for being there. ■

— Timothy Harris



Change happens when we all help.

Please make a difference with your gift today.

Real Change offers low-barrier jobs, award-winning journalism, and anti-poverty advocacy. Our Vendor Center has remained open through the pandemic, and it is thanks in large part to donors like you.

Your gift of any amount makes Real Change possible. bit.ly/RealChange2020

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REALCHANGE
May 20 - 26, 2020

NEWS



File photo by Jon Williams

'The news is not good.'

\$397 million lost from metro

\$42 million from behavioral health services

\$79 million from the general fund between 2020-2022

'In fact the news is VERY BAD.'

Government revenue streams are trickling as needs overflow

By ASHLEY ARCHIBALD
Staff Reporter

Funding for mental health services in King County could take a \$42 million hit as the shutdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus eats away at sales taxes, according to King County Budget Director Dwight Dively.

"The news is not good," Dively said. "In fact, the news is very bad."

The sales tax forecast for 2020 through 2022 projects shortfalls of \$79 million to the general fund, \$42 million to Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) and \$397 million to King County Metro. The projections may be too rosy, Dively told King County councilmembers on May 5.

It's too soon to know what the impact will be, said Sherry Hamilton, spokesperson for the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), in an email.

"Yes, unfortunately we are looking at a significant reduction in the sales tax revenues that normally support MIDD," Hamilton wrote. "We are beginning discussions about priorities and options, both for 2020 and also looking at impacts to the 2021-2022 biennial budget currently under development."

MIDD funding comes from a 0.1 percent sales tax that brings in \$136 million every two years specifically for behavioral health for low-income people.

The reliance on sales taxes for ser-

vices like mental health is a weakness during an event like a pandemic, when funding takes a dive even as services are more necessary. The pandemic creates stress, fear for oneself, fear for a loved one and financial insecurity, all of which are associated with declines in mental health, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children," according to the CDC website. "Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger."

Coping with such stress can hurt mental health, cause changes in sleep or eating patterns, worsen chronic health problems and increase dependency on substances. Alcoholic beverage sales increased 55 percent in the U.S. by mid-April compared to the same time last year, demonstrating at least one way that people are handling the prolonged crisis.

That's a concern, King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn said.

"We've got a very, very serious problem on our hands we need to take a look at in terms of addiction and recovery," Dunn told his colleagues.

Shortfalls are a predictable consequence of funding services with sales taxes: Revenues drop as people with few resources start spending much less while, at the same time, lower-income people are

more in need of services. Washington is particularly reliant on regressive taxes on income and property because graduated taxes are unconstitutional and income taxes are banned by a 1980s state law.

Attempts to raise money for public services in other ways have been unsuccessful.

The city of Seattle passed an income tax on high earners that ultimately died in April when the Washington State Supreme Court refused to review the case. A tax on business was attempted in 2018 before the City Council repealed it. Seattle City Councilmembers Kshama Sawant and Tammy Morales are fielding an effort to raise taxes on business again, but the effort was stymied when Councilmember Lorena Gonzalez determined that meeting to raise taxes was against the governor's guidance on public meetings.

Cities, counties and states are having financial difficulties during the coronavirus as economic activity slows to a halt. They received some relief from the federal government's coronavirus relief fund, but additional help is at question.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in April that Republicans were not open to "revenue replacement" for local governments, only to walk that back a week later, according to CNN.

How states and local governments will overcome such dramatic revenue shortfalls without federal assistance has yet to be seen. ■

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Contact and confusion

Gov. Jay Inslee announced a new contact-tracing program that will identify coronavirus patients and those who have come into contact with them in an effort to safely open more businesses in the state.

There are 1,371 contact tracers trained in the state as of May 12, including members of the National Guard and the Department of Licensing and local health officials. They will interview coronavirus patients to get names of people with whom they have been in close contact. Those exposed will be asked to stay inside for at least two weeks after the date they interacted with the person who was sick.

The identity of the sick person will be kept confidential, according to a release by the Governor's Office, but tracers will ask for age, ethnicity, address and gender.

According to a survey conducted by National Public Radio, states had plans to put more than 66,000 people to work following up on infections and informing people who may have been exposed. That's 30,000 more people than when the network first surveyed states at the end of April.

The figure is still vastly below estimates of the need.

A letter cited by NPR and signed by public health officials suggests that the country will need more than 100,000 people to fully conduct contact tracing across the country.

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that people who have been exposed need to stay at least 6 feet away from others for at least 14 days and to monitor their temperature and other symptoms regularly.

Washington was one of the first states hit by the coronavirus. King County alone has more than 7,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and hundreds of people who have died of the disease. Those figures are likely only a hint at the total number of cases in the state, however.

Many people who have the coronavirus are either asymptomatic or have mild symptoms and aren't immediately able to get tested for the disease, meaning they can spread coronavirus without being aware.

Shortages of testing supplies hampered the initial response and even people with symptoms couldn't necessarily get tested. Even those who did could have gotten false results, depending on the test.

President Donald Trump denies that people in the United States have difficulty getting tested for the coronavirus while also saying that testing revealed more coronavirus cases, raising the numbers for the country.

"When you test, you have a case," Trump told reporters. "When you test, you find something is wrong with people. If we didn't do any testing, we would have very few cases." ■

— Ashley Archibald

OPINION: Tax Seattle's prosperous businesses

By ANITRA FREEMAN Guest Writer

WHEEL (Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League) is a grassroots organizing effort of homeless and formerly homeless women. One of our major projects for the past 20 years is a low-barrier shelter welcoming any woman, in any condition, at any time of night — the only shelter of its kind in Seattle.

COVID has impacted the homeless community severely. We welcome the Tax Amazon legislation proposed by Councilmembers Kshama Sawant and Tammy Morales. It would tax the most prosperous 2 percent of businesses to provide immediate relief for homeless people and others hit by the COVID crisis and to fund steps on the homeless emergency, building 10,000 new units of low-income housing.

Council hearings on this have been canceled for the duration of the Governor's stay-at-home orders, because it is deemed not "related to the immediate COVID-19 public health emergency." This is the only emergency COVID aid that is going to directly help homeless people!

We were already in an officially recognized, severe state of emergency. Now homeless people and everyone working with and serving homeless people are in this new emergency atop an emergency already stretched thin.

When you're homeless, you're always afraid. You're afraid while you're sleeping. Now add another fear on top of that.

You never have everything you need. You always have to choose between one need and another. Now you have new needs that your life depends on, and no new money.

WHEEL together with SHARE (homeless and formerly homeless men and women) provide a big slice of King County emergency shelter, some with church hosts. We provide it for each other, self-managed and self-maintained, providing dignity and empowerment along with survival.

We do it on a shoestring. It's been a scramble. Now it is a grind. It's nerve-racking and exhausting, and if we don't get help soon, it's going to be heartbreaking when we have to tell a woman that we have no room, and nobody else does either.

There's no mental health support for the people in shelter or the staff. No treatment support. No support. Hospitals are still releasing people to the streets with no housing — without even a shelter referral. Police brought a woman to the WHEEL shelter with severe mental health issues because the hospital had released her with nowhere to go!

There's no new shelter. New sites have opened to spread people out. That's not more beds. For 20 years, WHEEL has been able to say that no woman is ever turned away, no matter how full we are. Now we have to limit our capacity. WHEEL has asked repeatedly for hotel vouchers, like the ones given to several other programs, and for collaboration in planning added capacity. We haven't even received a reply.

The CDC advised cities NOT to sweep encampments at this time, but our city leaders went ahead and swept one in Ballard May 4. There was not enough shelter for everyone who had been living there.

Whenever the "shelter-in-place" orders are over, the rooms that were opened for "spacing" will close, the shelters that have been allowed to go to 24 hours will go back to night only, and there will still be no new beds, and no new housing.

Planning for the end of temporary help needs to start now, and the SHARE/WHEEL community needs to be at that table, with our experience and expertise. Let's not go back to "normal." Normal was killing people! Let's prove that we can meet an emergency at the scale of the emergency, and then continue to do it. We can end homelessness, if we actually try.

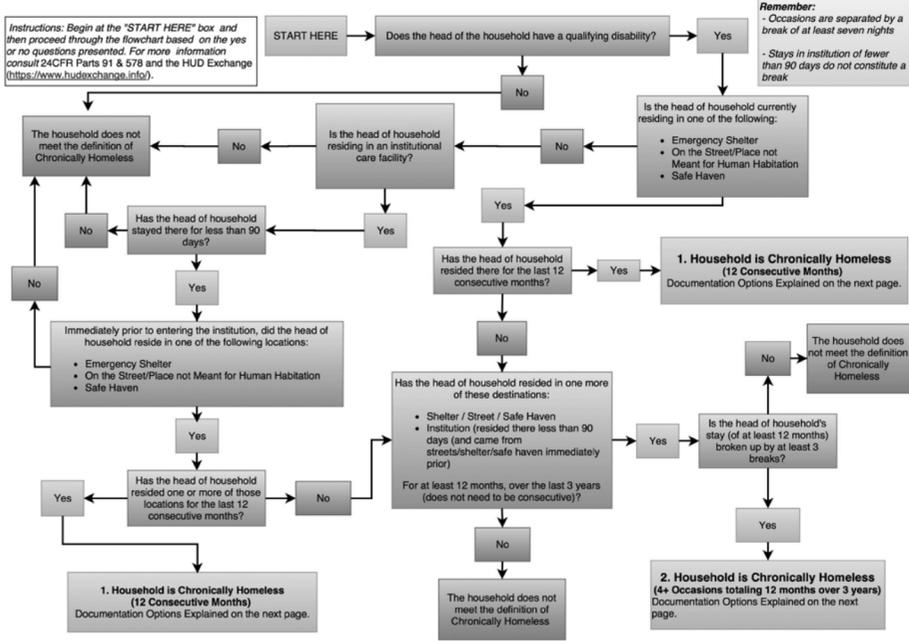
An effort at the scale of the emergency will take many times the amount targeted in this legislation. The Sawant-Morales Tax Amazon legislation is the biggest first step I have seen in 25 years. To do less would be like sending an expedition up Mount Everest with only half the needed supplies: The goal isn't going to be reached, and people will die.

There is no reasonable excuse for the council to delay this emergency legislation. It will save lives and lessen the misery that women living on the street are feeling. We need the city to tax our biggest businesses without watering down the councilmembers' proposal, without delay.

Thank you, Kshama, for getting the ball rolling. Now let's all get behind it and push, and get this done! ■

Anitra Freeman is a formerly homeless participant in WHEEL and SHARE and a founder of WHEEL Women in Black.

Flowchart of HUD's Definition of Chronic Homelessness



Businesses, advocates and academics unite to end chronic homelessness

By ASHLEY ARCHIBALD Staff Reporter

An organization formed by unlikely allies in business and homeless advocacy sectors proposed a \$1.6 billion plan to end chronic homelessness within five years by building 6,500 units of permanent supportive housing, but funding for the idea has yet to be finalized.

The Third Door Coalition — a group of businesspeople, academics and nonprofit leaders — alongside elected leaders from Seattle and the state said that the plan would house the people who are most visible and vulnerable in the community, and those who have been outside the longest.

Getting people who are chronically homeless into housing would mean a massive change in the quality of life for those individuals as well as the already housed residents of the city and county, said Sara Rankin, a co-chair of the Third Door Coalition and head of the Homeless Rights Advocacy Project at Seattle University.

"We believe that if we can make an impact with respect to the hardest to house, we can change minds and create momentum to solve homelessness more generally," Rankin said.

The backbone of the idea is straightforward: more permanent supportive housing.

Permanent supportive housing is not just an apartment. It comes with wraparound services and costs roughly a third of a household's income, whatever that may be. At \$1.6 billion over five years, it sounds like a lot of money, particularly for Seattle which would fund 10 percent of the effort even as the coronavirus decimates public coffers.

However, the same population is only a third of the homeless population in Seattle and King County, but accounts for a disproportionate amount of services, be it emergency response, hospitalization, police or time in jail.

It's the humane thing to do, but it's also the most fiscally responsible, which accounts for the strange bedfellows that make up the organization, said Chad Mackay of Fire & Vine Hospitality.

"Data, not drama, was our mantra from the start," Mackay said in a press release.

The data is stark.

The Third Door Coalition estimates that there are 6,500 people experiencing chronic homelessness in King County, a figure that is roughly double the num-

ber found in the annual point-in-time count that takes place in January. Chronic homelessness is defined by the federal government as whether or not a person has a disability and the amount of time that they've lived outside.

As a result, people who are chronically homeless tend to be more visible and have more complex symptoms, which means they can play an outsized role in people's perception of the homelessness crisis.

They also account for a large amount of public spending on the homelessness crisis, spending that could be directed elsewhere if they were inside. One year of permanent supportive housing costs the same as three months in King County jail and three days in Harborview Medical Center, according to Plymouth Housing.

One weakness of the plan is that it is, at its heart, a public-private partnership, marrying public money with funds raised from businesses or other outside parties. So far, there are no firm funders lined up, although the city of Seattle would be spending roughly \$160 million to make it happen.

"We share this framework today knowing it doesn't have all of the details," Rankin said. "Today was a really important step toward offering space for everyone to come together and work together on the proven solution."

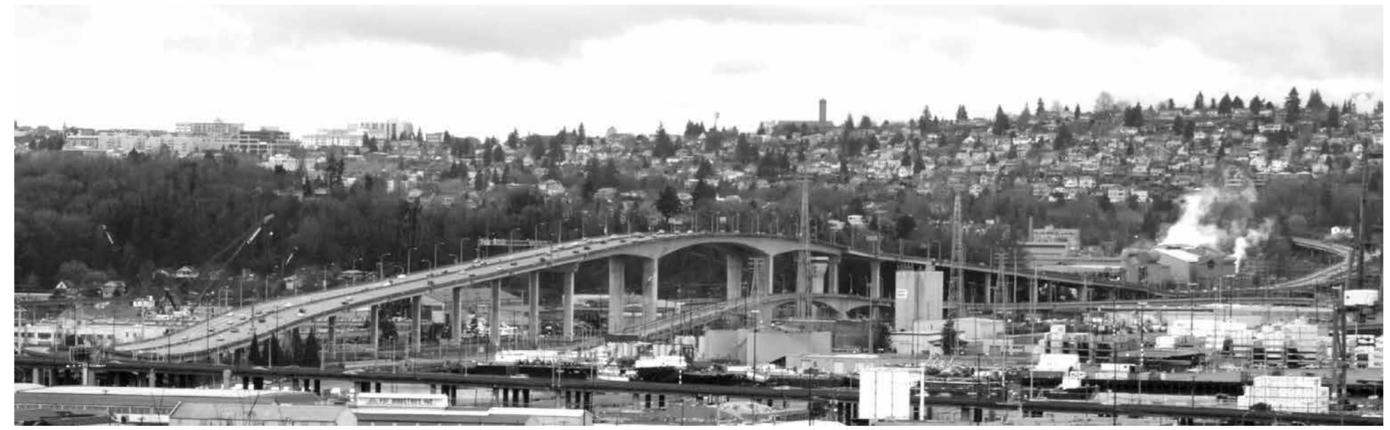
The concept of "Housing First" — getting people into homes without requiring certain behaviors of them first — is old hat in the homeless services community, and widely viewed as one of the most effective interventions at hand. However, the intervention relies on the availability of land as well as many, separate funding streams, often pieced together using federal tax credits.

It also depends on the public's willingness to allow such a complex. Seattle City Council meetings around affordable housing projects and legislation to fund or make housing projects possible are often met with commenters who say they support affordable housing, but it's not right for their neighborhood.

The plan does not offer a solution to that critical hurdle.

However, with homelessness topping the list of problems in the state's pre-coronavirus era, the Third Door Coalition's cross-sector nature does suggest that even groups with disparate notions on many subjects are ready to come together over solutions driven by data, and theoretically put money behind them.

"Government alone cannot end homelessness," Rankin said. "It has always been our collective responsibility." ■



2010 photo by Joe Mabel

The West Seattle Bridge can be seen from vantage points across Seattle, Washington, like here from the 12th Avenue South Viewpoint on Beacon Hill, while in use.

West Seattle Bridge closure exposes inequities in Duwamish Valley communities

By BUNTHAY CHEAM Contributing Writer

On March 23, the city of Seattle closed the West Seattle Bridge due to rapidly expanding cracks that rendered it unsafe for vehicle traffic.

The bridge will be closed until at least 2021 and may not be repairable, according to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) director Sam Zimbabwe. SDOT is still working to assess the full cost and timeline of needed repairs.

The city-owned bridge is vital to people living on the West Seattle peninsula, serving as the main route of access to the rest of the city for about 100,000 vehicles per day.

The main detour routes offered by the city take drivers through the Duwamish Valley and through the communities of Georgetown, South Park and along West Marginal Way.

Uncertainty about how long repairs will take and the impending influx of traffic and air pollution has residents in the Duwamish Valley worried, especially as COVID-19 shelter-in-place guidelines from Gov. Jay Inslee continue to ease.

"My immediate thoughts were, 'Where are the 90,000 cars going to go?'" said John Persak, a 14-year resident of Georgetown, upon learning of the bridge's closure. "And my immediate next thought was — well, they have to go through Georgetown because all of those West Seattle commuters that use that bridge are trying to access I-5, I-90 and, to some degree, downtown."

Persak helped draft a letter to the city with a coalition of Georgetown and Duwamish Valley stakeholders about the impact of the detour as it routes through the area.

"The biggest impacts will be along Michigan [Street] and Bailey [Street] particularly. We have an artist community around Fourth [Ave. S] and Michigan, but also Michigan where it intersects with Corson [Ave. S] is a congested intersection and with Carlton, which is a residential street," Persak said.

In 2009, the Duwamish Tribe opened its Longhouse, which is located along West Marginal Way across from the Duwamish River. For the most direct route to areas such as Alki or the Admiral District, commuters take West Marginal Way after

crossing over from Georgetown and South Park. That increase is having an impact on the cultural center.

"People drive too fast on West Marginal Way ... there's a lot of traffic in the morning and at night now," said Jolene Haas, a Duwamish Tribe member and Director of the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center.

While the lower Spokane Street bridge is still open, it is currently restricted to transit, freight, emergency vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

"My concern is [traffic coming from] the south, cutting through South Park and Georgetown to go to West Seattle ... they would have to come and cut through both communities that are already super impacted by air pollution and the traffic infrastructure. We're not prepared to get a hundred thousand vehicles in our small neighborhoods," said Paulina Lopez, a South Park resident and Executive Director of the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition (DRCC).

Some Duwamish Valley residents feel that the increased traffic will also stress an already outdated traffic infrastructure.

"I think the city has been behind on making investments in our active transportation network, especially down in this part of Seattle ... Georgetown and South Park," said Jesse Moore, a Georgetown resident and organizer for Duwamish Valley Safe Streets (DVSS). "We don't have the same options in the rest of the city to get out of our cars and reach our destinations efficiently."

Some residents hope what is happening with the West Seattle Bridge can shed light on issues Georgetown and South Park have continuously advocated for, such as access to essential needs that are unique to the Duwamish Valley.

"Other neighborhoods have a grocery store, they have a community center or a library," Persak said. "They have health care facilities. All of us [in Georgetown] have to leave the neighborhood to get all of those things. And so, if there's gridlock in the neighborhood, we either have to get into a car, which is time consuming; we have to get on a bus, which will also be caught up; or we have to attempt to bike for our more able-bodied people. And that presents its own set of challenges because of the existing conditions of not a lot of

places for bikes."

Residents say South Park, which is considered a food desert, has its capacity already constrained due to impacts from COVID-19. Increased traffic could put even more strain on access to community needs.

"Even now with this [COVID-19] crisis, there are families accessing the resources at Concord [International School] — families are going up there to get pickup lunch from the free lunch program — families who are picking up packets of work because they don't have the resources to access technology," said Peaches Thomas, who worked as a traffic ambassador for Concord International School in South Park and is a DVSS organizer.

South Park has a high concentration of households with children, and according to the City of Seattle's Duwamish Valley Action Plan, 83 percent of students qualify for reduced or free lunch, compared to the city average of 37 percent. Compared to the city average of 21 percent, 40 percent of households speak a language other than English, making homeschooling an access issue for households that are non-native speakers of English.

Air pollution is also a high-priority issue for residents. The City of Seattle's Duwamish Valley Action Plan revealed that asthma prevalence in the Duwamish Valley is 12 percent, compared to the city average of 9 percent.

"Beyond the pedestrian safety ... our biggest concern at PTA [is] also the air quality and the effect on our kids with asthma [because] of so many more cars," said Robin Schwartz, a South Park resident and member of the Concord International School PTA.

Another study, the Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis written by Just Health Action and the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group in 2013, found that "a range of health exposures and impacts disproportionately affect people in the Duwamish Valley, an area with the greatest number of contaminated waste sites, poorly built environment characteristics and severe air pollution compared to the rest of Seattle. Life expectancy in the neighborhoods of Georgetown and South Park is up to 13 years shorter than wealthier parts of Seattle."

"That's one of the biggest concerns we heard that keeps coming up — is we're already dealing with so much pollution in the [Duwamish] Valley. We're already dealing with lower life expectancy and higher incidence of childhood asthma," Jesse Moore said.

SDOT Downtown Mobility Director Heather Marx has been appointed by Sam Zimbabwe to oversee the West Seattle Bridge repair project. "Of course, the [historic environmental justice issues] were taken into consideration, but we don't have a lot of choices. There are only so many routes across the Duwamish waterway," Marx said, responding to whether historic environmental justice issues affecting Duwamish Valley residents were taken into consideration when SDOT decided on the detour routes.

"We like to focus on arterials [when deciding detour routes]; we don't want to send people onto neighborhood streets," Marx said. "We also focus on routes that are most proximate and most parallel to the road that's being detoured. In the case of the West Seattle Bridge, we have geography, topography and existing infrastructure not in our favor. ... This isn't the way I would have it, but it's what we've got, and we're making the best use of it."

Residents hope their voices will be included as plans to mitigate the bridge closure progress.

"We definitely want a seat at the table, because people are definitely perceiving this as a West Seattle issue and forgetting we're part of this," said Aley Thompson, one of the organizers behind a letter to the city from South Park community members.

"No, they haven't [reached out to us initially], and that's why part of the letter was like, we need to be sitting at the table making sure that they're considering our opinion of everything that they're planning," Paulina Lopez said, "that they should be bringing our community leadership and that we also get to decide on the mitigation measures. They're not here on the day to day. They're not here to see this reality."

These are some of the issues that were underscored in the letter that prompted Duwamish Valley community members

See BRIDGE Continued on Page 12



Photo courtesy of Angelina Villalobos

The grand piano designed by Seattle artist Angelina Villalobos was placed at Alki Beach.

COLOR ME WILD

Angelina Villalobos uses nature and fantasy to transpose possibility on reality

By KAMNA SHASTRI | Staff Reporter

When Angelina Villalobos was asked to paint a piano for Pianos in the Park in 2017, she did not paint just any piano. She passed over the uprights she was shown and went straight for a grand piano. She adorned the instrument with her signature color palette inspired by nature. Leafy greens, browns and soft mauves curled up the legs and across the curved body of the piano.



Photo by Mark White

Angelina Villalobos talks with Real Change.

"I love a challenge when it comes to difficult spaces," she said about painting all the nooks and crannies of a full-sized grand. "Oftentimes, difficult people, difficult spaces, difficult situations — people tend to shy away from them." The finished piano was installed at Seattle's Alki Beach, looking out over the blue waters all summer long.

Villalobos' style is illustrative and vibrant; color is everything. Even in her studio, her pens are color coordinated. When she paints murals, her paints are organized along the ROYGBIV color scale. This penchant for color came from Villalobos' early years spent in the Yakima Valley, where her father was a farmworker. Those years were characterized by the colors of the landscape — mainly, the yellows of the fields — and the organic shapes and flow of nature that surrounded Villalobos and captured her imagination.



Photo by Mark White

For a mural Villalobos created in White Center, she recalls, "...I'll just do happy little fish; a koi pond can be here; something beautiful can exist here."

Villalobos sees herself as a mix of country mouse and city rat. She was only in the Valley for four years and came to stay with her grandparents in Seattle after her father, who had been undocumented, was deported to Mexico and her mother became addicted to drugs. Walking through Seattle, through the warehouses in Belltown and the gray concrete of the city, Villalobos yearned for color and form. "I wanted to see my experience in Yakima on those fields and on those adventures we'd take with my sister there," she said.

Evolve like revolution

Villalobos was an introverted child who found solace and adventure in books. "I'm really quiet and shy; I was chubby; I had glasses; I was awkward. So art gave me an escape: I'm going to read my book and I am going to draw what I read," she said, adding that this is still the case.

Anything from "The Little Mermaid" to "The Ugly Duckling" captured her imagination, a common thread being the idea of transformation, especially when something tiny becomes something much larger. Comics, anime, folklore and fantasy meshed together for her to create a unique, illustrative style.

Villalobos characterizes her style as nature overgrowing a dystopian futurescape. Take the public mural she painted for the SODO track that runs along the Link light rail route: Blues and greens bloom across a gray warehouse, soothing an industrial



landscape with an earthen touch. Yet she sees nature being overgrown by the ever-expanding city.

Villalobos often borrows magical contexts to subvert and question the roles of women and religion that are not

"My major hang-up with canvases is it's only accessible to people who can immediately see it."

— Angelina Villalobos



Photo by Mark White

A mural, "Dragon Lotus," by Angelina Villalobos borders the Hangar Cafe in Seattle's Georgetown neighborhood.



Above, "Offering" challenges the traditional depiction of the Madonna and baby Jesus. "Lady Pear," left, and "Sleeping Lady," below left, show Villalobos' illustrative style.

Images courtesy of Angelina Villalobos

only prevalent in society but have been omnipresent forces in her own life.

Both of Villalobos' parents came from Mexican Catholic backgrounds, and she often explores the nuances of this identity through her art. Her family expected women to adhere to gender roles, and she went to church every Sunday with her grandmother while the men of the family could stay home and indulge in watching sports.

The Bible takes center stage, where she questions the angelic image and message of perfection placed upon Mary and Jesus. Villalobos created a series of black-and-white illustrations titled "Pray for Me" and "Offering" for a zine. These pieces depict the Madonna and baby Jesus as vulnerable characters who are not beyond the human experience.

"In a lot of [my] illustrations you see him crying because when you look at the Madonna, he looks so serene. In one drawing, I switched roles and I had Jesus be a gruffly dad with a cigar and sailor tattoos and the virgin Mary as the little girl, so just

picking at what these characters actually are because they are really just characters in a story," Villalobos said. Chuckling, she added, "My grandpa's going to be like, 'That is blasphemous!'"

For Villalobos, elders in her family would suggest that the ideal life for her included a stable marriage, fulltime motherhood or becoming a secretary. Villalobos pushed back and followed the artist's path. She completed a bachelor's degree in graphic design, but later realized she didn't enjoy working on computers so much and turned back to doing art by her own two hands. That choice was not easy.

"You don't want to disappoint the people you love. You don't want to feel like you are betraying anybody's expectations for you to be successful," she said, "but you have to be true to yourself, and at some point, you have to be stubborn."

Justice as accessibility

Central to Villalobos' philosophy is social justice and the accessibility of art for all people. That took shape in high school,

when she imbued her love of art with activism. At the time, she was attending programs at El Centro De La Raza in Beacon Hill, the neighborhood where she grew up. "They were really instrumental in making me aware of social justice and empowering me in making poetry," she said. "I kind of merged those two worlds, so that is how I got into doing street art."

Villalobos has three mediums: a black-and-white, line-drawing style; street art and mural work; and acrylic painting, where she gets to experiment more with color and shape. Recently, she realized she does not like painting in small spaces. "My major hang-up with canvases is it's only accessible to people who can immediately see it." She says that a piece of art only affecting one household or one person "is almost counterproductive to the mural work I do because I want art to be accessible to everyone." That is why she makes plenty of affordable prints and \$5 archival cards, so that even if someone cannot purchase the original design due to a financial barrier, they have other ways to connect to the work.

Also, Villalobos constantly looks for ways to uplift fellow artists, especially young people of color who may not have access to and opportunity in the art world. She helps other new artists prepare their portfolios, artist statements and biographies to get started on their own paths to success. Her desire to help other artists comes from remembering what it was like to struggle through the ins and outs of the industry on her own.

VILLALOBOS Continued on Page 11

BOOK REVIEW: 'The Nickel Boys'

By Colson Whitehead | 2019 | Doubleday | Paperback | 224 pages | \$15.95

SCHOOL OR PRISON?

Colson Whitehead's 'The Nickel Boys' is based on an infamous Florida reform school, where life is brutal and death is too common

Review by MIKE WOLD
Contributing Writer

In some novels, it's the situation — not the plot, not the characters — that moves the story. That's the case with "The Nickel Boys" by Colson Whitehead, which just won the Pulitzer Prize. Whitehead bases his story on a now-notorious boys' "reform school" in Florida that operated from 1900 to 2011, where brutal floggings and sometimes deaths were common enough to fill a mostly unmarked graveyard on the school grounds, and sexual molestation was common.

There's more than one way to approach a place like Whitehead's fictitious "Nickel Academy," also in Florida. One is to play up the atrocities and the agony, the brutality and the sexual molestation, to effectively sensationalize what occurs there. An opposite approach is the tack Whitehead takes: His matter-of-fact descriptions sometimes read like a case study.

That approach also serves to emphasize one of his points: A place like the Nickel Academy was not an exception or a deviation from the norm; it was merely an extreme manifestation of what might be called the punishment regime in American — and particularly white Southern — culture: "Their daddies taught them how to keep a slave in line ... Take him away from his family, whip him until all he remembers is the whip, chain him up so all he knows is chains." The school's practices (and those of its real-life model) were only partially hidden from the public, and there were many people who knew what went on there and chose to remain silent.

It's the early 1960s, and two Black teenagers are sentenced to the Nickel School. Turner is a smart, homeless street kid; he's been at the school before and intends to survive it again. Elwood, on the other hand, is a well-behaved model student, planning to go to college in the fall, and an admirer of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; he was arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Turner knows that the best way to make it out of the school is to keep his head down, seize what opportunities he can and take advantage of the system. Elwood, as soon as he understands that he's in a prison disguised as a school, sets out to change it. When Elwood gets in serious trouble while trying to break up a fight in

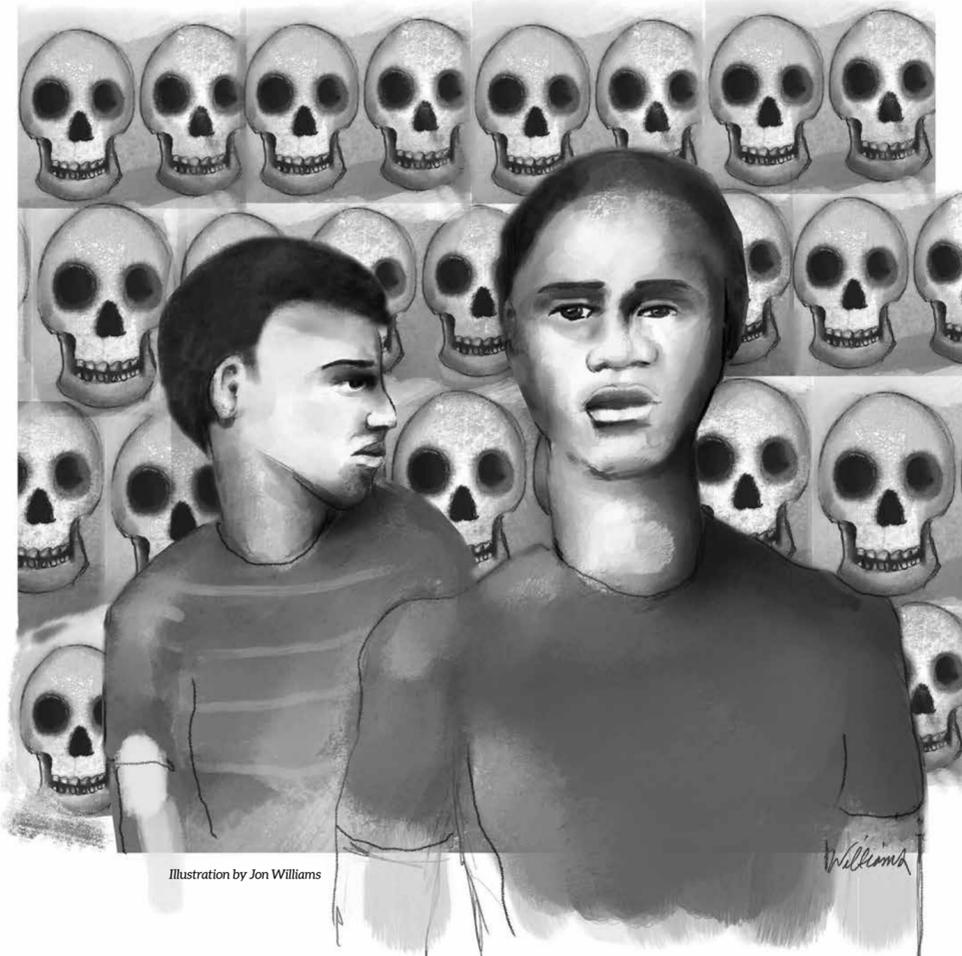


Illustration by Jon Williams

the bathroom, Turner befriends him.

The school also has white students, who are strictly segregated, and one Mexican American, who keeps getting bounced from one group to the other. Still, the school effectively functions as a metaphor for how racism and other oppressive systems can operate with a veneer of consent by the oppressed: There's no fence around the school, but trying to escape means being tracked down by dogs and subject to solitary confinement, beatings and worse.

There's also a veneer of normality about it. The school pretends to offer a real curriculum and even diplomas to its "graduates." A point system gives the illusion of a behavioral ladder that boys can climb to be released — except that the points are arbitrarily given and taken away by the staff. The annual Christmas pageant at the school draws visitors from miles around, and the boys get presents from townspeople. Boys who can keep

their mouths shut, like Turner, get unpaid "training" jobs in the nearby town, delivering school supplies, such as food, tools and clothing, that are being illicitly sold to grocers and hardware stores, or doing maintenance work for members of the school's Board of Trustees.

Turner gets Elwood on the crew for working in town — any chance to leave the school grounds is welcome — warning him to keep his mouth shut about the corruption he sees. Elwood, still trying to find a way to nonviolently change the system, keeps notes on everything. When he tries to get his information to the State of Florida, he finds out that the corruption extends a lot farther than he had realized.

Elwood's insistence on the power of loving resistance contrasts sharply with the regimen at the school, but Turner's friendship for Elwood creates the tension around that philosophy that makes the book more than just a horror story. Turner

knows that Elwood can't succeed. Elwood may believe in Martin Luther King's philosophy, but he is an inverted dreamer, not an organizer. Turner is attracted by this mixture of idealism and naiveté, as well as Elwood's evident intelligence and his unwillingness to accept things as they are. Turner helps get Elwood's report out of the school, even though he suspects it will backfire. In the end, Elwood's biggest impact is to change how Turner thinks. As Turner puts it, "It was not enough to survive, you have to live."

The truth about the Nickel School, like the real-life Dozier School in Marianna, Florida, doesn't come out until after the school is closed and archaeology students from the University of Florida discover many more skeletons than had ever been documented in the records. "The Nickel Boys" is a story that needed to be told and a reminder of the corruption that feeds on silence. ■

THE MIDDLE GROUND | By Sam Day

'Your honor, of what am I being charged?'
'You're charged with having been charged'

Trump now accuses Obama of a crime, but won't say what crime. ("You know what he did.") If he can do it to a former president, he can do it to anyone. This is very dangerous behavior. Also dangerous is Mitch McConnell saying Obama "should have kept his mouth shut" rather than criticize the administration's COVID-19 response.

It's pretty clear to me that Trump considers Obama's crime to be just that criticism. Trump has long said he believes that any criticism of him or his policies should be illegal. He's called for changes in the law to make it easier to charge someone with slander or libel. There's been no such changes in the law, but that reality doesn't seem to be a problem for him. What he can't do in a court of law he can do with his supporters backing him up, acting as a jury.

It's a pretty stupid jury that would say a defendant is guilty of a crime because the prosecutor said he was, even if the defendant was not ever charged with a crime. Judge to defendant: "You have been charged with a crime. How do you plead?" "I don't know what crime I'm being charged with. No one has stated a charge." Judge: "You know what you did. Everyone here knows what you did." "OK, not guilty then." Judge: "You just perjured yourself. We all know you're guilty."

And so forth. This form of justice was very popular in the Inquisition. If it catches on, the U.S. is in for some pretty dark times.

In other scary news, Jared Kushner stunned most of the country last week by suggesting that he had some role to play in deciding whether or not November's gen-

Adventures
in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning

eral election would be canceled, presumably because his father-in-law made him in charge of the coronavirus response.

Meanwhile, the president is spouting nonsense about how voting by mail is too liable to fraud, even though this state has been doing it for years without any serious problems.

But plenty of states are holding off from setting up voting by mail. So, as the general election approaches, Trump could be in a position to declare a national emergency calling for indefinite postponement on account of the coronavirus. Jared Kushner was probably in the room when the idea was floated.

The spike in COVID-19 deaths, almost sure to happen following the August primaries for federal legislators, will support the idea that the general election would be too dangerous.

Of course, there's nothing at all in the constitution that grants the president the power to cancel federal elections, but this is the president who says the constitution says he can do anything he wants to.

Article 2, Section 1: "The executive Power, which is All the Power in the Whole Wide World, shall be vested in a President of the United States of America, whose name will be Donald J. Trump. But not before then, because Obama. Amen."

The best news this week as far as

I'm concerned is that Boston Dynamics shipped their robot dog Spot all the way to Singapore so he could roam Singapore's parks, nagging people to practice social distancing.

When I lived in Switzerland for a year, way back when you couldn't buy sliced bread and cow's milk was only for calves, they had little old ladies to do all the nagging. One day I was walking in a park along Lake Zürich and I saw a big rock about three feet high and, having been walking all day, I sat upon it. Within seconds, a little old lady came up to me to say, "Don't you know it's forbidden to sit on rocks in the park?" except she said it in German, so I could pretend I didn't understand. "Jaja, no hablo alemán." (I didn't say that. I got off the rock. This is just my fantasy now.)

It's hard to argue with a little old lady saying "Weisst du nicht? Das ist verboten! Verboten!" But robot dogs don't have that moral authority.

It seems most people regard robot dog Spot as a sign of the End Times, but I think he's adorable. If a robot dog told me it was forbidden to sit on rocks in the park, I would pat his headless body where his head should be and say, "Oh, look at the good little doggy woggy. Isn't he so precious!"

Or I'd say, "Hey, why aren't you wearing a mask?" ■

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

Intersectional
Idealism

Jill Mullins

Title IX regulations,
or lack thereof

The Department of Education released new Title IX regulations. Title IX is the ban on sex discrimination in education. A refresher: On the federal level, Congress passes laws; the application and enforcement of many laws is often handled by administrative agencies — in the case of Title IX, the Department of Education.

Administrative agencies are part of the executive branch. The agencies issue regulations and guidance to ensure people understand how the laws will be enforced.

The Republican Party has a platform of de-regulation. This effectively means eliminating the enforcement of the laws passed by Congress to protect citizens and our lands/environment.

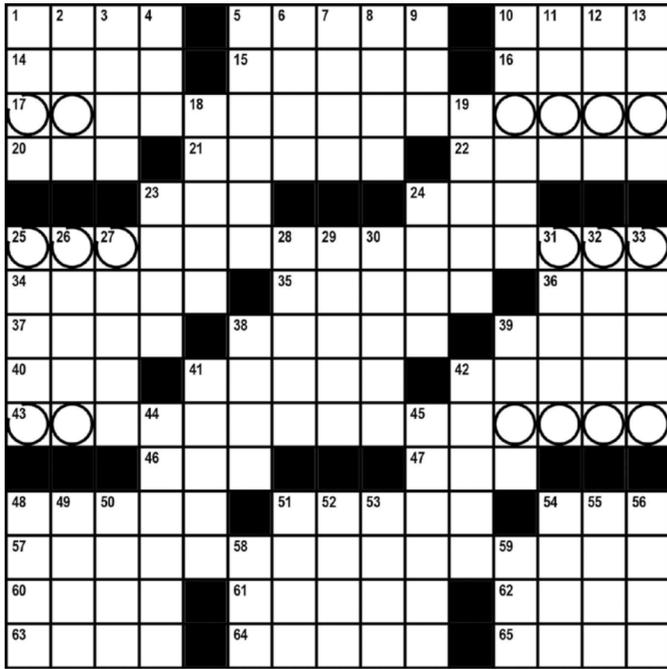
Regardless of the political party in power, addressing sexual harassment and assault in education have long been controversial. In 1990, Antioch College pioneered the first affirmative consent policy. The backlash was intense. The prevalent view was affirmative consent would destroy the romance of sexual interaction (because apparently rape is romantic).

Opponents of Title IX believe that schools are unequipped to investigate sexual harassment and assault. Their solutions, embodied in the new regulations is to create a presumption that harassment and assault have not occurred, to make it harder for victims to report and harder for schools to be held accountable for not addressing harassment and sexual violence. They often couch their position in terms of protecting boys and men.

This framing is intentional. Patriarchy, sexism, sexual violence, discrimination, racism, and all the isms weave together and reinforce each other so that no lives matter. The more oppressed categories you are in, the less your life matters. But theories of superiority obscure the reality that systems of oppression create no good choices.

For example, patriarchy demands the sacrifice of male bodies in differently dehumanizing ways. Male bodies are disproportionately the victims of war, industry and non-sexual violence. Which is one reason why affirmative consent and bodily autonomy is so dangerous. Because if women's bodies (and all gender non-conforming bodies) should be free from violence, why shouldn't men's bodies?

The weakening of Title IX is another sign of the times that we must not overlook. Similar to the failure to enforce the ban on sex discrimination, failure to employ the Defense Production Act to produce personal protective equipment and testing for COVID-19 is a failure to use the laws Congress passed to resolve foreseeable concerns. We have lost close to 100,000 lives unnecessarily. Systemic inequality and the weakening of non-discrimination laws (and other equal access laws, like those related to voting) have meant that a disproportionate number of the lives lost are communities of color, particularly Native Americans, which is intensified by our lack of honoring our treaty obligations and tribal sovereignty. ■



It Could Happen, Y'know

Puzzle by **Patrick "Mac" McIntyre**

ACROSS

- 1 Street fleet
- 5 Word that may be a lead-up to "television" or "tower"
- 10 Quarrel
- 14 Cream shade
- 15 Some colorful food fish
- 16 "I am woman, hear me ___" (classic Helen Reddy lyric)
- 17 With "the," a recreational activity widely associated with flappers, speakeasies and the 1920s (2 wds.) (10,5)
- 20 One of the 4 depicted on every one- and five-dollar U.S. bill
- 21 "Old MacDonald" refrain (1-1-1-1-1)
- 22 Out of practice
- 23 Aliens, for short (Abbr.)
- 24 Body ___ (video technology for policing the police)
- 25 Film type often selected as a first date flick (2 wds.) (8,7)
- 34 "Ouch! That hurts!"
- 35 Face-to-face exams
- 36 Application for the Mr. Universe contest?
- 37 Palindromic time of day
- 38 One might be seared on a steer's rear
- 39 Thomas Edison's middle name
- 40 "Eeew!"
- 41 Like wallflowers, typically
- 42 Braid of hair or the "P" in RSVP
- 43 Its absence in the brain may be directly related to anxiety and/or depression (2 wds.) (8,7)
- 46 Targets for a crunch crusade
- 47 Greyhound vehicle
- 48 Ala. ____
- 51 Jewish wedding rings?
- 54 Tiebreakers, briefly (Abbr.)
- 57 What someone hoping for something that's possible but highly unlikely has... or a hint to a feature of the 3 other long answers in this puzzle (3 wds.) (2,7,6)
- 60 Shape employed in many rating systems
- 61 "Farewell, mon ami"
- 62 Country singer McEntire's self-styled 1988 album title
- 63 "Time and ___ wait for no man" (Chaucer)
- 64 Heals, as a broken bone
- 65 The "Say Hey Kid" of the Giants from 1951-72

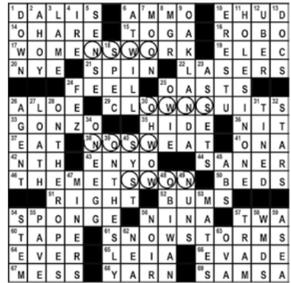
DOWN

- 1 Gospel singer Winans whose name sounds like an enthusiastic agreement in Spanish
- 2 Hurting all over
- 3 Scottish hillside
- 4 Big ____, Calif.
- 5 1996 best-selling guide for "grammarphobes" (3 wds.) (3,2,1)
- 6 Cathedral recess
- 7 Jacques of "Mon Oncle"
- 8 What often follows "ah" and precedes "Gesundheit!"
- 9 Sister channel of QVC (Abbr./Acron.)
- 10 Kind of med. center
- 11 Charged particles
- 12 It's the truth
- 13 Rocker Glenn of "The Eagles"
- 18 "___ take you down 'cause I'm going to... Strawberry Fields..." (Beatles lyric) (2 wds.) (3,2)
- 19 Apothecary weights equivalent to 1/16th of an ounce
- 23 "___ go bragh!"
- 24 Far from the target, in a children's guessing game
- 25 "Scratch any ___ and you will find a disappointed idealist" (Geo. Carlin)
- 26 Illegal liquor, informally
- 27 Came out of a sleep state
- 28 Desmond portrayed by Gloria Swanson in "Sunset Boulevard"
- 29 "Monty Python and the Holy ___"
- 30 Grammy category
- 31 Pitching Hall-of-Famer Ryan
- 32 Palindromic Honda model
- 33 Fill with joy
- 38 They may be flicked at rock concerts
- 39 Word often uttered with a sigh
- 41 Dalai Lama's homeland
- 42 Luxurious
- 44 What the "M" video game rating stands for
- 45 Ancient calculating device that's still being used throughout the world
- 48 Large percentage of names in film credits, typically
- 49 Pro: for :: ___ : against
- 50 Word before "work" or "warrior"
- 51 Online option that turns into "show" when clicked
- 52 Scandinavian war god
- 53 Part of many a woodwind instrument
- 54 Most fit rating for a military draft (3-1)
- 55 Leading inits. in frozen desserts
- 56 Group that includes the Caribbean and the Mediterranean
- 58 Yosemite ____ (Bugs Bunny adversary)
- 59 Something up a magician's sleeve

SOLUTION

Blizzard
May 13 Issue

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



Donate an old car to REAL CHANGE
1.877.537.5277
realchangenews.org/index.php/site/giving

Streaming to stay sane

Almost all King County events are canceled, so we're listing streaming events for optimal physical distancing

May 25

Online Improv Workout
7-8:30 p.m., pay what you can, Zoom info with registration at tinyurl.com/yd69xhh2

Have you taken improv classes before and feel like getting back in the game? And by the game, I mean practicing and performing improv in your living room. Unexpected Productions is hosting this 90-minute workshop that will lead you through games, exercises and open scenes to reinforce and hone your improv skills. Unexpected Productions Veteran Paul Levy and Education Director Jill Farris will be there to provide constructive feedback along the way. Improvisation seems just as important a skill to develop as baking endless banana bread, so enjoy!

May 27

Do's & Don'ts of Separation & Divorce Meetup, 5:30-7 p.m., free, register at tinyurl.com/yccrm0jt

Full disclosure: This event is hosted by a law firm, but because the topic is often "taboo" and the experience can be isolating, it could be an important resource. If you find yourself in a separation or divorce, this meetup will offer a Q&A with a top divorce attorney, a certified divorce financial analyst and a certified

real estate divorce specialist. A licensed family and marriage counselor will also be present. The meetup recurs on the last Wednesday monthly, if you miss this week's or find yourself suddenly needing some info.

Photographing Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest, 6:30-9:30 p.m., free, register at tinyurl.com/y7z2uyqc

Despite the fact that the spring season felt sort of canceled, the blooming of the Pacific Northwest continued on without interruption. Advocates Alanna Jonson (environmentalist and amateur photographer) and Jennifer Carr (nature photographer and educator) will host a webinar on how to identify and photograph the flowers of this beautiful region. You'll learn techniques to identify and photograph wildflowers, following nature-first principles, and you'll gain a new appreciation for these local wonders. Now you can add zest to your daily walks by running into your new friends — the beautiful blooms.

May 21 and 28

Weekly BrainDance, 1-4 p.m., free, Facebook and Instagram Live, tinyurl.com/ydbt7env

What is a BrainDance, you might be wondering? Well, it's a series of eight

movement patterns that can help us feel more awake, grounded and refreshed. This help from Seattle Theatre Group is much appreciated while sheltering in place. The BrainDance is friendly for all ages and abilities, so gather a crew from near and far for a nice midday break. Also, may I add that now is a time to really dance (BrainDance included) like no one is watching? Let loose and have fun with it!

Digitizing Your Family Photos, 5-6 p.m., donations encouraged, register at tinyurl.com/y8tep8dv

Remember when photographs lived outside of screens on actual paper?! The Southwest Seattle Historical Society wants to help you organize your old family photos, like those stashed in a shoebox in the back of a closet or collecting dust on your grandma's bookshelves. Collections Manager Rachel Regelein will walk you through the basics to digitize these parts of your history, answering questions: How do you best scan a photo nowadays? What is the best file type for storage? Where do you even start? And many more. There is also a downloadable reference guide available for you after the workshop to continue the project. I hope this made you feel as nostalgic (read: old) as me for the days of printed photos!

May 30

Pole with Purpose: A virtual competition for COVID-19 relief, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., donations encouraged, Facebook Live, tinyurl.com/yd5ag4rl

Pole with Purpose is an all-day competition with 80 participants from all over the world. The judges will provide feedback to every participant and give lighthearted titles and fun awards. The donations will go to support people who have lost their income due to COVID-19, including the event staff of Seattle's Positive Spin Pole Dance Gym, as well as Sex Workers Outreach Project-Seattle. Tune in for a fun-filled day of watching rare and wonderful performances!

Calendar compiled by **Michelle Galluzzo**. Got something we should know about? Email it to calendar@realchangenews.org. The deadline for calendar submissions is nine days prior to the date of publication.

Ahmaud Arbery's killing highlights the risk of jogging while Black

By **RASHAWN RAY**
The Conversation

Unsteady cellphone footage follows a jogger — an apparently young, Black man — as he approaches and attempts to run around a white pickup truck parked in the middle of a suburban road. Moments later, he lies dead on the ground.

The killing of Ahmaud Arbery took place Feb. 23, after the 25-year-old was confronted by Gregory McMichael, a 64-year-old former police officer and investigator for the Brunswick, Georgia, district attorney's office, and his 34-year-old son, Travis. It took 10 weeks to gain widespread attention with the circulation of video footage on social media, prompting revulsion and calls for justice.

Gregory and Travis McMichael were both taken into custody on May 7 after charges of murder and aggravated assault.

Death in suburbia

The killing of Arbery by people with links to law enforcement raises important questions over why it took so long to make arrests in the case and the so-called blue wall of silence that extends from law enforcement agencies to prosecutor's offices and courtrooms.

But there is a separate question that needs to be asked: Why do these incidents seem to occur in certain types of neighborhoods? Satilla Shores, where Arbery was killed by the McMichaels, is predominately white and suburban. It evokes memories of the killings of Trayvon Martin, Jonathan Ferrell, Renisha McBride and Tamir Rice.

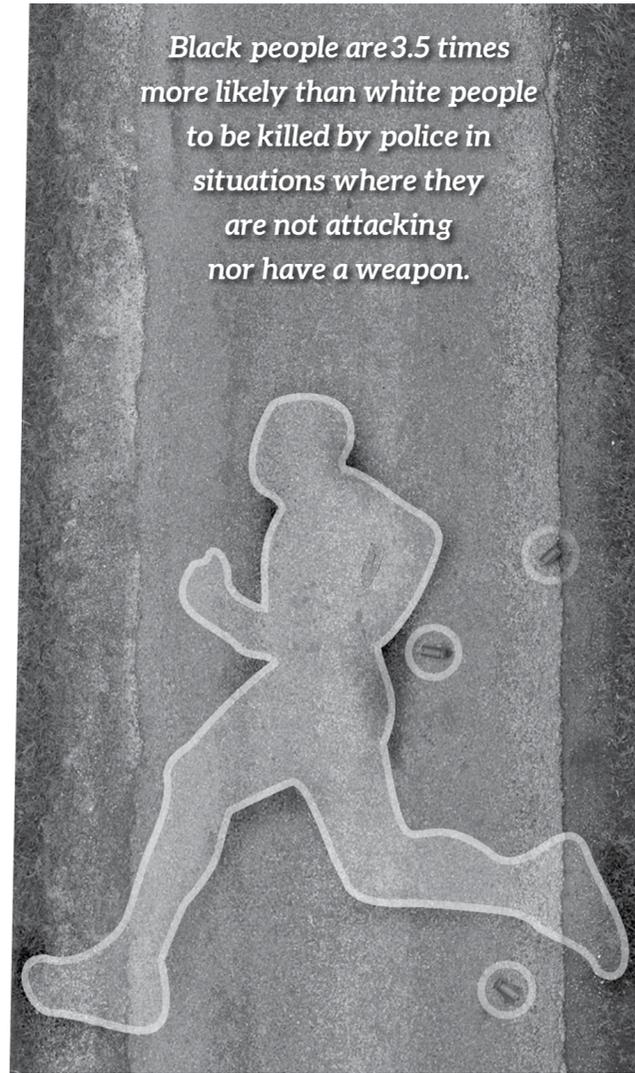
As a sociologist and public health scholar, I have studied physical activity and how it varies by race and social class. I know that the exact behaviors that are encouraged to extend life for all are the exact ones that can end the life of men like Ahmaud — in short, jogging while Black can be deadly.

In 2017, I published a study on physical activity — focusing on where and how people exercise, and breaking this down by race and gender. I surveyed nearly 500 middle-class Black and white professionals around the United States. The research also included in-depth interviews, focus groups and observations of public spaces in cities with varying racial and class compositions, including Oakland and Rancho Cucamonga, California; Brentwood, Tennessee; Bowie, Maryland; and Forest Park, Ohio.

I found that race and place significantly inform where people engage in physical activity: White men, white women and Black women living in predominately white areas were significantly more likely to engage in physical activity in their neighborhoods. Black men living in predominately white neighborhoods, however, were far less likely to engage in physical activity in the areas surrounding their own homes.

Good neighbors?

Black men I interviewed who had jogged in white neighborhoods where they lived reported incidents of the police being called on them, neighbors scurrying to the other side of the street as they approached, receiving disgruntled looks and seeing the shutting of screen doors as they passed. Similar experiences have



been documented in public places like stores, restaurants and coffee shops.

Black men are often criminalized in public spaces — that means they are perceived as potential threats and predators. Consequently, their Blackness is weaponized. Moreover, Black men's physical bodies are viewed as potential weapons that could invoke bodily harm, even when they are not holding anything in their hands or attacking. In fact, Black people are 3.5 times more likely than white people to be killed by police in situations where they are not attacking nor have a weapon.

My research highlights that the social psychology of criminalization — the inability to separate concepts of criminality from a person's identity or role in society — is important here. Often, physical features such as skin tone are used to guide attitudes, emotions and behaviors that can influence interactions between people of different races and lead to oversimplified generalizations about a person's character. For Black men, this means that negative perceptions about their propensity to commit crime, emotional stability, aggressiveness and strength can be used as justification for others to enact physical

force upon them.

Signaling or survival?

Some Black men attempt to make themselves less threatening. When it comes to jogging in white neighborhoods, some of the Black men I spoke to wore alumnus T-shirts, carried I.D., waved and smiled at neighbors, and ran in well-lit, populated areas.

This is hardly surprising. Black men do this at work by thinking consciously about their attire, tone and pitch of voice, and behavioral mannerisms. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Black men are going to great lengths to reduce criminalization by staying in the house, wearing colorful masks and even forgoing masks altogether. Sociologists call it a signaling process. Black men call it survival.

An irony in the case of Ahmaud Arbery is that it has set in motion a campaign that could see more Black men putting on their running shoes. The #IRunWithMaud social media campaign is encouraging people to jog 2.23 miles — a reference to the date on which Arbery was killed. ■

Rashawn Ray is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Maryland.

VILLALOBOS Continued from Page 7

"When you think about who has access to art school — or, in my industry, street artists — who are those people? Usually, they are white males," she said.

"What is the point of paving a path for other artists to follow if you don't look behind and make sure that they are coming along with you?"

Villalobos wants to see more people of color in arts spaces and often works with youth in partnership with Urban Arts. She has clever ways of teaching them about color theory and imparting life lessons when students act up. She tells them their destiny is in their own hands; they can do something in reaction to a negative person or situation in life or *in spite* of it.

Villalobos mentions how dehumanizing the idea of being a "starving artist" can be and thinks of the stigma she and her parents have faced because of her parents. "Other people look at me, the daughter of an illegal immigrant and a mother that is addicted to drugs her whole life — I think I am doing pretty good, and when you say [starving artist], it's actually pretty condescending. It's invalidating."

Villalobos has painted beautiful commissioned murals with private clients, such as Microsoft and Starbucks, as well as city and community art projects. Many of her murals feature animals, which she often decorates to signify that they are precious creatures. Her bright colors that play with contrast splash nature on walls across the city.

Villalobos finds herself caught between wanting to create work with a message and simply creating something aesthetically beautiful. "When I deal with the city, when I do public works of art, I want it to mean something," she said.

The catch for her is being part of a generation that is so attached to being able to make money from their passions, which makes it challenging to refute the idea that everything one does has to make value or have a purpose.

A mural she did in White Center broke this open for her. "I remember doing it and thinking, 'I'll just do happy little fish; a koi pond can be here; something beautiful can exist here.' So I put these little goldfish," she said. Villalobos painted the mural for free, but it became one of her most photographed and tagged pieces on social media.

"It's hard, because we think of getting that [monetary] check as the validation versus ... tagging me in a photo they took with their little kids in front of the mural — how do you put money on that? Obviously, the attention and the love the community is showing is worth the weight of the mural in gold." ■

READER REACTIONS



"This is a great newspaper with a focus on activism and change."

— Tony G.

BRIDGE Continued from Page 5

to reach out to the city through a letter with more than two dozen community stakeholders as signatories.

Mayor Jenny Durkin unveiled the city's Duwamish Valley Action Plan in 2018 with a goal to "expand economic opportunity, make environmental progress and increase investments in the South Park and Georgetown communities."

"The city has been better, the investment ... the city is doing a lot with their race, social justice and equity toolkit. They're trying to address systemic and historical racism," said Aley Thompson.

Despite programs like the Duwamish Valley Action Plan, there is fear among members of the community that the momentum created might dissipate if West Seattle Bridge mitigation plans lack Duwamish Valley voices.

"DROF [The Duwamish River Opportunity Fund] came out of years of advocacy," Lopez said, "to have more community ownership, community ways of doing things. When you're thinking about the government doing things better and engaging populations — but then these types of things happen. ... What happened with the encouragement for communities and for creating programs that talk more to equity when you didn't even consult with [the] community?"

DROF is a grant pool awarded by the city to "improve the quality of life and restore the health of Duwamish River communities."

"I think this health crisis has really shown a lack of infrastructure for people to have alternate routes to get to where they're going," Peaches Thomas said. "If there is a time for prioritizing the projects

that are already on the table, it would definitely be now, so that they are not left out of the shuffle. Because if those projects remain further delayed, then the equities — the inequity and the inaccessibility will continue in those communities."

"When the low span bridge also closes, if only temporarily for repairs of the upper bridge, every single person riding a bike towards downtown will be going through Georgetown or South Park," Jesse Moore said. "They'll have to. And I think now everybody's realizing there is no safe bicycle infrastructure at all through the manufacturing industrial center into SODO. ... I think that there are projects like the South Park to Georgetown trail that could be a way for the residents in those neighborhoods and community members to better access those spaces."

DVSS recently concluded outreach for a planned Georgetown to South Park bike trail in partnership with SDOT and fears that dealing with the bridge closure may halt just when communities need it most.

"Right now the city's under a lot of budget restraints and there's a lot of considerations for prioritizing other essential needs at this time. But I think the bridge closure has highlighted the need for city-wide connectivity. The concern would be keeping those projects hopefully on the table," Moore said.

"Because of the pandemic, everybody's budget is squeezed," Marx said. "We at SDOT, as well as the mayor and the City Council, have to take into consideration the needs of the whole city, but with a special recognition that the communities that are most impacted by the West Seattle Bridge closure are attended to appropriately."

When asked about what the Duwamish Valley communities need to best absorb

the traffic and pollution caused by the bridge closure, many residents pointed to investments in more transportation options and safety for pedestrians.

"We've been advocating to get to the Duwamish River," Jolene Hass of the Duwamish Tribe said. "We've been advocating for crosswalks because we try to get to the river [and] to T-107 Park, which is an archeological site. And we have tours and schoolchildren that come."

The Duwamish Longhouse sits on an acre of land across the street from the Duwamish River, along West Marginal Way, one of the main routes to West Seattle since the bridge's closure.

The park across the street, T-107, is owned by the Port of Seattle. Many visitors use its parking lot while visiting the Duwamish Longhouse.

"We need people to be able to come to the Longhouse," Hass said. "We have limited parking and people want to ride their bikes and take the bus. ... A lot of Indian people are poor; they ask to take the bus. We have people that work for us that don't have cars that need to take the bus."

Currently, bus service doesn't run on the stretch of West Marginal Way where the Duwamish Longhouse sits.

Letters from the Duwamish Valley and Georgetown include suggestions for increased bus service, safe pedestrian crossings and improved bike connection.

Hass noted that there have been some new traffic revisions near the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center. "We're thankful that SDOT did traffic revisions in front of the Longhouse to make it easier to see traffic," she said. "They've reduced two lanes to one lane going south. It gives us a chance to get out to West Marginal Way without getting hit."

In the coming weeks, Marx plans to respond to all community letters, as well as begin dialogue and unveil neighborhood traffic plans that "will include all the ideas that we've collected both within SDOT as well as from the community," she said.

"We want to give comprehensive responses that really address in a serious way all of the issues that the community has brought up," Marx said, "and that's not something that can be completed in 10 minutes. We really want to put some thought into it."

On April 28, District 1 Councilmember Lisa Herbold, whose district encompasses West Seattle and South Park, held a virtual town hall to take questions and hear concerns from residents.

"We're sharing all recommendations with SDOT," Herbold said, "really requiring them to communicate with folks as much as possible in real time."

She stresses it's also up to voters to help mitigate impacts in the Duwamish Valley.

"In order for any of that work to really come to fruition," Herbold said, "we need to make sure that Seattle passes a new transportation benefit district. We are not going to have any additional funding for new services. The city has a new transportation benefit district package on the ballot in November."

"I'm hoping that now they'll see that West Marginal Way has got to become more important to the community," Haas said.

"I'm tired of feeling afraid to ask, like it's asking too much. That's how we feel most of the time." ■

Bunthay Cheam was born in the Khao I Dang refugee camp. He is a storyteller, activist and lifelong resident of South Park.



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