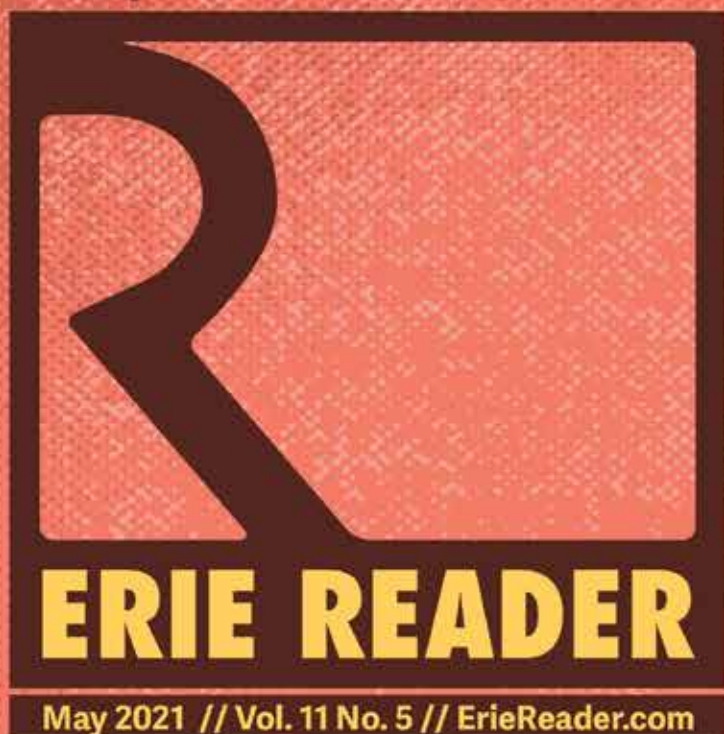


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ERIE'S MUNICIPAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

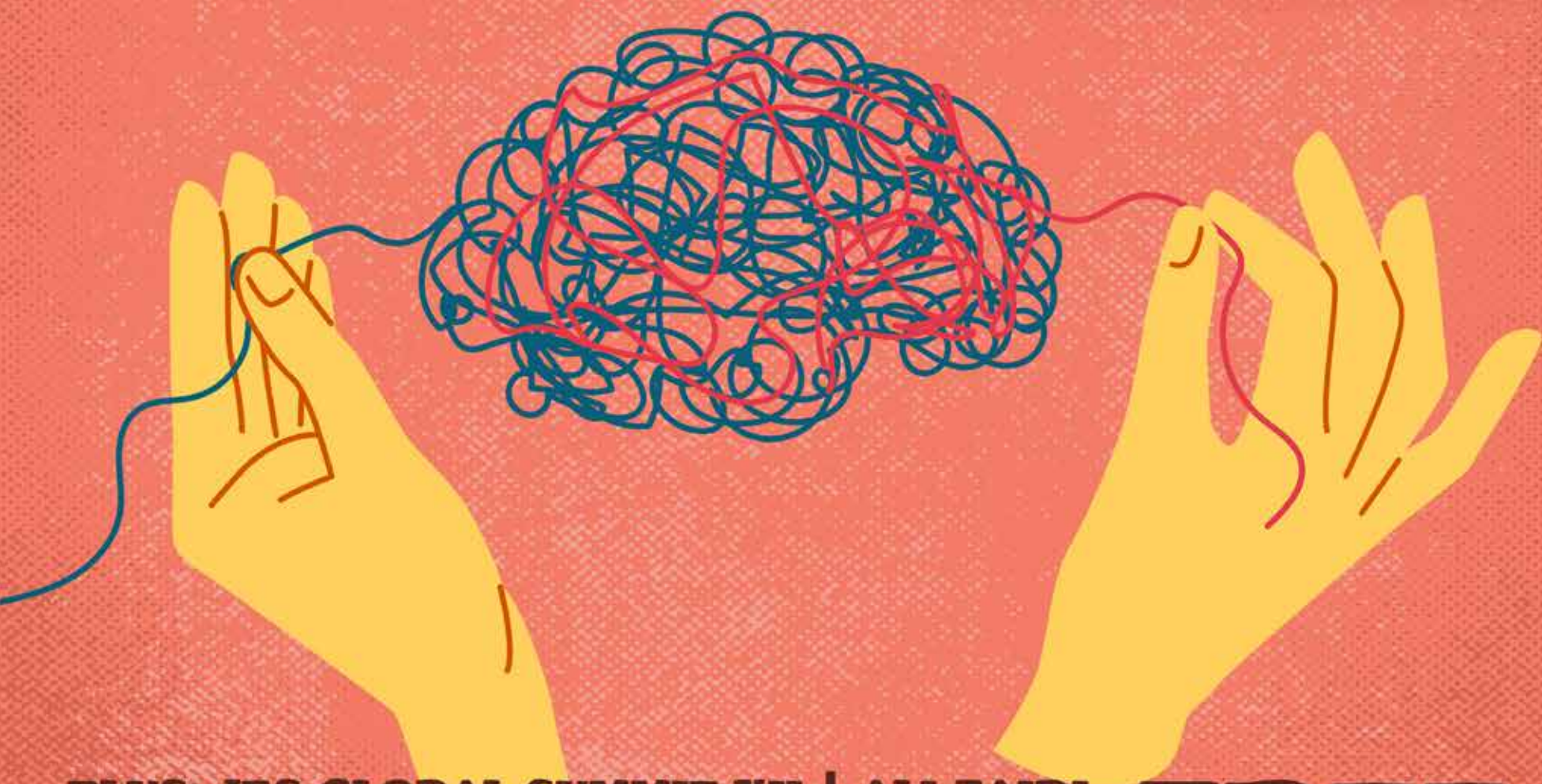
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From the Editors

A triage of the soul

One of the fundamental challenges of human existence is determining where our priorities lie. Unfortunately, Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, Surgeon in Chief to Napoleon's Imperial Guard, often found his lying on the ground.

Operating frequently within the midst of mass casualty events at the turn of the 19th century, Larrey helped refine a system for prioritizing care for the wounded according to the severity of their injuries. The process that we now know as triage derives from a French word meaning "to break into three pieces" — originally that meant filtering groups who required 1) immediate, 2) urgent, or 3) non-urgent medical attention.

Today's triage categories and processes vary from place to place, but the goal remains the same — to maximize life and minimize loss. However noble that aim may seem, though, part of the equation is evaluating who is beyond saving (dubbed "expectant" or "presumed dead") so that more resources can be committed to those who most realistically *can be saved*.

It's an ethical burden assumed not only by military medics, but also civilian first responders and — especially during the ongoing pandemic — emergency room and ICU nurses. Despite being often understaffed, underequipped, and underprotected, the nation's nurses battled back tirelessly against a tireless adversary in 2020. Jonathan Burdick and all of us at the Reader will continue to be grateful for their selflessness and sacrifice throughout National Nurses Month and beyond.

Even so, bodies are not the only things that could use nursing back to health. In observance of Mental Health Awareness Month, perhaps we could pay some attention to our psyches, too. Between waves of misinformation, propaganda, and general ill will, widespread damages have been wrought. What of ourselves can still be saved? What have we already lost?

It is, perhaps, time for a triage of the soul. As another election season comes into focus, it's imperative that both politicians and voters examine their conscience and devote their resources and energies toward what matters most. Political leaders should leave egos and vendettas to die while working to resuscitate education, healthcare, climate, and social justice situations in critical condition. Meanwhile, voters should do everything they can to enlighten themselves — may we suggest the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit XII and XIII for starters?

As long as human curiosity, compassion, and conscience have a pulse, we still have a chance.

Erie's Municipal Primary Elections Set for May 18

Mayor, County Executive, City and County Council races see new faces



By: Ben Speggen

When it comes to voting in Erie, voter participation doesn't come in one-size-fits-every-election. Just as elections may be categorized three ways — presidential, midterm, and municipal — so can the levels of voter engagement.

Illustrated on a line graph, an elementary rendering of two-dimensional crags and canyons takes shape. The highest, Rocky Mountain-style peaks represent the elections during which the nation chooses its top executive — the president — while the lowest represent when communities elect those seeking to fill their local offices.

Since 2000, presidential elections have drawn, on average, just over 124,000 voters in Erie County to the polls (out of the over 177,000 total registered). With 2000 marking the lowest turnout in modern history, at 112,355, and 2020 notching the highest, at 137,944, there have been ebbs and flows within those 20 years, with an overall upward trend.

The same undulation holds similar for midterm elections. Falling two years following a presidential election, on average, midterm election results find just shy of 85,000 registered voters casting ballots.

Last in voter turnout in Erie County, but certainly not civically least, lie the municipal elections. With similar ups

and downs, a paltry average of about 51,500 voters voice their decisions in local elections.

In percentage terms of those voting compared to those registered to do so, the numbers declined from more than two-thirds to less than half to around a third or less, respectively.

But for the first time, in the 2020 election, thanks to 2019's PA Voting Reforms Act 77, voters could mail in their ballots, no questions asked. A decision pre-dating the pandemic, it came as a welcome one during times of pandemic-induced social distancing restrictions.

Will these measures designed at making voting an easier exercise in which to participate — which delivered a historic uptick of votes in the 2020 general election — carry through to the 2021 municipal election in Erie? Time will tell, but in looking at the lead-up to the 2021 primary municipal election, there are plenty of races and plenty of new — and relatively new — names along with familiar faces vying for various offices.

File Under: Even third-party voters have a say!

Pennsylvania, still a closed primary state, restricts voters to making choices only within their registered party. Have only one candidate carrying your party's banner? Little incentive to pull the lever for the presumed victor. Registered to a party that doesn't have a

On average, only about 51,500 of Erie County's registered voters cast their ballots in local elections, compared to about 85,000 in midterms and 124,000 in presidential elections.

candidate running? Why show up to not have your voice heard?

This time around, however, even third-party candidates will have cause to cast ballots, as four questions are on the ballot, three of which are proposed constitutional amendments. It may not appear to be much, but it is.

File Under: Not Quite as We Might've Expected

Four years ago, 2017 featured two marquee races, both for top executive positions — Erie County Executive and City of Erie Mayor. This year, they're both in play but in ways we may not have expected.

For the mayoral race, Erie's current Joe lacks the electoral victory security luxury of Erie's former Joe. Erie's previous mayor, Democrat Joe Sinnott, emerged victorious from a crowded field when he, amongst others, challenged incumbent Democrat Rick Filippi, who was coming off the heels of a Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office investigation into real estate deals. Acquitted on all charges of using insider knowledge to his benefits, Filippi sought a second term but lost. Sinnott went on to win two more four-year terms in 2009 and 2013 and left office due to term limits. During neither of his reelection bids did he face primary opposition.

For first-term Democratic incumbent Joe Schember, it's a different story. Two candidates filled their bids for May 18's primary: Erie School Board member Tom Spagel and Sydney Zimmerman, local activist and Erie County United member.

Schember, after rising up out of a pack of seven Democrats in 2017's primary, faced Republican opposition in the fall. He defeated John Persinger, who had bested Jon Whaley in the Republican primary. No Republican filed for the 2021 mayoral election, meaning whoever wins in May this year has an all-but-certain lock on being mayor come January 2022.

The other marquee race in 2021 has all eyes on it not because the incumbent faces primary challengers, but because

the incumbent has decided to step down, guaranteeing that new leadership will be sitting in the Erie County Executive seat.

While eligible to seek a third four-year term — which would be her final, if elected, due to term limits — current County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper decided not to seek reelection. The former congresswoman defeated Democratic incumbent Barry Grossman in 2013 and later Republican Don Tucci in the general election. In 2017, she defeated Republican challenger Art Oligeri, becoming just the second County Executive in Erie's history to serve more than one term. The other, Democrat Judy Lynch, served five terms in an era pre-dating term limits.

Six candidates are vying to become Erie's seventh County Executive. Both the history (there have been four) and voter-registration edge (86,453) favor Democrats. Two Republicans — Russell Robison, the first Erie County Executive, from 1978 to 1982, and Richard Schenker, the last Republican County Executive, from 2002 to 2006 — have held the office. Current records report 66,922 registered Republicans throughout the county.

Four Democrats — all familiar names in Erie's civic arena — seek the seat: Carl Anderson, the first-term county councilmember representing District 4; Rita Bishop, who sought the 7th District county council seat in 2019 but lost to Republican Ellen Schauerman; Dylanna Grasinger, who's seeking elected office for the first time but who's served as the Executive Director of the International Institute; and Tyler Titus, current President of the Erie School Board in their first term and the first openly transgender person elected in Pennsylvania.

Two Republicans are squaring off on the other side of the ticket. Brenton Davis, the first to announce his candidacy in this race, sought the office once before in 2017 but was upended in an automatically triggered recount by Art Oligeri. This time he faces first-time candidate Shawn Wroblewski, a paramedic with East Erie County Emergency Medical Services.

While May will, in all likelihood, close the chapter on deciding Erie's next mayor — Will Schember win a second

JESSICA HUNTER

term? Will Erie voters elect to plot a new course? — things will continue to heat up in the County Executive race. Will the defeated back the victors of their parties? Will the trend line continue to be drawn in blue, or will red re-emerge into the ledge for the first time since the early 2000s? Time — and the voters — shall tell.

File Under: Even So, It's Looking Odd

In Erie County, there are seven council districts, for which elections are alternated in even and odd seats. This election is for the even districts: 2, 4, and 6.

In the second district, incumbent Democrat Andre Horton faces zero opposition. No Democratic challenger, no Republican challenger. Barring the unlikely, congrats, Councilman Horton — we can, with confidence, call your race.

Change will be guaranteed in the fourth district, as Carl Anderson, who's seeking the County Executive seat, is legally prohibited (as would any candidate be) from seeking two offices at once. This paves the way for one of four Democrats — Julia Ann Calipo, Angela Euell McNair, Kevin E. Pastewka, or Jim Winarski — to square off against Re-

publican Timothy E. Gostomski.

First-term incumbent Republican Scott Rastetter faces a primary challenge from Samuel Charles Bayle IV. Whoever emerges there will face the Democratic victor from the Lydia Laythe v. Herbert Riede race. While Riede held prior offices — McSherrystown Borough Councilmember, in Adams County, Pa., and as a former Mayor of McSherrystown — Laythe holds a current office: Washington Township Councilmember. Laythe won her seat in 2019 and looks to build on that momentum as she seeks higher office.

Also seeking higher office: Kim Clear. Clear won her seat as Erie County Councilmember representing District 1 also in 2019. She is now vying to become Millcreek Township Supervisor, challenging first-term Democratic incumbent John Morgan in the primary. Either Clear or Morgan will face one of two Republicans in the fall: either James A. Lindstrom or Kirk McCaslin for the six-year post.

For County Council, this is significant, because if Clear does win, her District 1 seat will be up for re-appointment, meaning yet another change to County

Council. Also potentially at place: Erie County Council District 5.

File Under: What's the Total Reach of that Social Media Post?

Like Clear in District 1, who filled the seat vacated by Democrat Kathy Fatica, who decided not to seek reelection — as well as Ellen Schauerman in District 7, who filled the vacancy left by the Republican Councilmember Carol Loll, who also opted not to seek reelection — Republican incumbent Erie County Councilmember Brian Shank, who represents the 5th District, won his seat in 2019, unseating Democratic incumbent Kyle Foust. Shank filed his bid for Erie County Sheriff and is unopposed in May's primary.

Outgoing Erie County Sheriff John Loomis has endorsed Democrat and Deputy Captain Chris Campanelli, who faces a challenge from Anthony J. Sanfilippo. Campanelli has also received support from Erie County Democratic Chairman Jim Wertz, who explained his rationale in an op-ed for the Erie Times-News published Thursday, April 29 and in another printed in this edition of the Reader.

Social media posts Sanfilippo engaged with — from liking, to commenting, to sharing — link him to “un-Democrat and bigoted sentiments on social media,” as Wertz put it. Sanfilippo has since issued an apology on his social platforms and in an op-ed appearing the same day as Wertz's.

Adding to the tensions of the race, A.J. Rao broke the story for Erie Times-News on April 27 that Campanelli “posted Facebook images that attacked illegal immigration and the Democratic Party's supposed willingness to support ‘illegals’ and refugees as opposed to soldiers and homeless veterans.”

Campanelli distanced himself from the posts “insisting they do not reflect his ‘ideals’ and that he is a proud son of immigrants,” according to Rao's report.

To detail these posts, too, gives oxygen to a hate-fueled social media fire best left extinguished. But for the curious here, a quick Google search will scratch this itch, as well.

“My father and his parents came to this country in 1957,” Campanelli told Rao. “They came here legally and made a wonderful life for us here and they believed that this was the land of op-

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- Expanded the Police Athletic League for Erie's youth
- Developed Mayoral Advisory Councils, fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion

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portunity," adding that he takes "full responsibility" for the content on his page, even though he didn't recall posting certain images, according to Rao.

Wherever this race goes in the coming days — let alone weeks — Erie voters will be watching.

File Under: That's Not All, Folks!

These races are amongst just a few on the 2021 Primary Ballot. There's the Erie City Council race, where, again, Erie voters will see a three-person slate of candidates advertised (this one supported by Erie County United). And they'll see familiar names, like first-term incumbent Democrat Liz Allen (who won handily in 2017 and ran as part of a slate then but was the only one to emerge victorious) as well as folks who came up short in prior elections trying to gain a seat at the table once again.

And there's Erie School Board — where candidates can cross-file under both parties, which puts the onus on the voter to know who belongs to which party. And with four open seats — as is the case with city council — a vacancy is certainly being left, as current President Tyler Titus cannot seek reelection here while also seeking election to Erie County Executive.

And there are other mayoral races left uncovered here, as well supervisor races, and council positions to be filled — some unopposed, but not all.

Now that voters have additional ways to cast their ballots — as they did in the historic, record-breaking voter-turnout election of 2020 — will the records show an uptick in Erie's municipal elections? Time will tell. And as the time between when this story is published to election day, there are a few key dates to be aware of:

May 11: The final day to apply for a mail-

Get your "I Voted" sticker by visiting your local polling place (if voting in person) by 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18.

in or civilian absentee ballot.

May 18: Final day for county board of elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots by 8 p.m. Which is also the day to cast your vote in-person between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., with the friendly reminder that if you're in line to vote before 8 p.m., you cannot be turned away.

And in Pennsylvania, it's still legal to hand someone waiting in a line a drink of water, which should give participants in this democracy of ours, regardless of their home state and home municipality, something else to think about in addition to these local offices and why it matters that we vote for them.

Because after all, it takes a lot more to run for an office than it does to show up to vote or put a ballot in the mail for someone running for office. And it takes even more to hold office and to hold those once in office accountable.

And if you needed any more incentive to value the selection of and holding accountable of locally elected officials in the democratic process, the forthcoming pandemic relief aid from the Biden administration's American Relief Plan should give voters in Erie County \$275 million-worth of reasons.

For an official list of candidates running, or to view your sample ballot, go to eriecountypa.gov.

Ben Speggen can be contacted at bSpeggen@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpeggen.

Unpacking Your Primary Ballot Questions

What they mean in plain English and what they'd entail



ONASILL - BILL

By: Nick Warren

In addition to the dozen or so races you'll be voting on during this year's municipal primary election, voters will face four ballot questions. For registered independent voters, now is your chance to vote in an off-year primary! The first three questions move to amend the PA Constitution. The first two deal with disaster emergency declarations (something we all experienced in 2020) and the powers of the governor. These are by far the most polarizing questions along partisan lines. The third deals with denial based on race or ethnicity, and the fourth is a budget measure for fire and emergency services. While these questions require a simple yes or no answer, any experienced voter will know that the phrasing of these questions is anything but simple.

Ballot Question #1: Shall the Penn-

sylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law and increase the power of the General Assembly to unilaterally terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration—and the powers of Commonwealth agencies to address the disaster regardless of its severity pursuant to that declaration—through passing a concurrent resolution by simple majority, thereby removing the existing check and balance of presenting a resolution to the Governor for approval or disapproval?

Ballot Question #2: Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law so that: a disaster emergency declaration will expire automatically after 21 days, regardless of the severity of the emergency, unless the General Assembly takes action to extend

Proposed amendments to the Pennsylvania State Constitution would allow the PA General Assembly to unilaterally terminate or extend disaster emergency declarations (beyond a proposed 21-day shelf life) made by the governor. Voters will be able to voice their approval or disapproval for these measures by answering a series of ballot questions during the primary elections, which will be held in-person on Tuesday, May 18.

the disaster emergency; the Governor may not declare a new disaster emergency to respond to the dangers facing the Commonwealth unless the General Assembly passes a concurrent resolution; the General Assembly enacts new laws for disaster management?

Ballot Question #3: Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended by adding a new section providing that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of an individual's race or ethnicity?

Ballot Question #4: Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized under the referendum for loans to volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads under 35 PA.C.S. Section 7378.1 (related to referendum for additional indebtedness) to include loans to municipal fire departments or companies that provide services through paid personnel and emergency medical services companies for the purpose of establishing and modernizing facilities to house apparatus equipment, ambulanc-

es and rescue vehicles, and for purchasing apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of the duties of the fire companies and emergency medical services companies?

If your eyes glazed over, awash with legalese, you're not alone. Both Republicans and Democrats have taken steps to inform their base on how they wish to see the votes go. PA Dems urge people to vote "No, No, Yes" on the first three measures. Organizations such as the PA Senate GOP push for "Yes" votes across the board. Searching online, it's much easier to find the Democrats' clearly worded stance than the GOP's. Perhaps that's for the simple fact that Pennsylvania has not rejected a ballot measure since 1993. Still, Republicans have pushed back, saying that the language of these measures set them up for failure. This of course, almost exclusively pertains to the first two measures. These two measures focus on the power of the state legislature to override declarations from the governor's office. Both parties — thankfully — are pushing for a "Yes" vote on the third question regarding race and ethnicity, one appearing in remarkably straightforward wording. Even with question four, it's hard to rally against loans for fire departments and emergency medical services, with neither side pushing against it. Know what you're getting into, read and reread each question before you go to the polls.

On Your Ballot

A partial list of who both parties will see on election day

Justice of the Supreme Court (Vote For One)

Democrat
MARIA MCLAUGHLIN - PHILADELPHIA

Republican
PAULA PATRICK - PHILADELPHIA
KEVIN BROBSON - DAUPHIN
PATRICIA A MCCULLOUGH - ALLEGHENY

Judge of the Superior Court (Vote For One)

Democrat
JILL BECK - ALLEGHENY
TIMIKA LANE - PHILADELPHIA
BRYAN NEFT - ALLEGHENY

Republican
MEGAN SULLIVAN - CHESTER

Judge of the Commonwealth Court (Vote For Not More Than Two)

Democrat
DAVID LEE SPURGEON - ALLEGHENY
LORI A DUMAS - PHILADELPHIA
SIERRA STREET - PHILADELPHIA
AMANDA GREEN HAWKINS - ALLEGHENY

Republican
DREW CROMPTON - CUMBERLAND
STACY MARIE WALLACE - MCKEAN

Judge of the Court of Common Pleas 6th District (Vote For One)

Democrat/Republican
MARSHALL PICCININI - ERIE

County Executive Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
RITA BISHOP
CARL ANDERSON
DYLANNA GRASINGER
TYLER TITUS

Republican
SHAWN WROBLEWSKI

NEWS & VIEWS

BRENTON DAVIS

Sheriff Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
ANTHONY J SANFILIPPO
CHRIS CAMPANELLI
Republican
BRIAN SHANK

Clerk of Records Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
AUBREA HAGERTY HAYNES
KARLA L JEFFERY

Republican
EDWARD T DIMATTIO JR

County Council 2nd District Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
ANDRE HORTON

County Council 4th District Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
JULIA ANN CALIPO
ANGELA EUELL MCNAIR
KEVIN E PASTEWKA
JIM WINARSKI

Republican
TIMOTHY E. GOSTOMSKI

County Council 6th District Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
HERBERT RIEDE
LYDIA LAYTHE

Republican
SAMUEL CHARLES BAYLE IV
SCOTT R. RASTETTER

Mayor - City of Erie Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
JOE SCHEMBER
SYDNEY ZIMMERMANN
TOM SPAGEL

City Controller Four Year Term (Vote For One)

Democrat
TERESA STANKIEWICZ

City Council Four Year Term (Vote For Not More Than Four)

Democrat
MARCUS P YUILLE
ELSPETH KATE KOEHLER

JASMINE FLORES
LIZ ALLEN
CHUCK NELSON
MAURICE MO TROOP
CORY DILORETO
KENDRICK TATE

Republican
GREG BROWN
SHAWN LYONS

School Director Erie School District Four Year Term (Vote For Not More Than Four)

Democrat
JAY BRENEMAN

Democrat/Republican
ZAKARIA SHARIF
LAUREN GILLESPIE
LEATRA TATE
TIMOTHY E GOSTOMSKI
AARON J LUNDBERG
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Erie at Large: Prejudice and the Old Politics

Why I choose Chris Campanelli for sheriff



Locals can register to vote or cast their ballot in advance of the May 18 municipal primary at the Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. Sixth St. Candidates for — and in some cases positions for — county executive and sheriff, mayors, township supervisors, county executive, sheriff, school boards, and council members will be determined by this election.

while the police “finish their coffee.” It was a statement shrouded in racism and a profound display of derogatory arrogance toward the existential dilemma we face as a society. Quite frankly, it’s the kind of sentiment I have come to expect from Republican candidates. It can’t be the public profile of a representative of the Democratic Party, particularly one who wishes to lead our county’s law enforcement.

Since these memes and posts were discovered, Mr. Campanelli’s opponent issued a public apology on Facebook in which he claims to have moved on from these recently held ideals. But his timing points to a concern for political expediency on his part to salvage his campaign, not of self-awareness and growth. This national cultural moment demands more and so should the people of Erie.

While no one should claim to be perfect, and I certainly don’t believe in litmus tests of any kind, Mr. Campanelli has openly acknowledged the injustice of systemic racism and the inherent bias of humans no matter their station in life or political persuasion.

In times like these, in a race like this, and the other options before you, that’s a pretty good start toward pushing Erie toward a new politics and realizing the purpose of what Frederick Douglass called “a Government founded upon justice.”

Our municipal primary is on May 18. If you’re not registered to vote or you would like to vote early, you can do so in Room 112 at the Erie County Courthouse or you can register to vote and apply for a mail ballot at [VotesPA.com](https://www.votespa.com).

Don’t leave your voice out of this important conversation.

Jim Wertz is a Contributing Editor and the chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party. He can be reached at jWertz@ErieReader.com or you can follow him on Twitter @jim_wertz.

By: Jim Wertz

One of the most difficult things for someone to do in exceptional times is to look objectively at the present while reconciling the future they want with the lingering past. It’s a challenge in so many areas of our lives that it’s easy to get overwhelmed with the prospect of change, and it’s easy to get dismayed by the pace. Sometimes it’s a slog.

With each passing election, we’re left wondering what’s in it for us? How will the issues and candidates on the ballot affect our daily lives? For a multitude of reasons, the answers haven’t resonated during municipal elections like they should—the odd numbered years that most people call “off-year” elections, like 2021.

For those of us who engage in a new election every six months, there’s no such thing as an “off year.” And in an ideal world, there would be no off year for voters either. That’s because the issues and candidates on the ballot in our odd-year elections have a much bigger impact on our daily lives than those we send to Harrisburg or Washington D.C.

This year, we’ll elect a new county executive, and we’ll elect and re-elect mayors, council people, township supervisors, school board members, and a host of often forgotten offices such as tax collectors, auditors, and constables in every community in Erie County.

I’ll ask as I have asked before in this

column, that we — the voters — do our homework to really know the people on your ballot. Sample ballots for every precinct in Erie County are available on the county’s website at eriecountypa.gov. Don’t rely on familiar family names or attachments to nostalgic political brands. That’s the politics of the past, and most assuredly will keep us tethered to that past, unable to break forward to a new future.

In the first half of the 20th century, that old way of voting could land you a job or a political appointment, or perhaps better treatment when you needed something. But in the first half of the 21st century, that kind of political patronage is all but dead. It’s the stuff of legend, forever being chased by the left-over power-brokering wannabes with less to give than they have to gain.

Last year, as we fought to preserve our democracy and wrapped ourselves in (small “d”) democratic values, it was also clear that character — for most voters, regardless of party — was the primary issue on the ballot. In that case, the good guys (so to speak) won. But it doesn’t end there. For people with their hearts and minds on our future, character will always be on the ballot. We have important choices to make for the future of Erie County.

That’s why I’m joining Erie County Sheriff John Loomis in supporting Chris Campanelli for sheriff. I hope you will too.

Mr. Campanelli is a proven leader in

the Erie County Sheriff’s Department and, he has served as a member of Sheriff Loomis’ command staff for the past seven years, demonstrating trust and fidelity that has been the hallmark of his 25-year career. He understands the challenges we face and, as Sheriff Loomis affirms, Mr. Campanelli has the values and the temperament to lead us through challenging times. He’s not political. He’s just professional.

Mr. Campanelli’s primary opponent, Anthony Sanfilippo, was recently discovered to have shared, liked, commented on, and espoused un-Democratic and bigoted sentiments on social media. In posts as recent as last September, Sanfilippo made disparaging remarks about organizations that support the victims of police brutality, and previously he expressed contempt for Presidents Obama and Biden with statements and images, including some of the same Republican symbols seen at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, in multiple posts and as his profile picture. Showing he has not changed in his perspectives, he continued to support anti-Democratic and racist social media posts several times last summer, and right through to Jan. 6 which portrayed the insurrectionists as better behaved than those marching for racial justice. His disdain for the Black Lives Matter movement is crystal clear.

Perhaps most dismaying was the liking of memes that pitted law enforcement against those marching for justice by referring to their “dying homeboys”

From General McLane to the White House

Climate advisor Ali Zaidi to speak at Global Summit



Ali Zaidi, a 2004 graduate of General McLane High School, emigrated from Pakistan with his parents in first grade, settling in Edinboro. Since then, he's earned a role as Deputy National Climate Advisor to President Joe Biden — and a speaking engagement during the Jefferson Educational Society's all-virtual Global Summit XII on Tuesday, May 11.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Liz Allen

When Ali Zaidi graduated from General McLane High School in 2004, he aspired to go to med school after his undergraduate studies at Harvard College.

"Someone else is living that dream. It just wasn't me," said Zaidi with a smile.

Today, Zaidi is using his passion for healing in a different role — by helping to mend planet Earth as Deputy National Climate Advisor to President Joe Biden. Zaidi brings a "whole of government" approach to that job. This means that improving public health is one desired outcome in addressing climate change, along with achieving other "intersectional" goals such as better housing, transportation, and security.

Zaidi is one of the stellar speakers lined up for the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit, which is divided into two parts. Global Summit XII, a free digital program featuring experts on such topics as race in America, public health, politics, civic renewal, extraterrestrial life, as well as climate change, takes place May 10-May 27. Zaidi speaks on May 11 at 7:30 p.m. Global Summit XIII follows in late October and early November with in-person speakers.

"A big goal of the Global Summit has been to invite experts, scholars, and

policymakers across a wide range of topics and ideas, from those impacting the national level to those shaping community at the local level, to connect them with our Erie audience," said Ben Spегgen, JES vice president.

"That's perhaps a bit more special when we're able to reconnect Erieites to one of their own. And when it comes to topics of the day, climate impact ranks amongst the top, so we're thrilled to address a critical issue with Ali Zaidi, an expert from Erie's own backyard, to talk about local, national, and global implications," Spегgen said. "Of course, the JES has to thank its chairperson, Steve Scully, who's able to help us make these connections and extend these invitations."

Erie folks take pride when hometown people make good, and at age 34, Zaidi deserves to be included on any "I knew him or her when" list.

After receiving his A.B. from Harvard, he earned his J.D. from Georgetown University and taught as an adjunct professor at Stanford University. At Stanford, he co-founded Lawyers for a Sustainable Economy, which provided sustainability-focused startups with pro bono legal services. Before joining the Biden administration, he served as deputy secretary for Energy and Environment for New York State, leading the state's efforts to address climate

change.

But Zaidi does not boast about academic achievements or career successes. Rather, he remains focused on a life of service, a role he embraced as a youth in Edinboro.

Zaidi emigrated from Pakistan with his parents, Syed and Afroz Zaidi, and his younger brother, Danish, for his father's job at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and had to learn English in first grade.

In a short Zoom interview, he talked about the ideas he will share during his Global Summit talk. The White House communications staff graciously squeezed the interview into Zaidi's busy schedule, which included Biden's Leaders Summit on Climate April 22-23, a virtual gathering of 40 world leaders.

The Leaders Summit produced a detailed international agenda for tackling climate change as a follow-up to Biden's Jan. 20 order to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement. As an official in President Barack Obama's administration, Zaidi had worked for the Office of Management and Budget and on the White House Domestic Policy Council and had helped to negotiate the Paris Agreement.

Shaped by his immigrant experience and his Edinboro upbringing, Zaidi's perspective on public policy is also framed by two milestones in the last four years: walking out of the White House gates at the end of the Obama administration and returning through those same gates at the start of the Biden presidency. In the intervening four years, young people successfully made the case that climate change is a crisis and their advocacy made it possible to imagine the possibilities of what can be achieved, he said.

Solving climate change is "about improving outcomes in people's lives. It's about people's health. It's about the dignity of work, about being able to provide for their families," he said. Working on climate change isn't just

about "averting the worst that could happen," he said. "It's about unlocking the full opportunities of what could happen," he added, including the new "jobs, jobs, jobs" that Biden promised in his April 28 speech to Congress. Steel plants in Alabama and West Virginia will be making offshore turbines; manufacturers in western Pennsylvania will be producing resin and other materials for the blades, Zaidi said. Those workers will be doing that work the "right way," with the right to bargain and to make a fair wage, he said.

Zaidi learned about the diverse occupations that power an economy by living in Erie County. He had classmates who would graduate from high school and take over the family farm. He lived near the Edinboro campus where its biggest program was educating nurses. He watched the rise and decline of jobs in plastics, paper, and locomotives, among other occupations.

As a White House policymaker, it's important not to live in an ivory tower and for those on the two coasts to understand what makes a place like Erie thrive, he said. People outside of the heartland don't know that Erie is a big refugee resettlement community, where newcomers make their marks as did the original immigrants, he said. "It's that notion of America embracing diverse people," he said. "Edinboro did it for my family."

He remembered attending a mosque in Erie, where the place of worship included immigrants from tiny villages and megalopolises alike.

He also cherishes his memories of General McLane homecoming, where "half the town" would attend the football game, then convene at John's Wildwood Pizza on Main Street. "It's not just 'Friday Night Lights' in Texas," he said.

He hopes to never lose that sense of community he experienced in Edinboro, where "we were all in it together," he said. "I got to see a great cross-section of people pitching in." He is a regular visitor to GoErie.com, too, to stay in touch with Erie's values and issues.

Another defining experience for him as a teen was volunteering at Shriners Hospitals for Children in Erie. "What motivates me is what we do for those kids," he said. And by kids, he means



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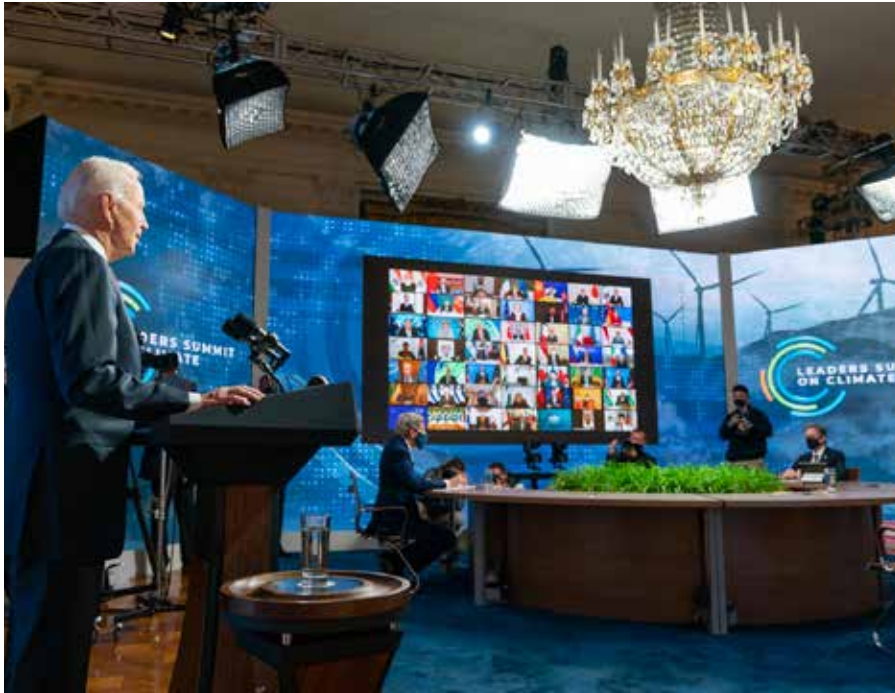
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WHITE HOUSE

President Biden assembled 40 world leaders for the Leaders Summit on Climate held on April 22, announcing an ambitious new goal of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

Learn more

One book that persuaded Ali Zaidi, a 2004 graduate of General McLane High School, to pursue a public policy career in law was *How the Human Mind Works*, by Steven Pinker, an expert on cognitive evolutionary theory.

He also credits the late Harris Wofford, a former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania and civil rights activist, as a mentor. At age 18, Zaidi served on the board of America's Promise with Wofford. "I learned a lot from him about the civil rights movement," Zaidi said. He credits Wofford for introducing him to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "Unfulfilled Dreams." That MLK talk taught him "to always agitate for big things" even while you work for incremental change. "I don't see that with being in conflict," he said.

est University, a Master of Bioethics from Harvard Medical School, and a Master of Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School. Danish is a resident physician in internal medicine at Yale University School of Medicine and Yale-New Haven Hospital. His brother is not only a great clinician. He's "an incredibly brilliant, insightful bioethicist," he said. "He's about connecting the big dots."

The same can be said about Ali Zaidi, who offered words of wisdom to today's teenagers. "I'm just as idealistic and optimistic as I was 20 years ago," he said. And for youngsters pushing to solve climate change? "What you're doing is working."

Liz Allen met Ali and Danish Zaidi when they wrote for Fresh Ink, the teen journalism program she supervised at the Erie Times-News. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com.

"A Conversation with Ali Zaidi, deputy national climate advisor to the Biden Administration," takes place during the Jefferson Educational Society's free digital Global Summit XII on Tuesday, May 11, at 7:30 p.m. Reserve digital seats, which are limited, at jeserie.org.

all children who have to "jump up to catch the ladder of opportunity."

Working on climate change, he said, "is always about opportunity." President Biden, he said, "sees the whole finish line and wants to win the whole thing."

By the way, the person he referred to as "living that dream" of becoming a doctor is his younger brother, Danish Zaidi, who attended Collegiate Academy, got his undergraduate degree in theology from Georgetown University, has a medical degree from Wake For-

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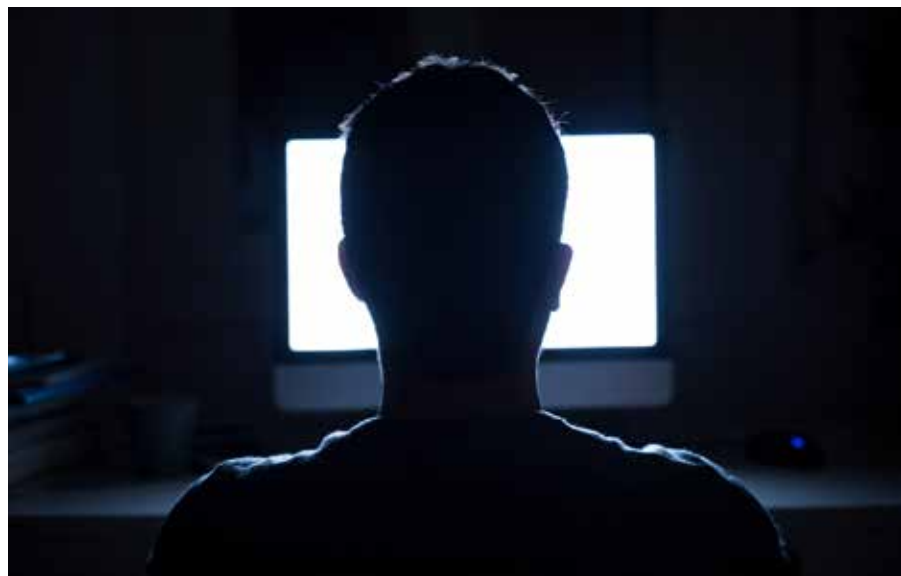
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Misinformation in the Aftermath of Trump

QAnon, “Stop the Steal,” and everything in between



PAOLO/LESE

By: Dan Schank

Does any event encapsulate the anxiety, disillusionment, and chaos of the Trump presidency more effectively than the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6 of this year?

You know the story already. After months of unsubstantiated claims about a rigged election, Trump supporters gathered for a “March to Save America” on the National Mall. In the words of the former president, they came together to “demand that Congress do the right thing and only count the electors who have been lawfully slated.” At the end of a characteristically unscripted speech, Trump encouraged his supporters to set off for the Capitol building “to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard.”

What followed was anything but peaceful — you’ve undoubtedly seen the pictures of QAnon conspiracists, Proud Boys, neo-Confederates, and armed vigilantes storming their way into Congress by now. By day’s end, five people were dead, over a hundred were injured, and Trump was no closer to reclaiming his office than he was on the morning after Biden’s election.

It’s not just the sense of alarm I felt on that day that seemed so emblematic of our historical moment. It was also the sense of *futility*. For all of its tragedy and chaos, the insurrection didn’t end with a Great Awakening, or a *coup d’etat*, or even an election recount. It ended with middle-aged men shooting selfies in Nancy Pelosi’s office. And two

weeks later, the vice president of the Obama administration took office with little fanfare. It’s this rinse-and-repeat cycle of anxiety and pointlessness that seems so demonstrative of pandemic life during a time of unprecedented misinformation. And I’m not sure where it’s headed next.

What follows is an attempt to map out the paths of misinformation as they seep into our discourse, both locally and nationally.

The QAnon spectrum

First, some good news.

Most of our local elected officials (and candidates for office) shy away from openly supporting QAnon, the conspiracy theory claiming that Donald Trump is secretly working to bring down a cabal of elite pedophiles with direct ties to the Democratic Party and Hollywood.

But the broader influence of the conspiracy is still alarmingly widespread. Some high-profile supporters include former national security advisor Michael Flynn, *Passion of the Christ* star Jim Caviezel, and comedian Roseanne Barr. More alarmingly, a February report from the conservative American Enterprise Institute found that 29 percent of Republicans found the claim “Donald Trump has been secretly fighting a group of child sex traffickers that includes prominent Democrats and Hollywood elites” to be either mostly (17 percent) or completely (12 percent) accurate. In December, an NPR/Ipsos

Propagating propaganda and misinformation is easier than it’s ever been, spreading through forums, chat rooms, and social media like wildfire. It’s helped fringe movements such as QAnon gain traction among popular, prominent, and public figures.

poll found that less than 47 percent of the inquiry’s participants could identify the following statement as false: “A group of Satan-worshipping elites who run a child sex ring are trying to control our politics and media.” The same inquiry also found that 39 percent of Americans believe in a “deep state” working to undermine Trump. Other data shows declining support for QAnon, such as a Morning Consult poll from late January, indicating a 14-point decrease since October. But even after factoring in that decrease, the poll indicated that 24 percent of Republicans found QAnon’s claims “at least somewhat accurate.”

Obviously polls can be misleading. And the grab-bag of false claims we label as “QAnon” is very multifaceted. For example, not everyone who suspects elite-level pedophilia necessarily believes that kidnapped “mole children” were being rescued from underground tunnels in Central Park last spring. Not everyone who thinks a “deep state” controls our government also believes that Vincent Fusca, a fortysomething financial advisor from Pittsburgh, is secretly JFK, Jr. QAnon beliefs circulate across a constantly-changing, always-contradictory spectrum. This may be why they’re so dangerous.

The conspiracy has led to political campaigns in Pennsylvania as well. Last year, a QAnon supporter named Bobby Jeffries ran for our 10th congressional district as well as the state House of Representatives (unsuccessfully in both cases). Until a few weeks ago, state Sen. Doug Mastriano and Pennsylvania Supreme Court candidate Paula Patrick were both scheduled to speak at a Q-affiliated conference in Gettysburg. Both backed out when the event’s conspiratorial agenda became clear, but both have also appeared on podcasts supportive of the conspiracy. Finally, when the House of Representatives passed legislation condemning QAnon last fall, 17 members voted against the measure, including Central PAs Scott Perry and our own representative, Mike Kelly.

Saving the children?

Last summer, my fascination with QAnon shifted from morbid curiosity to genuine concern when its ideologues began infiltrating good-faith efforts to fight child abuse. In late August, a series of marches were organized across the country under the hashtag #SaveTheChildren. Ostensibly coordinated to draw attention to the “800,000 children who go missing each year,” the demonstrations were a mix of concerned allies, abuse survivors, and QAnon conspiracists. In fact, as the Q-sympathetic agenda became clear, the hashtag switched to #SaveOurChildren to avoid association with the Save the Children Fund, a legitimate U.K.-based non-government organization.

So let’s talk about that agenda, if you have the stomach for it. One of the strangest parts of the QAnon worldview is its obsession with something called “adrenochrome.” Many QAnon believers don’t simply believe that the global elites are abusing children — they claim they’re actually drinking the adrenaline-rich blood of terrified, dying infants to ensure personal longevity (or even immortality).

The “adrenochrome theory” is essentially a repurposed variation on antisemitic “blood libel” propaganda dating as far back as 12th century England. Though the specifics obviously vary, the basic outline remains intact across centuries — a secret cabal of elites (or Jews, in its most racist version) kidnap, abuse, and extract blood from innocent white children. In 13th century France, they supposedly mixed this blood into their Passover bread; by 2016, it became Hillary Clinton and George Soros dining like vampires.

I learned about a #SaveOurChildren gathering in Erie from a left-leaning Facebook group, of all places. Thankfully, the event came and went with little excitement. In fact, I suspect that the event page was shared by someone unfamiliar with adrenochrome or the imaginary cabal of Democrat Satanists. More likely, it was the “800,000 missing children” that set off their sense of alarm. And why wouldn’t it?

But that number is also incredibly misleading. The Huffington Post’s Michael Hobbes traced the origin of the statistic last September to a 2002

survey from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which asked parents if they had reported their children as runaways the previous year. The “800,000 children” mentioned in this nearly 20-year-old text referred only to the *number of reports*, not the total number of children. Meaning that if you filed a dozen reports about the same child in a year, the number increased by 12. Furthermore, Hobbes found that the vast majority of children (nearly 99 percent) who were reported missing returned home within hours or days — and about half of the cases were related to custody battles rather than nefarious child abduction.

Since child sex trafficking is obviously awful, you might find these numbers beside the point if they’re raising awareness. Unfortunately, there’s evidence that legitimate anti-trafficking organizations were flooded with unfounded theories in response to these gatherings. This sudden attention distracted from more legitimate abuse inquiries, often by looking in the wrong places for the wrong signs. For example, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 93 percent of juvenile victims know the perpetrator of sexual violence. Instead of demanding vigilante justice at the Democratic Convention, we should probably be examining relationships with coaches, teachers, parents, and priests.

How did we get here?

Every era has its conspiracies. I’m old enough to remember the “9/11 Truth” movement of the Bush era, while my parents’ generation watched the John Birch Society accuse President Eisenhower of being a Communist. So what’s different about QAnon?

To rhetorical theorist Colleen Kelley, a colleague of mine at Penn State Behrend, a key difference is technological. In a recent talk on the subject for the Jefferson Educational Society, she noted that “Q is fundamentally a digitally-based, hyper-connected coalition that rhetorically operates in a different way — and on a different scale — than much of what we’ve seen before.” She also notes its ability to cultivate community quickly: “It is highly participative in a way that few other conspiracy theories have ever been. You get together, you code, you play the game, and you bond with fellow travelers and believers.”

In a follow-up conversation I conducted with Dr. Kelley, she stressed that Trump’s base will play a key role “well

into the next rotation of the presidency.” Though she is quick to assert that she doesn’t see our former president as the mastermind of QAnon, she claims that “Trump’s secular, ‘I-am-the-greatest’ ideas, draw out of the recesses not only folks who are desperately and legitimately looking for a way out of their misery, but also the folks at the peripheries of antisocial society.”

It’s the latter group — the image board moderators, the crypto-fascists, the failed Instagram influencers, and the Roger Stones of the world — that seem especially well-suited to amplifying and profiting from chaos, often through well-timed emotional appeals and a very sophisticated understanding of the internet’s algorithms.

Failed prophecies

As I write this at the tail end of April, I’m reminded of the futility I mentioned at the start of this piece.

Q believers must certainly be feeling futile as hopes for a second Trump term slowly die. It’s hard to predict Trump’s future legacy, but his presidency strikes me as memorable for three things beyond the shallowness of his personal character: the normalization of overt bigotry, the consolidation of right-wing ideologues in our judicial system, and the half-million people who died of COVID, due in large part to his incompetence.

In the end, Trump turned out to be “a small boy’s idea of a tough guy,” to borrow a phrase from Raymond Chandler. He could wind up the liberals with his Twitter account and he could express anger in a way that was cathartic to those who agreed with him. He could orchestrate misinformation with astonishing success, but he certainly couldn’t change much on a day-to-day level. Obamacare is still the law of the land, his border wall is more of a symbol than a functional barrier, opioid overdoses are worse than ever, education and health care are as expensive as ever, and massive ecological destruction almost certainly awaits us.

The question that really alarms me is this — what happens when the antisocial media manipulators truly *internalize* this futility? Do they double down? Do they change their ways? Do they get Trump back in office and start all over again?

I have no idea what the answer is.

Dan Schank can be reached at dschank@eriereader.com

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Year of the Nurse

Nurses gave everything and more as pandemic peaked



BLUE PLANET STUDIO

By: Jonathan Burdick

In 2019, it was announced that the World Health Organization was designating 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of WHO, stated in the official announcement that the year would be “dedicated to highlighting the enormous sacrifices and contributions of nurses and midwives, and to ensuring that we address the shortage of these vital professions.”

Little did he know what 2020 had in store for the world. Dr. Jenna A. LoGiudice and Dr. Susan Bartos recently wrote for AACN Advanced Critical Care that WHO’s yearlong honor was quickly “overshadowed by the international invasion of the novel coronavirus disease 2019.”

Over the past year, nursing shortages have been at the forefront of the conversation as SARS-CoV-2 spread rapidly throughout the United States, but it is hardly a new conversation. Dan Schank wrote about the nursing shortage for the Erie Reader in 2016 and a local chief nursing officer in his story stated that “we

have a perfect storm brewing across the country.” At her hospital in Erie, she said, over one-fifth of her nurses were over the age of 56 and nearing retirement. The American Nurses Association more recently noted that with 500,000 registered nurses retiring by 2022, there will be a need for 1.1 million new RNs in order to avoid an even worse nursing shortage.

In April 2020, this predicted perfect storm manifested in New York City. It was only in 2019 that 13,000 city nurses voted to authorize a strike over a lack of safe staffing ratios. Now, New York City was the world epicenter of the pandemic and the city’s Health Department estimated a then-unfathomable 10,000 residents had died due to COVID-19. The virus overwhelmed the hospital system. Nurses, who were overworked and understaffed *before* the pandemic, worked even more tirelessly to save lives, risking their own safety and health in the process. Selfless nurses from all over the United States traveled to the city to assist with an influx of as many as 3,000 new admissions per day.

“I have never seen patients so sick

before,” Tamara Williams, a nurse from Dallas, told the New York Times on April 28, 2020. “And dying, despite everything that we’re doing.”

Sara Marks-Sammons, a graduate of Union City Area High School, now resides in Florida where she works as a registered nurse. When she heard reports of what was happening in New York City, she felt a sense of obligation to help.

“It was just so heart-wrenching and saddening to hear how bad things really were [in New York City],” she says. She, along with nurses throughout the country, arrived in the city to help in the midst of that deadly April, feeling a duty to her fellow nurses as well as the community. “I just knew in my heart it was what I needed to do no matter how hard or scary it was with all the unknown.”

Nurses were at the forefront in a way that many in the field had never anticipated. Already thinly-stretched staffs were reduced even more from their own infections. On a single day in April, the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation confirmed that 924 staff members in city hospitals had tested positive for the virus and over

The World Health Organization was eerily prophetic in 2019 when it designated 2020 as The International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, prior to the pandemic taking hold. That honor was earned many times over as more was demanded from the profession than ever.

3,000 had called out sick the day prior.

“I don’t think there was any part of being there that was easy. From beginning until the end of my entire 31 days there, it was a struggle mentally, emotionally, and physically,” explains Marks-Sammons. “Every day was a new challenge ... [and] the days were long and hard. Flexibility became who I was when I was there.”

The Journal of Clinical Health noted that same month how nurses were “literally working until they drop” and many were “dealing with a lack of essential items.”

“I think a lot of what was happening was known, but maybe not necessarily believed. We didn’t all have PPE. We were reusing it and putting ourselves in danger. It was *real* and it was *hard*,” says Marks-Sammons. The uncertainty did not help. “It was also new and a learning process for

everyone. We weren't ready for a pandemic of this degree and that became clear."

She says that they all simply did everything that they could, based on what they knew at the time, and hoped, if nothing else, they were making *some* kind of difference by being there. The signs and support from the residents of New York City as well as the hospital staff helped and were encouraging.

"The clapping during shift changes and all the healthcare signs on buildings were noticed," she says. "There was a genuine thankfulness from the majority of staff that we were there to help. They needed us and we were there. We stepped in and did everything we could, with very little, to make a difference." Still, she adds, "It was a lot of feeling helpless."

In Erie by this point, two deaths were known to be from COVID-19. Yet, while some in the Erie area were arguing over the constitutionality of mask-mandates, for many, especially those in healthcare who were reading about and seeing reports out

of New York City, it seemed like the calm before the storm.

The deadliest wave began here as winter arrived. By the end of December, there were over 270 confirmed COVID-19 related deaths in Erie County (with nearly 200 more deaths added since). According to data from the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health though,

The American Nurses Association more recently noted that with 500,000 registered nurses retiring by 2022, there will be a need for 1.1 million new RNs in order to avoid an even worse nursing shortage [than the one in 2020].

725 more people died in 2020 than in 2019 across the county. Since 2000, an average of 2,774 people have died each year countywide. In 2020, a total of 3,650 people died throughout Erie County. By the side of each person who died of COVID-19 were the local nurses who were caring for them.

National Nurses United has conservatively estimated that 1,700 healthcare workers have died from COVID-19. The toll this pandemic has had on nurses cannot be overstated. *JAMA Psychiatry*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the American Medical Association, published its findings last month that female nurses are twice as likely to die by

importance of preventative and management strategies.

"I wish people realized that over the past year everyone who makes up our healthcare system is still struggling," says Marks-Sammons. "Some have coped and others have not. Some have left the field from such overwhelming feelings of being helpless. Many are still trying to find their way back to what real life consists of after being on the frontlines. Some of us are still there fighting. We literally battled a war that's not over and are still experiencing the mental fatigues that come with such devastation."

Nurses have been taking care of us and our loved ones since before the days of Florence Nightingale. It is imperative then that we as a society and as communities, make sure that we help take care of and *listen* to them now more than ever.

Jonathan Burdick runs the historical blog Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com



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‘Virtually’ Impossible to Miss: JES Global Summit XII

Rescheduled speaker series streaming throughout month of May



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Speakers for the Jefferson Educational Society’s Digital Global Summit XII will include, in order of appearance: (top row, left to right) Camille Busette, Rashawn Ray, Ali Zaidi, Avi Loeb, Rev. Jeffrey Brown, and Nile Gardiner; (middle row, left to right) Gerald Seib, Dr. Michael Saag, Susan Page, Karen Tumulty, Dr. Leana Wen, and David Ignatius; (bottom row, left to right) Ambassador Christopher Hill, April Ryan, Steven Ascher, Jeanne Jordan, and James and Deborah Fallows.

By: Cara Suppa

According to Dr. Ferki Ferati, the President of the Jefferson Educational Society, the JES team was initially resistant to a virtual event.

“The Global Summit is such a special program for us that we initially did not want to hold it virtually,” he said. “We pushed the in-person Summit to November of this year but wanted to provide the community with content until we are able to resume in-person programming safely.”

So Steve Scully, the chair of the Global Summit, Vice President Ben Speggen, and Ferati got together to arrange the Summit XII lineup, scheduled for the last three full weeks in May.

While the organizers had to forgo the

preferred in-person aspect, a virtual event does have some benefits.

“A key difference for the Virtual Global Summit is that we didn’t have to ask our speakers to commit up to two days of their time to come to Erie,” Ferati commented. “We were asking our speakers for an hour to an hour-and-a-half of their time. The logistics of securing speakers was easier.”

One of the summit’s great strengths is the versatility of its speakers, from a variety of fields and on a whole host of subjects, and this spring edition does not disappoint. Ferati is entirely enthusiastic about the lineup and the discussions they will generate.

“As a community, we must be bold enough to have more than one conver-

sation at a time, and those can often vary widely,” he said.

Global Summit XII is an excellent standalone event, but it’s also something of a precursor to Global Summit XIII in November, with the original XII slate — which had to be canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic — all honoring their speaking commitments.

Events all begin at 7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 10

Addressing Policy Reform and Racial Equity with Camille Busette and Rashawn Ray

Racial injustice can never be righted until the policies and laws which govern our society are changed. Enter

Camille Busette, director of the Brookings Race, Prosperity and Inclusion Initiative, and Rashawn Ray, a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at the Brookings Institution and professor at the University of Maryland. The two will combine their insight, research, and expert analysis to discuss the ways in which minority communities have been lawfully exploited and oppressed, and what can be done to change it.

Tuesday, May 11

A Conversation with Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Adviser to the Biden Administration

If you were a student at General McLane High School between the years

of 2000 and 2004, you might have shared a class or a hallway with this next illustrious speaker. Ali Zaidi, who moved to Edinboro with his family in 1993, is a Pakistan-born attorney and political advisor; he is also a current member of the Biden Administration, serving as the very first Deputy White House National Climate Advisor, under Gina McCarthy. He is part of an essential climate change team that will help the president shape environmental policy for the next four years and beyond.

Wednesday, May 12

Avi Loeb — Extraterrestrial Life: Are We the Sharpest Cookies in the Jar?

Are we alone in this massive expanse we call the Universe? Avi Loeb, the chairman of the Astronomy department at Harvard and author of *Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth*, thinks not, and he's got receipts. Loeb has been shaking up the astronomical world for years with his

theories, particularly that concerning 'Oumuamua, an unidentified interstellar object that was detected in 2017. Loeb believes, based on its appearance and movement, it was a solar "light sail" from a defunct far-away galaxy. Intrigued? You're not alone — and maybe neither are we.

Thursday, May 13

A Conversation with Rev. Jeffrey Brown: Race in America and Today's Black Lives Matter Movement

Reverend Jeffrey Brown has been credited with playing a major part in the "Boston Miracle" — a reduction in youth homicides in the Massachusetts capital over the course of eight years, from 73 deaths to none — and he founded RECAP, Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace. The Baptist minister's life has been devoted to ending racial violence through his faith, his organizations, and the municipal models he has developed and shared with cities nationwide.

Friday, May 14

Nile Gardiner — The Iron Lady on Screen: Discussion Margaret Thatcher in Film and on TV

If you happened to catch the latest season of Netflix's *The Crown*, you couldn't miss Gillian Anderson's stunning performance as the late Margaret Thatcher, Britain's prime minister from 1979 to 1990. But how authentic was Anderson's portrayal? Or Meryl Streep's in the film *The Iron Lady*? Nile Gardiner, an aide to Thatcher and director of Thatcher Center for Freedom and fellow at Heritage Foundation, will dismantle media portrayals as needed and describe the real person at the heart of world politics for 11 years.

Monday, May 17

Gerald Seib — We Should Have Seen It Coming: From Reagan to Trump — A Front-Row Seat to a Political Revolution

Gerald Seib's rise to Washington bureau chief at the Wall Street Journal

has afforded him some spectacular views — not only to the tidal wave political force that is Trump but to all the elements that have been in play long before the real estate mogul even considered filling the highest office in the land. This Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist has covered Washington politics since 1987; his insights provide an invaluable insider's perspective.

Tuesday, May 18

Dr. Michael Saag — The Global Coronavirus Pandemic and America's Path Forward

In a December 2020 interview with AL.com, Dr. Michael Saag — already renowned the world over for his groundbreaking research with the HIV/AIDS virus — described his mission back in March as both a deeply concerned physician and a COVID-19 patient himself: "Put a story to the numbers." As an infectious disease expert, he realized that sheer data would not be enough to convince Americans to put on a mask and

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FEATURE

socially distance. Dr. Saag, who is currently the director of infectious disease at the University of Alabama — Birmingham, shared every stage of his personal, harrowing experience battling COVID to make an emotional appeal and potentially save lives. Where we go from here is still uncertain, but if anyone could hypothesize, it would be Dr. Saag.

Wednesday, May 19

Susan Page — Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power

Six White House administrations, ten presidential elections, nine presidential interviews, and most recently, the Vice Presidential debate between Mike Pence and Kamala Harris — Susan Page, the Washington Bureau Chief for USA Today knows a thing or two about American politics, and she'll be here to speak about it. She will focus on the formidable Nancy Pelosi, once the top-ranked woman in American government and now second only to the VP. Page recently published a biography about Pelosi's influence over, and instinct for, the Washington political machine, which was made even more impressive by her breakthrough into a traditionally "boys only" club.

Thursday, May 20

Karen Tumulty — Nancy Reagan: Archives, Letters, Memoirs, and Interviews Offering a New and Revealing Look at the Former First Lady

Karen Tumulty has covered politics since the 1970s and has seen it all as a journalist. She went toe-to-toe with the McCain campaign in 2008 and has appeared on numerous news programs, like PBS NewsHour and Special Report with Bret Baier. Her latest work is a biography of Nancy Reagan, President Ronald Reagan's most trusted — and some might argue capable — advisor. Critics have singled out Tumulty's deeply thoughtful research, on which she spent four years, and the three-dimensional picture of the enigmatic First Lady who steered her husband's course, and that of America's.

Friday, May 21

Dr. Leana Wen — COVID-19: The Path Forward for Parents, Educators, and Public Health Experts

Dr. Leana Wen came to national attention when Planned Parenthood announced she would be heading the organization. Though she departed a mere eight months later, the Washington Post columnist and CNN medical analyst, who is also a practicing physician, is turning her gaze forward to life in a post-COVID world. Parents and educators alike were hard-hit during the pandemic, their lives disrupted in unimaginable ways by the "new normal," even as public health officials used what data they had to pinpoint what normal would be. Dr. Wen has provided a guiding voice to many with her simple, common sense, fact-driven approach to COVID.

Monday, May 24

David Ignatius — Russia, China, and What You Need to Know about America's Greatest Foreign Policy Challenges

After receiving a diploma in economics, David Ignatius went into journalism, writing for the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post, covering various topics such as foreign affairs, politics, and economics. Some might call it a career at that point, but Ignatius also went on to publish 11 novels, one of which was turned into a film by director Ridley Scott (Body of Lies). With his political expertise and intelligence analysis, Ignatius will speak to the challenges our country faces internationally, from two of its greatest recognized threats.

Tuesday, May 24

Christopher Hill — Understanding America's 21st Century Diplomacy: Lessons from the Front Lines of Europe and Asia

Which American do you think has one of the best-known faces in China? If you guessed Christopher Hill, you would probably be surprised, but also correct. The former Assistant Secretary of State of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and former US Ambassador to Iraq, South Korea, Poland, and Macedonia (who happens to be mul-

tilingual in five languages) became a Chinese celebrity, famous for his easygoing demeanor while on camera. Hill is currently the George W. Ball Adjunct Professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Wednesday, May 25

April Ryan — Front Row to History: Reporting from the Front Lines of the White House

During a time characterized by rampant misinformation from the White House, April Ryan's reporting pressed for truth and transparency. She stood her ground in exchanges with Trump and his press secretary, Sean Spicer. She speaks up for minorities, sometimes as the lone voice in the room, asking the questions no one else will. As a CNN political analyst and White House correspondent, plus the Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief for The Grio, Ryan witnesses history firsthand — and isn't afraid to make it herself.

Thursday, May 26

James and Deborah Fallows + Steven Ascher and Jeanne Jordan — "Our Towns": From the Pages to the HBO Screen

The cultural/political/economic evolution of a population is a never-ending process, and very many are on the decline. Outside of major centers like New York or Los Angeles, what can the rest of the country's small towns do to revitalize and reinvigorate their communities? This is precisely what James and Deborah Fallows, writers, researchers, and travelers, set out to unearth in their book Our Towns: a 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America, published in 2018. Award-nominated filmmakers Steven Ascher and Jeanne Jordan developed the book into an HBO documentary that is creating a crucial open dialogue about small-town America's path forward.

All events begin at 7:30 p.m. // All speakers will broadcast virtually, via Zoom // Pre-registration is required // All events are free // For more information or to register visit: jeserie.org/digital-global-summit

Cara Suppa can be reached at csuppa@eriereader.com



UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Thursday, May 13 | Open Mic with host 50 Miles to Empty |
| Friday, May 14 | Concord Station |
| Saturday, May 15 | Kevin Wilson Acoustics |
| Sunday, May 16 | Breakfast with Jesus (11am) |
| Sunday, May 16 | Brunch with 50 Miles to Empty (12 Noon) |
| Friday, May 21 | Jim Froman Band |
| Saturday, May 22 | Mark Morris (Afternoon) |
| Saturday, May 22 | Mike Mannerino (Evening) |
| Sunday, May 23 | Brunch with John & Richard |
| Friday, May 28 | Memorial Weekend Music |
| Saturday, May 29 | Memorial Weekend Music |
| Sunday, May 30 | Breakfast with Jesus |

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Warner Theatre Rehearses for Stunning Second Act

Fitted with new rehearsal hall and loads of upgrades, Erie treasure to return in December 2021



Passers-by the Warner Theatre's State Street entrance have noticed the glaring absence of its famous marquee, which is being replicated out-of-state in all of its original 1931 glory. The fourth and final phase of Warner renovations is slated to be completed by December of this year.

sorely lacking in modern amenities.

The Warner's at-times tenuous future

By the end of 2021, the Warner will have comfortably broken free of the "inadequate" label with a fully-equipped modern theater facility, the culmination of a renovation project that began all the way back in 2002. That's when plaster, gold leaf, tapestries, and other surfaces were thoroughly cleaned and restored and the roof was replaced (Phase 1).

The following year, new seating — a re-creation of the theater's original seating — was installed in a configuration better suited to audience comfort and maneuverability (Phase 2). Also in 2003, the Erie County Convention Center Authority (ECCCA) purchased the adjacent National City Bank Building, which was integrated into the complex for additional restrooms, bar areas, conference rooms, and offices. Vintage movie posters from the Warner's early days (framed and arranged by the Erie Art Museum) hang on its walls to impart the requisite charm. And thus fulfilled Phase 3.

The fourth and final phase, as should be quite clear, has had difficulty evading delay after delay. The biggest holdup was the acquisition of the property *behind* the theater — although the ECCCA held a 99-year lease on that parcel (owned by the National City Development Corporation, who manages the neighboring Mid City Towers apartments), the Commonwealth (who owns the Warner) would not approve construction on land it doesn't own. Therefore, the ECCCA was forced to

By: Matt Swanseger

“Watch the eyes of a child as it enters the portals of our great theatres and treads the pathways into fairyland. Watch the bright light in the eyes of the tired shopgirl who hurries noiselessly over the carpets and sighs with satisfaction as she walks amid furnishings that once delighted the hearts of queens. See the tail-worn father whose dreams have never come true, and look inside his heart as he finds strength and rest within the theatre. There you have the answer to why Motion Picture Palaces are so palatial.”

— George Rapp, Warner Theatre architect

Dating back to its grand opening on April 10, 1931, Erie's Warner Theatre had always been intended as a great escape. Its opulent interior drew heavily from Art Deco and French Im-

perial styles, with just a touch of Tutankhamen (King Tut's tomb was discovered in the 1920s, making Ancient Egypt quite fashionable). Its employees, under the direct employ of Warner Bros. Studios in Hollywood, regaled patrons with their entertaining chops. For Ra's sake it even boasted *air conditioning* — a contrivance unbeknownst to most at the time. To be at the Warner was to be somewhere else, and through the Great Depression into the war years, that was exactly what people wanted.

But although the Warner has reliably provided an escape over the past nine decades, it could not itself escape the demands of changing times. It served beautifully as a “motion picture palace” (Warner Bros. films and others after a 1948 federal antitrust lawsuit) for its first 40 years — but the emergence of

large cinema multiplexes in the 1970s nearly proved its undoing. After being sold to CiNET Corp. in 1973 and an unsuccessful run showing B and C movies, CiNET was prepared to cut its losses and commit the historic building to the wrecking ball. Thankfully, then Mayor Lou Tullio intervened, and convinced the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to purchase the Warner.

The Warner escaped its near-certain doom because Tullio and others recognized its merits and history as a *presentation house* — a designation that encompassed more than film. Although the theater had hosted vaudeville acts and other live performances during its first act, it was the Erie Philharmonic's adoption of the Warner as a performing space in the '70s that really galvanized preservation efforts. In 1977, Tullio

formed the Erie Civic Center Authority to operate the Warner Theatre, and in 1981, it hosted its first Broadway show after some minor updates to get the building up to code.

However, an inevitable consequence of raising a facility's profile is that of comparison. As far as character goes, Erie's Warner was virtually peerless — other Warner Theatres were constructed in the early 20th century, but of those only five remain intact (with Youngstown, Ohio's Powers Auditorium the closest to our motion picture palace in aesthetic). In 1992, when the Erie Metro Cultural Planning Committee declared the Warner Theatre the top priority of the arts community, they brought in leading theater architects from major cities all over the country, all of whom were spellbound by how much of its original majesty remained. Still, all knew it was

NICK WARREN

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[left] Situated behind the original Warner Theatre building on East Ninth Street, a new rehearsal hall will be accessible both from the street and via a glass-walled outdoor link connected to the existing Warner foyer. A video board showing performances to onlookers on French Street will be added sometime in the future. [bottom right] Offset barrel-vaulted ceilings and a gallery-style overlook highlight the contemporary interior of the new Warner Theatre rehearsal hall, scheduled for completion in Dec. 2021.

COFFEY GROUP ARCHITECTURE

wait for the HUD mortgage on that property to fully mature before purchasing.

Of course, the price tag for planning, labor, and materials only go up over time, so construction bids were consistently coming in \$10 million over the set budget of \$16.5 million — \$11 million in state funding, \$3.5 million from the Warner Theatre Preservation Trust established by former Gov. Tom Ridge in 1997, and \$2 million raised by Erie Events. Just before the bids expired in February of 2020, another \$3 million in corporate donations helped rescue the project from limbo. The planned relocation of the Erie Philharmonic’s 2020-21 concert season to the Erie Insurance Arena (which never happened in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic) helped close the budget gap, as crews have been allowed to work continuously toward a projected completion of December 2021.

What will the renovated Warner look like?

For those wondering, the iconic Warner Theatre marquee will be back to shine upon State Street once again. It will be an exact replica of the 1931 original,

with certain elements (such as the antique Tiffany glass) being restored and others being replaced.

Those passing underneath the marquee into the lobby will notice little difference in aesthetic. Once they sit down for a performance, however, the difference in experience should be obvious. A newly installed orchestra shell and state-of-the-art, in-house sound system will provide acoustics previously unmatched in Warner history. Underneath the stage, a trap system will allow for a much fuller complement of theatrical effects. The stage itself will be expanded by 15 feet, and equipped with an orchestra pit lift that can be raised or lowered, supporting various symphonic configurations. Meanwhile, the available electrical supply to the stage is being *quadrupled*, generating a foundation for some of professional theater’s flashiest shows.

Behind the scenes, drastically enhanced accommodations should encourage bigger and better productions to not only stop by, but to stick around a while. These include:

- 3 quad dressing rooms
- 3 eight-seat dressing rooms
- 2 chorus dressing rooms
- 2 musician locker rooms
- 1 green room
- 1 wardrobe room
- 1 wig room (for the first time Warner history — it’s taken 90 years, but we’re finally getting ahead!)

- A loading dock on East Ninth Street
- 2 star dressing rooms

• 1 laundry room

The *pièce de résistance* of the project, though, is the construction of the two-story rehearsal hall that will sit above the loading dock on East Ninth. This contemporary but intimate space will have its own dedicated entrance, ticketing area, lobby, restrooms, and bar area for small gatherings and receptions. Offset barrel-vaulted ceilings will offer exceptional acoustics, while a gallery-style overlook will feed into the classy atmosphere. It is expected to accommodate crowds of up to 400, and will be programmed for both performances and art education throughout the year, independent of or supplementary to whatever’s transpiring on the

Warner’s main stage. The brand new rehearsal hall will be connected to the existing Warner foyer by means of an outdoor link running alongside the building on French Street, enclosed in clear glass. Eventually, a video wall on the French Street side of the rehearsal hall will show movies and broadcast sold-out events to public spectators on the lawn outside Erie Insurance Arena. Between the arena, UPMC Park, and the Warner complex, summer nights in Downtown Erie’s Sports and Entertainment District should have no shortage of lights, camera, and/or action post-pandemic.

It’s an escape we can most certainly look forward to.

Special thanks to the Erie County Historical Society and Erie County Convention Center Authority executive director Casey Wells for their Zoom presentation “The Warner Theatre: Past, Present, and Future,” from which this article has been adapted.

Matt Swanseger’s favorite Warner Theatre memory was losing his tassel during Collegiate Academy’s graduation ceremony in 2005. If by chance you have it, reach out at mswanseger@eriereader.com



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MOVIES

A Comedy of Errors

Shiva Baby is as funny as it is uncomfortable



The term "cringe comedy" has been a popular moniker for the past decade-and-a-half and plenty of films and television shows have certainly earned that distinction since that time. However, I don't think anything has so perfectly embodied the description quite like Emma Seligman's *Shiva Baby*. This is a film that is tense, uncomfortable, anxiety-inducing, and incredibly funny all at the same time. Suffice to say, it's an absolute blast.

We follow a single day in the life of Danielle (Rachel Sennott), a college student who is sleeping with an older man (Danny Deferrari) who's paying her way through law school. That afternoon she attends a family shiva (a traditional Jewish gathering after a funeral) and has to endure awkward conversations with family members whom she hasn't seen in years. But things take a turn for the worse when she learns that the shiva is being attended not only by her ex-girlfriend Maya (Molly Gordon) but also her sugar daddy and his family that

she didn't even know about.

With its witty, rapid-fire dialogue and strong performances from an ensemble cast, the film works wonderfully as a comedy. However, the tight, hand-held camerawork and often overbearing soundtrack often make it feel more like a horror film. The end result is a film that is simultaneously funny and nerve-wracking. Seligman does a great job putting us in the protagonist's headspace while her life falls apart during the course of one horrible day. If that sounds like a fun time at the movies, then this film is for you but it may lead some viewers to bouts of anxiety themselves. — Forest Taylor

Shiva Baby is currently playing in select theaters and is available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, Google Play, and Vudu // Written and Directed by: Emma Seligman // Starring: Rachel Sennott, Molly Gordon, Polly Draper, Danny Deferrari, Fred Melamed, Dianna Agron, Glynis Bell, Sondra James, Deborah Offner, and Rita Gardner // 77 minutes // Unrated ('R' equivalent) // Utopia

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MOVIES

War of the Gargantuas

Godzilla vs. Kong is very dumb but occasionally entertaining



Legendary Entertainment's so-called "Monsterverse" has been the strangest cinematic universe to date. After a somber and fairly serious beginning with Gareth Edwards' *Godzilla*, the series has followed Toho's lead and made every subsequent film increasingly dumber and sillier. This all culminates with Adam Wingard's (*You're Next*, *The Guest*) *Godzilla vs. Kong*, which might just be the dumbest and silliest one yet. The film is loud and obnoxious, the story is incomprehensible, and the action wears tiresome. However, there are some unexpected pleasures to be found in just how far it's willing to go with its ridiculous premise.

After being discovered on Skull Island, Kong has been living safely these last decades under Monarch supervision. But when an Apex CEO learns about a possible new power source below the surface of the earth, he puts together a team of scientists to look for it with Kong guiding them there. This attracts

Godzilla to them as he is compelled to destroy Kong and the two find themselves in the fight of their lives.

The story is a convoluted mess with sinister corporate conspiracies, ancient legends, a little girl with an almost psychic connection to Kong, and a secret world that exists at the center of the earth. That said, we came to this film for the monster fight and it mostly delivers. *Godzilla*, Kong, and an unexpected third monster late in the film all have distinct personalities and it's fun watching how each one comes up with ways to pound on the other. It's a lot of stupid fun but the fun lies in seeing just how far the stupid is willing to go.

— Forest Taylor

Directed by: Adam Wingard // Written by: Terry Rosso, Michael Dougherty, Eric Pearson, Max Borenstein, and Zach Shields // Starring: Alexander Skarsgard, Millie Bobby Brown, Rebecca Hall, Brian Tyree Henry, Shun Oguri, Eiza Gonzalez, Julian Dennison, Lance Reddick, Kyle Chandler, Demian Bichir, and Kaylee Hottle // 113 minutes // Rated PG-13 // Warner Bros. Pictures

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Great Circle Takes Adventure to New Heights

Maggie Shipstead’s new novel awes and inspires

There is a lot to be said about the story told in Maggie Shipstead’s newest novel, *Great Circle*. But to summarize it in one word: fantastic.

Spanning the majority of the 20th century, *Great Circle* is an adventure in and of itself. Its main venture is telling the story of Marian Graves, a female pilot who eventually sets out to perform a great circle of the earth. A great circle is, by definition, the largest circle that can be drawn on any given sphere, with Marian setting out to do so across both poles.

The novel, however, focuses less on her final attempted feat and more on her early life and what leads her to her great circle. Marian’s story intersects with that of Hadley, a scandal-prone actress in modern-day Hollywood who, following a series of public disgraces, is cast to play Marian in a movie adaptation of the pilot’s life and final flight.

The story’s focus goes beyond Marian and Hadley, though. Sharing many of the pages is Marian’s twin brother Ja-

mie, a gentle boy who becomes a kind man and incredible artist. Other notable characters include Wallace, their painter uncle who takes in the twins when they are just babies; Barclay, a bootlegger who sets his sights on Marian and will not take no for an answer; Caleb, a childhood friend who grows with them into adulthood; and Ruth, a brazen female pilot Marian befriends during World War II.

Hadley, the Hollywood starlet playing Marian, has her share of fumbles and flaws, but ultimately wants to bring truth to Marian’s story, digging into the pilot’s past to truly understand the part she is playing. With some help from those who knew Marian, Hadley uncovers truths that she never could have imagined possible about the lost pilot.

Shipstead’s writing is absolutely stunning, each character coming to life through her mesmerizing descriptions and masterful imagery. Each high is ridden along with Marian, each low

felt intensely and deeply as though it were happening in real-time. There is something so amazing in the novel’s composition that even the most mundane or technical details — such as complexities regarding airplanes and machinery — jump off the page, drawing the reader in.

In a display of true talent, Shipstead sets the scene of each location — and there are a lot of them — in striking beauty and detail. From Montana to Alaska, Europe to Africa, New Zealand to the Arctic, and many more places in between, the imagery is so profound that it is difficult not to feel as though you can smell the mountain air or feel the chill of subzero temperatures.

The only fault in the novel is in its ending — or, rather, the fact that it has to end at all. Shipstead has created a world so unique and filled with such riveting characters that it is devastating to have to leave them behind.

Great Circle is so heartbreaking-ly beautiful and stunningly written

that each reader is sure to devour the story, hungry for more adventure.
— Ally Kutz

Knopf // 627 pages // Historical Fiction



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The First Ten Years

Welcome To Night Vale's Joseph Fink teams up with wife Meg Bashwiner for new memoir

In 2009, Joseph Fink was a 22-year-old aspiring writer who moved cross-country from California to New York City to follow his dreams. Working odd jobs to pay the rent, he takes up volunteering with a theater company in the East Village for free tickets to their shows. Meg Bashwiner, also 22 years old, was an aspiring performer and playwright living in New Jersey with her parents, working a desk job during the day, and commuting to the city for her internship with a theater company in the East Village — the same one Fink was volunteering at. They met, became friends, and the rest, as they say, is history... Well, it isn't really that simple.

Hilarious and down-to-earth, *The First Ten Years: Two Sides of the Same Love*

Story by Joseph Fink and Meg Bashwiner is as entertaining as it is heartwarming. The initial premise itself is enough to draw readers in: Fink and Bashwiner wrote their pieces separately, not consulting each other, leading to two different interpretations of the same events. Some are remembered vastly different from one another, while other events are nearly identical.

After the two met in 2009, Fink found huge success with *Welcome to Night Vale*, a podcast co-created with Jeffrey Cranor. Set in the fictional town of Night Vale, the podcast is presented as a radio show that reports on the strange events that take place in the town. Bashwiner is also involved, voicing a number of characters on the show.

While heartwarming and hilarious, the book also contains heartbreak and loss. The perfection of this memoir is truly in its imperfections, laid bare by authors who do not shy away from the more difficult subjects. Loss of a loved one, break-ups, make-ups, and dark points in life are discussed and brought to the light, rather than hidden away and brushed under the rug.

Both Fink and Bashwiner have strong, unique voices that come alive on the page, having readers laugh along with them, but also grieve their losses and continue to root for them throughout the memoir. With the first ten years being this good, the next ten should be even better.

— Ally Kutz

Harper Perennial // 193 pages // Memoir



Our Monthly Podcast Picks

Cool things to listen to this lunar cycle

Podcast Pick: With Gourley and Rust

Hosted by: Matt Gourley, Paul Rust // patreon.com/withgourleyandrust

A self-professed “cozy-cast” that can often run close to three hours long, *With Gourley and Rust* can best be compared to watching a movie with friends — something we could all use during these final hours of quarantine. (Ironically, one of their Patreon tiers rewards subscribers with synced commentaries to additional films, allowing listeners to actually watch the films with them in some capacity, but the same point stands for regular listeners.) Every Friday, Matt Gourley (*Superego*, *Conan O'Brien Needs A Friend*) and Paul Rust (star of *Love* and half of the band Don't Stop or We'll Die) discuss a film together — often part of a franchise, often horror-adjacent — usually something like an hour into recording. The rest of the show, which often feels minimally edited in a charming way, captures two friends catching up, telling stories from growing up and working in film, and generally trying to make each other laugh. It's an incredibly genuine and wholesome experience that leaves listeners caring less about *Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Myers* and more about their friends, Matt and Paul, who seem to burst with encyclopedic film knowledge and over-the-top anecdotes. In this way, and just in time for the weekend, it truly lives up to its “cozy-cast” status. — Aaron Mook



Podcast Pick: The Dana Gould Hour

Hosted by: Dana Gould // danagould.com

Perhaps you know him as “fragile” Frankie Merman, or maybe, somehow, you recognize his voice from the Gex video game franchise. Most likely, you've seen Dana Gould's name in the credits of *The Simpsons* from 2001 to 2007. Even if those aren't ringing any particular bells, you'll want to get to know the sound of his voice on his regular podcast, *The Dana Gould Hour*. Here, Gould mines his weird well of interests like a madman. Listen to this show if you are enamored with the following: *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, the *Planet of the Apes* franchise, bizarre true stories, mid-century Hollywood, any of artist Drew Friedman's subjects, any of artist Mitch O'Connell's subjects, or comedy in general. The show is half interview podcast, half variety show. It's also remarkably easy to jump into with its once-a-month schedule. It generally strays far from its titular length, but tends to hover between the acceptable runtime of a movie. Tangential to the podcast, Gould recently concluded the first season of *Hanging With Doctor Z* (hangingwithdoctorz.com), where he conducts *Space Ghost*-style interviews in full orangutan makeup. The podcast isn't so much of a binger, but it's a fantastic one to have in your feed, so tune in, it's a gas, it's the *Dana Gould Hour* podcast. — Nick Warren



Podcast Picks: Throughline

Hosted by: Ramtin Arablouei and Rund Abdelfatah // NPR

While listening to a podcast episode on James Baldwin during an evening walk last fall, I was stopped in my tracks. The episode had been slowly building towards a gut-punching monologue that was so moving that I needed a moment to gather myself. When it ended, I listened again.

The podcast is *Throughline*. It launched in 2019, but was perhaps an unlikely show. Co-hosts Ramtin Arablouei and Rund Abdelfatah are not historians. In fact, before *Throughline*, the duo were only producers who had never even been on air when they pitched their idea to NPR.

“There were these large gaps in our knowledge about all of these important events, and if we felt that way, we thought others did too,” Abdelfatah told Podcast Review in 2019.

Arablouei and Abdelfatah are contagiously curious in their conversations with knowledgeable guests as they examine the nuances of history often remembered more broadly. Episodes challenge listeners to set aside preconceptions — which the masterful storytelling makes easy.

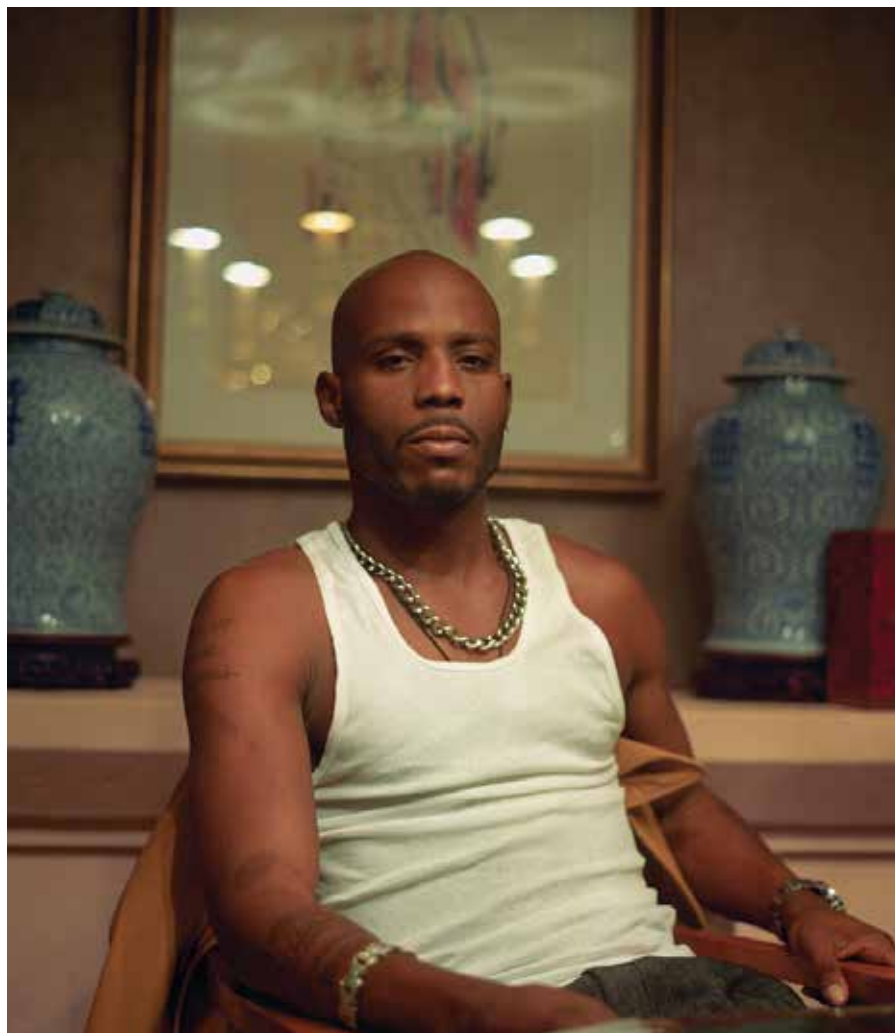
Episodes cover wide-ranging topics including the N95 respirator, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Billie Holiday's “Strange Fruit,” the Kurdish people, the banana industry, and a self-proclaimed genderless prophet named the Public Universal Friend.

For those who want to know the stories behind the headlines, *Throughline* is for you.— Jonathan Burdick



DMX: A Leader Gone Too Soon

Members of the Erie hip-hop community look back on rapper's legacy



Rapper Earl Simmons — more popularly known as DMX — passed away of an apparent overdose on April 9, leaving a huge void in the hip-hop community felt worldwide, including in Erie.

God, X's lyrics displayed his trauma as much as his desire to be saved from it. With a distinctive voice that carried an undeniable raspiness, this Ruff Ryder made it known that he was hungry for his shot in the world, and at the same time wanted to heal others with the word of God and natural philosophies.

Earl Simmons became a ray of light for those who were experiencing rough patches in their own personal lives. He was not only the voice of the streets, but a leader of the hopeless. What would you expect from a man who came from abuse (both physical and drug-related), neglect, group homes, and numerous times behind bars? X's messages were brutally truthful which led him to be an unstoppable force in hip-hop from 1998-2003 and dominating the rap game alongside his peers such as Jay Z and Eminem. Hollywood quickly took notice of the iconic Yonkers native which placed him in cult-classic movies such *Romeo Must Die*, *Exit Wounds*, and *Cradle To The Grave*.

MIKA VÄISÄNEN

By: Charles Brown

As if America hasn't dealt with enough heartbreaking news over the past year, we still find ourselves taking curveball after curveball, becoming more unsure of the future. But let's focus the scope on hip-hop, a genre that's claimed to be "the sound that runs the world." Fans all over are constantly anticipating the big next song or arguing who is the greatest to ever put the pen to the test. And as always, the culture never lets go of its legends even after their passing. From borough to borough, murals are painted all over to commemorate our street poets in order to keep hip-hop alive. And we'll continue to do so as we have lost one of the rawest talents to ever blaze the scene. That artist, my friends, is none other than Earl Simmons — aka DMX — who passed away on April 9 of this year due to an apparent overdose. Details of what drug caused his untimely demise have not been disclosed.

To many, the Yonkers emcee (born

Dec. 18, 1970), was more than an inspiration to listeners worldwide. DMX (or Dark Man X) would carry the torch from those before him such as Tupac Shakur, to present some of the grittiest of street tales and cringe-worthy yet beautiful introspection that resonates with fans until this day. X emerged onto the rap world in 1997 and sky-rocketed in 1998 with his debut album under Ruff Ryders/Def Jam *It's Dark And Hell Is Hot*. Within the same year, he dropped his follow-up titled *Flesh Of My Flesh, Blood Of My Blood* which featured one of his most honest songs yet, "Slippin." Both albums went #1 on the Billboard 200 charts with his next three releases tackling the same position. X became the first rapper to go #1 five times in a row and sold millions of copies each time.

DMX's music was based on the crippling duality of man, fighting what he would call the dark and the light. Filled with outbursts of pain, criminal motives, prayers, and conversations with

"Party Up" at a friend's house. "I later got the album and fell in love with his storytelling abilities and it definitely impacted my own writing."

Renowned hip-hop personality Jay Rastik recognized DMX's powerhouse status claiming him as a centerpiece to what hip-hop is. "Just watching his videos and being able to meet him and know how genuine he was is inspirational. Hip-hop lost a gem when we lost DMX. He helped many people get through rough times."

DMX was hospitalized at White Plains Hospital in New York where he was

DMX's music was based on the crippling duality of man, fighting what he would call the dark and the light. Filled with outbursts of pain, criminal motives, prayers, and conversations with God, X's lyrics displayed his trauma as much as his desire to be saved from it.

placed on life support but was in a vegetative state with little to no chance of fully reviving. Shortly after, he was pronounced dead. He was 50 years of age. Before his passing, Dark Man was back into the music with a new album planned to hit the waves all over with some of the most prolific names in rap and R&B featured on it from Lil Wayne to Alicia Keys. X's memorial service was held at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn where his family, friends, fans, and various artists attended and spoke on his behalf.

Though one of hip-hop's prophets is no longer here, the fans still champion his music allowing X's catalog to make a killing in streams over Spotify. Multiple headlines have been hitting the net on a daily basis covering his problematic beginnings to his last days. DMX may have been a troubled soul thirsty for salvation, but his mission was to save the world before himself like the humanitarian he was born to be. Long live one of music's icons.

Charles Brown can be found on Facebook and Twitter @CEEBrown814, and online at ceebrown.com

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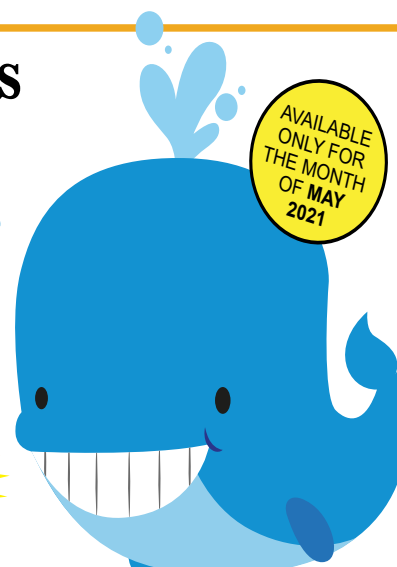
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INTO THE VOID

BY BRAD PATTULLO
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SO WHAT NOW? ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW A HIGHLIGHT REEL OF MY LIFE OR SOMETHING?
IF YOU'D LIKE.



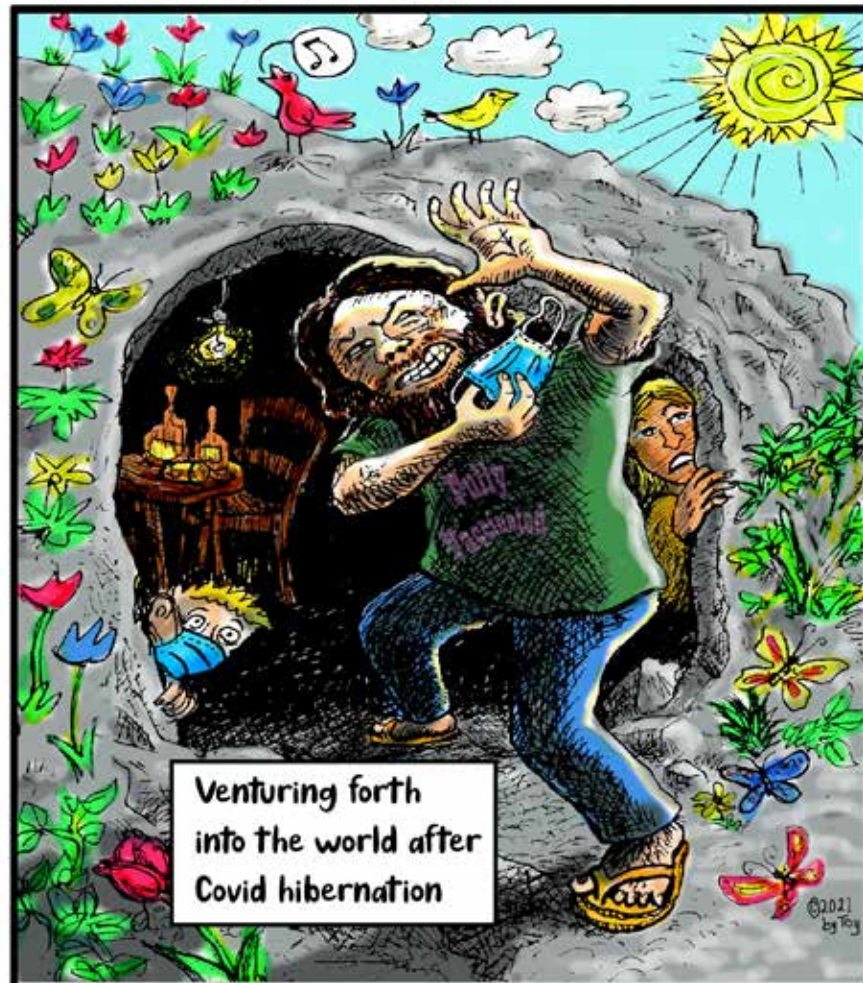
WELL, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THERE'S MUCH ELSE TO DO.
IT'S NOT THAT INTERESTING.



THAT MAKES ME FEEL TERRIBLE !!
I'M THE "ANGEL OF DEATH" NOT YOUR THERAPIST.



JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY



Venturing forth into the world after Covid hibernation

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Fish that Talk ²⁰²³ in: SoleMates

Do you know the difference between "Ignorance" and "Opathy?"



Frankly, I don't know, and certainly, I don't care.



©Tina Dumro 4.23.21

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

WHEN I WAS A KID, WE HAD TO CLEAN AUNT MARY ZITA'S HOUSE AFTER SHE PASSED AWAY. I REMEMBER FINDING A BOX OF MERCURY DIMES, A GLASS EYE, & A BUNDLE OF LOVE LETTERS WRITTEN TO MY AUNT LORETTA TIED IN A RIBBON. THESE DAYS, THINGS ARE DIFFERENT.



WE SEND MEMES OF RICHARD SIMMONS.



OMG! YAY!

VIDEOS OF UNHAPPY IKEA EMPLOYEES,

Then stop coming



OR PHOTOS OF DOGS IN WIGS.



MSHIMEK21

ALBUM REVIEWS

Alfa Mist
Bring Backs
 ANTI-



Do you need to relax? Do you kind of like jazz? Put on this album today. *Bring Backs* is the latest solo studio album



for Alfa Mist. The London-based pianist and producer is a self-taught musician, though this album — and his entire catalog in general — displays a highly educated sense of inventive musicality. Like his 2017 debut album *Antiphon* and his 2019 follow-up *Structuralism*, *Bring Backs* is bursting with luscious tones and a laid-back vibe that's worth examining, having gathered inspiration from throughout the decades. Whether you're putting it on as background music or fully indulging in every tone, listeners will love what they find. While it's not a far cry from his earlier work, *Bring Backs* is an exemplary piece in the burgeoning canon of nu-jazz. The album is stitched together by the poetry of Hilary Thomas. A heartfelt and glowing addition to the record, Thomas' words float along like magic against the backdrop of Alfa Mist's lo-fi tones and Fender Rhodes sounds. Is it groundbreaking? Perhaps not, but it may just be the perfect soundtrack to the mood you're looking for. — Nick Warren

The Armed
Ultrapop
 Sargent House



It's chaotic and exciting. *Ultrapop* is The Armed's fourth studio album since their formation in 2009



(including their hard-to-find debut), with as many EPs under their belt in that same time. Functioning less like a band and more as a musical collective, the Detroit outfit is made up of around eight people. Throughout their history, The Armed have been notoriously cagey and secretive about their actual lineup. For this album, they've released their official musical roster, but whether or not they're a reliable narrator is anyone's guess. Past contributors have included members of Dillinger Escape Plan, Rough Francis, and Converge. What we do know is that the twelve songs on the tongue-in-cheekily-named *Ultrapop* are fuzzy and bombastic, a frenetic cacophony that's not immediately decipherable. The album brings elements of noise, punk, and shoegaze together for a unique concoction that's worth hearing. For those of a more pop predilection, don't fear. It's extremely listenable (calling all Lightning Bolt fans), an intentionally unsettling, foamy brew of anger and experimentation. — Nick Warren

Gojira
Fortitude
 Roadrunner



With *Fortitude*, Gojira have cemented their place as one of progressive metal's most important bands. The



seventh album from the Ondres, France quartet is a step beyond in their already impressive catalog. Recorded in their New York City studio, this marks the band's return from their landmark 2016 album *Magma*. Curiously, there's almost a positive feel on this record. Filled by the band's trademark heaviness, *Fortitude* exists as a slightly more accessible endeavor than previous offerings. Twenty-five years after their formation, Gojira find themselves at the top of their game. The 11 tracks flow gracefully from one to another, with stand-out moments like the title track and the aptly named "The Chant." Feelings are codified, coalescing in sections of unforgettable fuzzy grandeur that you'll be tempted to sing along with. The family tree of metal is evident here, with sections that hearken to Led Zeppelin, Sepultura, and Iron Maiden, as well as contemporaries like Meshuggah and Mastadon. There's shredding aplenty, as evidenced in the opening licks of "Another World" melded seamlessly with epic sequences of forceful riffs and choruses. — Nick Warren

Cade Eliason
Forget Me Not
 Self-released



If you've never followed up on a music review, I hope today is the day. Writing music reviews can be rewarding, and

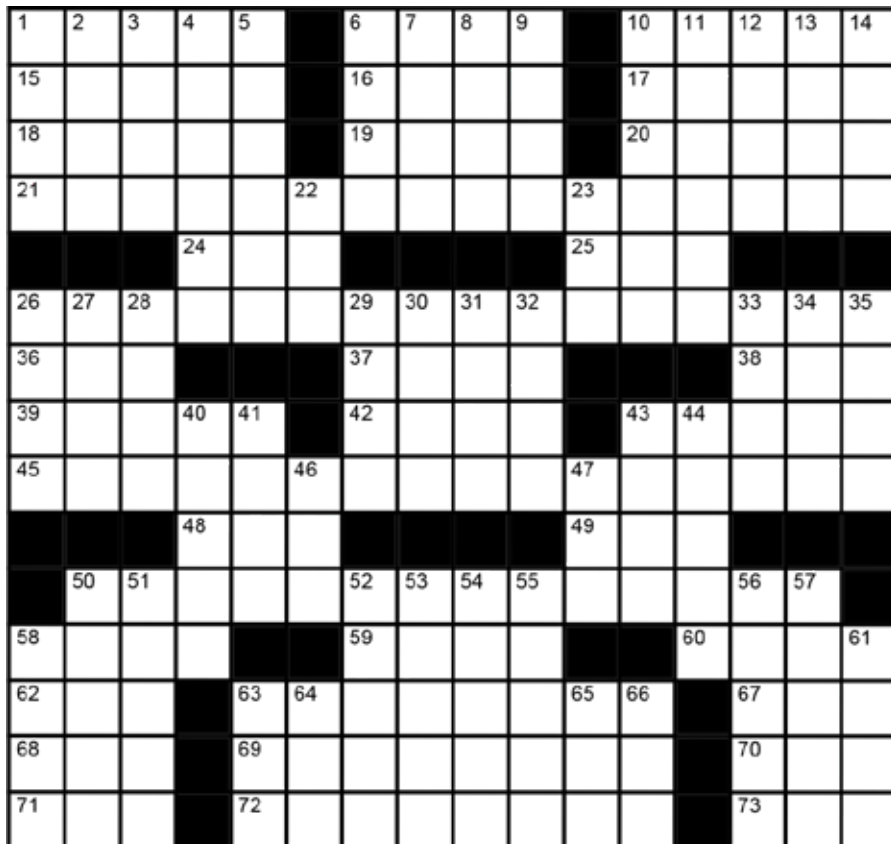


Cade Eliason is one of those few artists that make that search worth it. *Forget Me Not*, his third album is practically perfect. Aside from a handful of mix-volume issues, I'm utterly blown away. It's raw, and it's elemental. It's fun, and it's real. On a macro level, it's ripe for fans of Rex Orange County. Eliason's blend of emo, neo-soul, hip hop makes for the ideal "bedroom album." Keep in mind that this is all coming from an 18-year-old kid from Minneapolis with no Facebook artist page. *Forget Me Not* is a short, 8-song album that's fully formed. Every song is better than the last, with perhaps the best introductory track being "It's Okay." It took me four listens to realize that the track titles form the last line he wrote on the album. It all ends with the traditional, Civil War-era song "Aura Lea." Eliason has done his homework, and he's incredibly wise beyond his years, with an already-prolific output well worth diving into. In my five-and-a-half years reviewing music here, this is the fourth perfect review I've given. — Nick Warren

TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

1. Taking advantage of
6. Plumbing problem
10. Northeastern octet
15. McGregor with the Twitter handle @TheNotoriousMMA
16. ". . . on second thought, pass"
17. "As I'd've expected!"
18. ___ cum laude
19. "You ___ kiddin'!"
20. Prefix with phobia
21. Motto that translates to "Out of many, the actress who played Punky Brewster?"
24. "I figured it out!"
25. Wide shoe spec
26. Made tons and tons of food in a wok?
36. Scarecrow material
37. 12-time NFL Pro Bowler Junior
38. "Seinfeld" uncle
39. Company that launched Pong
42. 1970s heartthrob Garrett
43. Spanish 101 verb
45. Leaned on kids to spill the beans?
48. Junk ___
49. Suffix with market or musket
50. With 63-Across, a fast-food employee's classic query . . . or this puzzle's theme
58. Portia de Rossi, to 56-

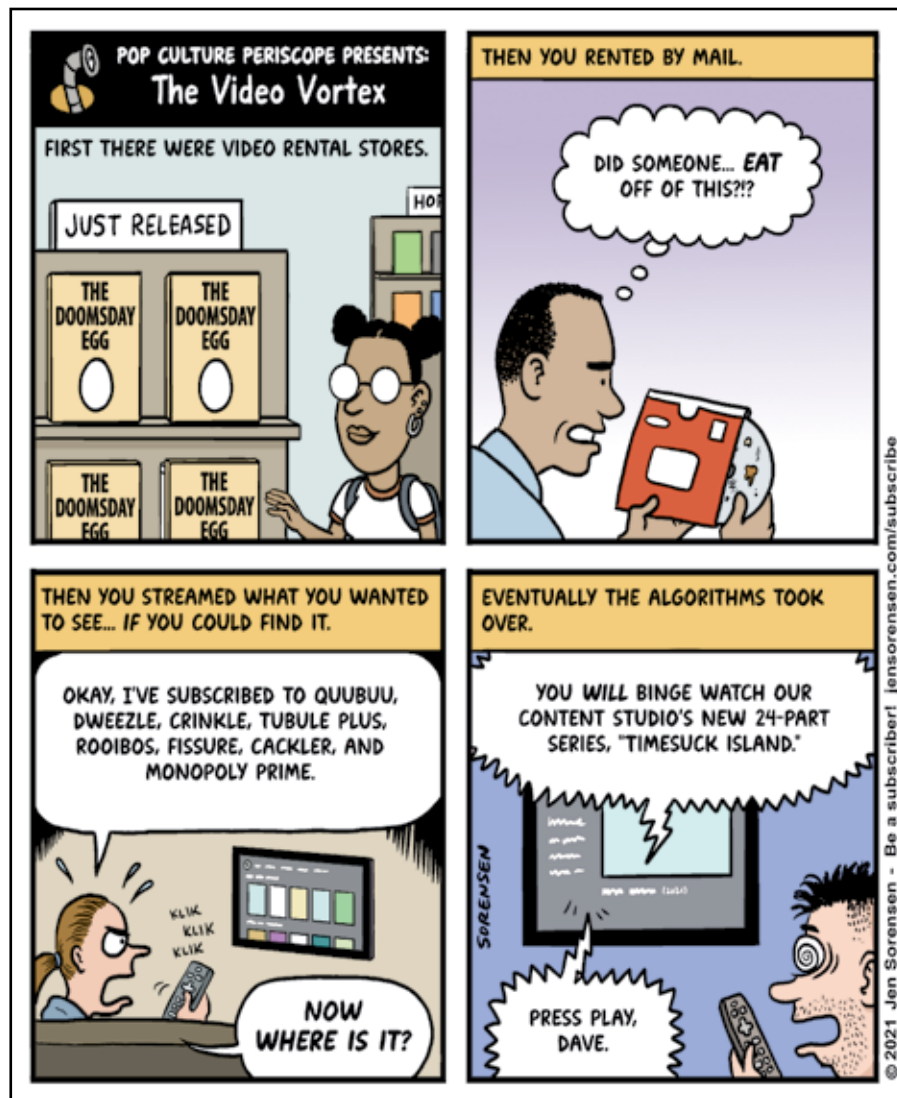
Down

59. Home of 60% of the world's people
60. Screenplay structure
62. Gasteyer of "Mean Girls"
63. See 50-Across
67. Put (down)
68. Below zero: Abbr.
69. Something that may be found in a belt
70. Flub
71. Dr. with Grammys
72. Cowboys, at times
73. Org. concerned with cyber threats

Down

1. Bay Area research sch.
2. Sweet companion?
3. "Waiter, there's a fly ___ soup!"
4. Dietary restriction
5. Staples of annual reports
6. Gathering of lei people?
7. Mideast leader
8. Years in the Roman Empire
9. Hoda of "Today"
10. "Be with you soon"
11. Less specific
12. Take ___ the chin
13. Light beige
14. Pillow cover
22. Back muscle, for short
23. One-eighty
26. "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go" duo
27. "I could ___ horse!"

28. Diana with a record-setting swim around Manhattan in 1975
29. Manhattan, por ejemplo
30. Attachment to a fishing rod
31. Epic ___
32. Lab noise?
33. Utah resort town
34. Passion
35. British city after which the Big Apple is named
40. Change the color of again
41. "Do or do not. There ___ try": Yoda
43. Observer
44. Unit of bacon
46. Egyptian ___ (spotted cat breed)
47. NBA official
50. One may have '50s decor
51. Old enough
52. Lightbulb units
53. They're often under fire
54. Part of TNT
55. Lake in the Sierra Nevada range
56. See 58-Across
57. Goes to great heights
58. Bubble-blowing tool
61. Banks on a runway
63. ___-Mart
64. "There ___ God!"
65. Make public
66. Emmitt Smith's 175, for short



Answers to last puzzle





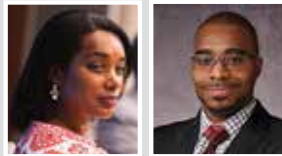
THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY'S GLOBAL SUMMIT XII

2021 **FREE** DIGITAL SUMMIT • Monday, May 10 – Thursday, May 27

WEEK ONE

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Camille Busette, urban expert from Brookings Institution, and **Rashawn Ray**, Brookings Fellow and University of Maryland professor
Addressing Policy Reform and Racial Equity with Camille Busette and Rashawn Ray



TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Adviser to President Biden; Zaidi, a Pakistani-American, is a 2004 graduate of General McLane High School near Edinboro
A Conversation with Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Adviser to the Biden Administration



WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Avi Loeb, author and chairman of Astronomy at Harvard University
Extraterrestrial Life: Are We the Sharpest Cookies in the Jar?



THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Rev. Jeffrey Brown, President of Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace, co-founder of My City at Peace, and “the architect of the Boston Miracle”
A Conversation with Rev. Jeffrey Brown: Race in America and Today’s Black Lives Matter Movement



FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Nile Gardiner, Aide to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; Director of Thatcher Center for Freedom and Fellow at Heritage Foundation
The Iron Lady on Screen: Discussing Margaret Thatcher in Film and on TV



WEEK TWO

MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Gerald Seib, Author and Washington editor of the Wall Street Journal
We Should Have Seen It Coming: From Reagan to Trump – A Front-Row Seat to a Political Revolution



TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Dr. Michael Saag, Director of Infectious Disease at the University of Alabama Birmingham
The Global Coronavirus Pandemic and America’s Path Forward



WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Susan Page, Author and Washington Bureau Chief for USA Today
Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power



THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Karen Tumulty, Author of *The Triumph of Nancy Reagan and a Washington Post* columnist
Nancy Reagan: Archives, Letters, Memoirs, and Interviews Offering a New and Revealing Look at the Former First Lady



FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2021 AT 1 P.M.

Dr. Leana Wen, Washington Post columnist and CNN medical analyst
COVID-19: The Path Forward for Parents, Educators, and Public Health Experts



WEEK THREE

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

David Ignatius, Washington Post columnist with expertise in foreign policy and economics; author of 11 fiction novels
Russia, China, and What You Need to Know about America’s Greatest Foreign Policy Challenges



TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Christopher Hill, Former Assistant Secretary of State of East Asian and Pacific Affairs; Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, South Korea, Poland, and Macedonia
Understanding America’s 21st Century Diplomacy: Lessons from the Front Lines of Europe and Asia



WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

April Ryan, CNN political analyst and White House Correspondent and Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief for The Grio
Front Row to History: Reporting from the Front Lines of the White House



THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

James and Deborah Fallows, authors of the national bestseller *Our Towns* and national correspondents for *The Atlantic*, and Academy Award-nominated filmmakers **Steven Ascher** and **Jeanne Jordan**
“Our Towns:” From the Pages to the HBO Screen



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