

The New York Times Magazine

March 7, 2021

**LIFE, DEATH
AND GRIEF
IN LOS ANGELES**

Photographs by Meredith Kohut
Text by Fernanda Santos





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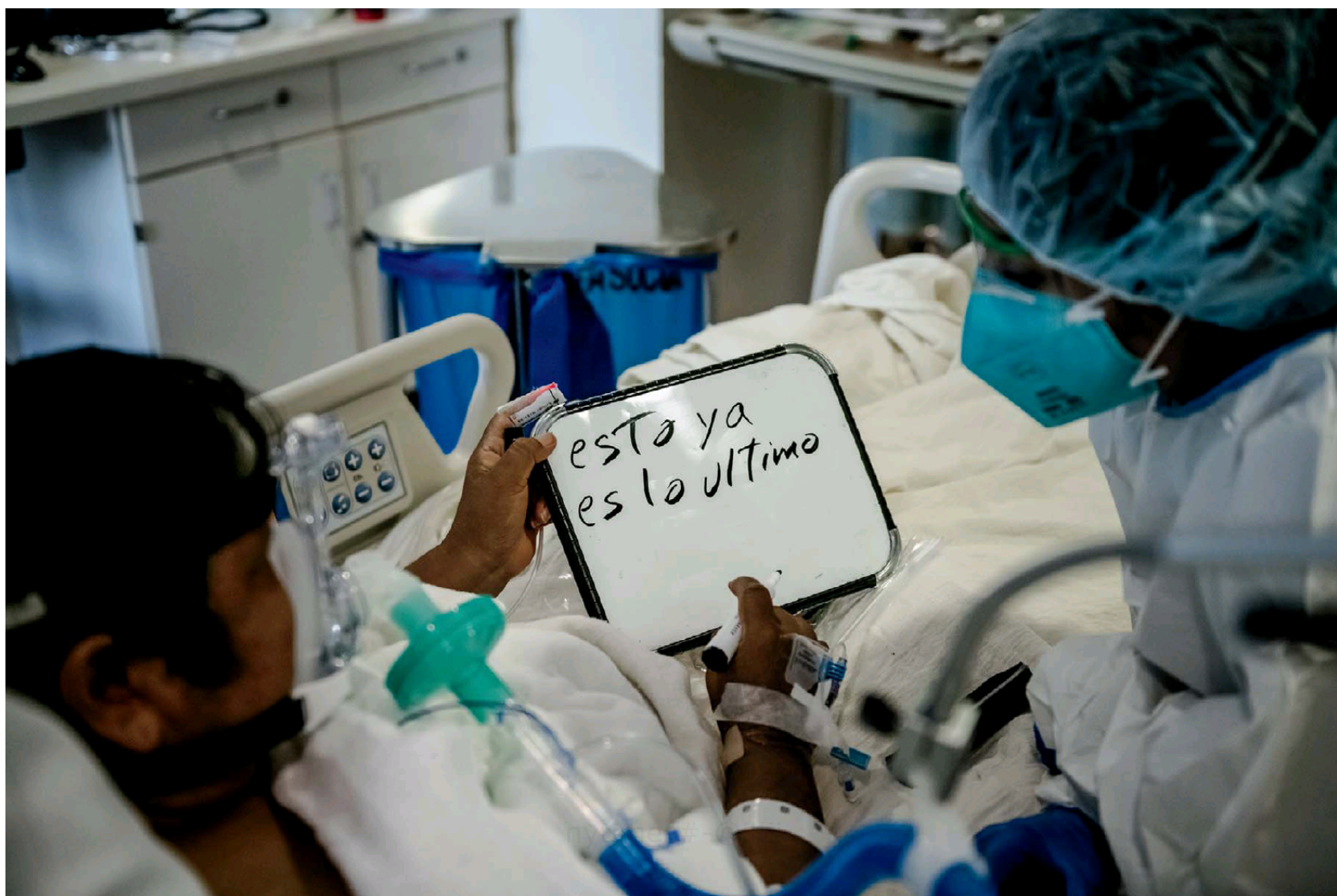
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A Covid-19 patient in Los Angeles County asking, Is this the end? A few hours later, doctors intubated the patient. Page 30.



Photograph by Meridith Kohut for The New York Times

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Behind the Cover *Kathy Ryan, director of photography: "This week's cover story is about the pandemic's toll on communities of color in Los Angeles County. In mid-January there, one person was dying every eight minutes. We wanted the cover to capture the grief that comes with each death, so we chose this photograph of María Salinas Cruz and Maritza Cruz, the wife and daughter of Felipe Cruz, consoling each other after he died. Felipe, who was 48, spent 22 days in an intensive-care unit." Photograph by Meridith Kohut for The New York Times.*

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TISHMAN SPEYER



Meridith Kohut

"Life, Death and Grief in Los Angeles,"
Page 30

Meridith Kohut is a freelance photojournalist who has documented humanitarian issues and global health for The New York Times for more than a decade. Her five-month investigation and photo essay exposing that hundreds of children had died from severe malnutrition in public hospitals in Venezuela was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Feature Photography in 2018. For this issue's cover story, she embedded with health care workers on the frontline of the Covid-19 pandemic in Los Angeles County, where Latinos are dying at a rate nearly three times that of white Angelenos. "So many of the patients that I photographed were people who continued to work throughout the pandemic: an air-conditioning technician, construction workers, housekeepers, restaurant workers, gardeners, a recycling-truck driver," she says. "I tried to capture how profoundly, and how disproportionately they've sacrificed to keep the country open."

Matthieu Aikins

"Written in Marble,"
Page 46

Matthieu Aikins is a winner of the George Polk Award and a contributing writer for the magazine. His first book, about a journey from Afghanistan to Europe with refugees, will be published by Harper next year.

Joshua Hammer

"What Happened to Paul Rusesabagina?"
Page 24

Joshua Hammer is the author of "The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu" and "The Falcon Thief." He last wrote for the magazine about a popular news site in the Philippines and its investigations of President Duterte's extrajudicial killing campaign.

Brian Ng

Screenland,
Page 11

Brian Ng is a writer from New Zealand living in Dublin. This is his first article for the magazine.

Fernanda Santos

"Life, Death and Grief in Los Angeles,"
Page 30

Fernanda Santos is a journalism professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post and the author of "The Fire Line: The Story of the Granite Mountain Hotshots."

Sam Sifton

Eat,
Page 22

Sam Sifton is an assistant managing editor of The Times responsible for culture and lifestyle coverage and the founding editor of NYT Cooking. His cookbook "No-Recipe Recipes" will be published on March 16 by Ten Speed Press.

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NYT FOR KIDS

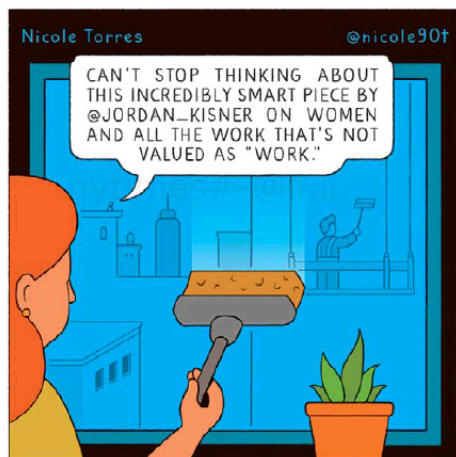
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Readers respond to the 2.21.2021 issue.

RE: THE WAGES OF HOUSEWORK

Jordan Kisner profiled the American and Italian feminist scholar Silvia Federici.



I honor Silvia Federici for her pioneering work on Wages for Housework. She is one of many women in the now frequently derided generation of second-wave feminists whose work deserves a reappraisal. My only objection is Jordan Kisner's reduction of the women's movement into a mainstream "liberal feminism" typified by Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In" and a merchandising arm promoting feminist kitsch. Having established this narrow definition, Kisner then implies that feminists themselves are at fault for failing to pursue the economic goals of Wages for Housework. I am tired of feminists being blamed for the failure or incompleteness of their goals. It's like blaming the leaders of the civil rights movement for failing to have made greater progress against racism. I worked in the women's movement in the 1970s and '80s in Milwaukee. Here, feminists — mostly working class and of all races — worked selflessly on many survival issues dealing with economics, health and freedom from violence. Today feminists continue to be the backbone of neighborhood organizing, shelters, Black Lives Matter, clinic defense, immigrant rights, union organizing and the Fight for \$15. Grass-roots feminists do this work for the most part without pay while facing constant harassment. Please, let's revise our definitions of feminism and give these women the recognition and respect they deserve.

Jamakaya, Milwaukee

There is so much more to this article than the headline implies. I love the concept

of "commoning" I learned about here. Capitalism insists that our primary relationship is always between ourselves and money. All human relationships have to fit into this primary one. And by necessity, much of our energy has to be in maintaining financial relations with the people who hold most of the money. Commoning reorients our primary relationships directly to one another, without the intermediary of money. It lets us direct our energy to people in our communities, rather than the people who hold all the capital. It's like releasing a mutilated, bound foot from its wrappings and setting it free.

Qu, Los Angeles

Fabulous piece. As the concept of "commoning" swims in my head, I wonder... would an electrician spend an hour making repairs at my house in exchange for a home-cooked meal (that takes an hour to prepare)? This examples bares the reality of just how little an hour of domestic work is valued. It is unfathomably low. "Commoning" becomes valid only where one hour equals one hour. We have very far to go to reach true equality, but it certainly is a worthy goal. Imagine the quality of our societal and domestic lives if this true level of equality is achieved.

Christine Loftus, Pahoehoe, Hawaii



RE: EAT

Tejal Rao wrote about brigadeiros.

Such lovely writing! When my cousins in São Paulo visit, they bring us cans of brigadeiro paste you can get in any grocery store there. OF COURSE the stuff inside is nowhere near as good as homemade (and would never trigger this beautiful writing!), but it makes for a great, effortless activity with little kids; they love rolling



THE COVER, ON INSTAGRAM

Stunning. Thank you for sharing the process — it's thrilling to me.
@lunacactus63

the balls in crushed peppermints, cocoa and different-colored sprinkles, and you don't have to turn on the stove.

Marjorie, New York

I made brigadeiros last weekend to cheer up my son because he misses school so much, and this is his favorite dessert ever. I enjoyed reading Natalia Pereira's story and can relate to the sensory experience of having a mom who was a great cook and made everything from scratch.

Leila, Sacramento, Calif.



RE: LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Dan Brooks wrote about Garfield variants.

I also grew up reading, watching and loving Garfield. I had the stuffed animals, the telephone, the books, the plush window cling, about a million Pez dispensers, and for a while my favorite candy was even the Garfield lollipop. And I'm not ashamed to admit that as an adult I still try to watch the old holiday specials every year. (To me, Lorenzo Music will always be the voice of Garfield.) I was hoping for a brief mention of Gazorpazorpfield, but I very much appreciate this article nonetheless. What better time than now, stuck at home after a snowstorm in the middle of a pandemic, to revisit that soft bed of the past.

AM, Ohio

CORRECTION:

An article on Feb. 21 about delivery-app workers referred imprecisely to whether such workers receive compensation if they are injured or fall ill. They are not legally entitled to compensation. It is not the case that they necessarily receive no compensation.

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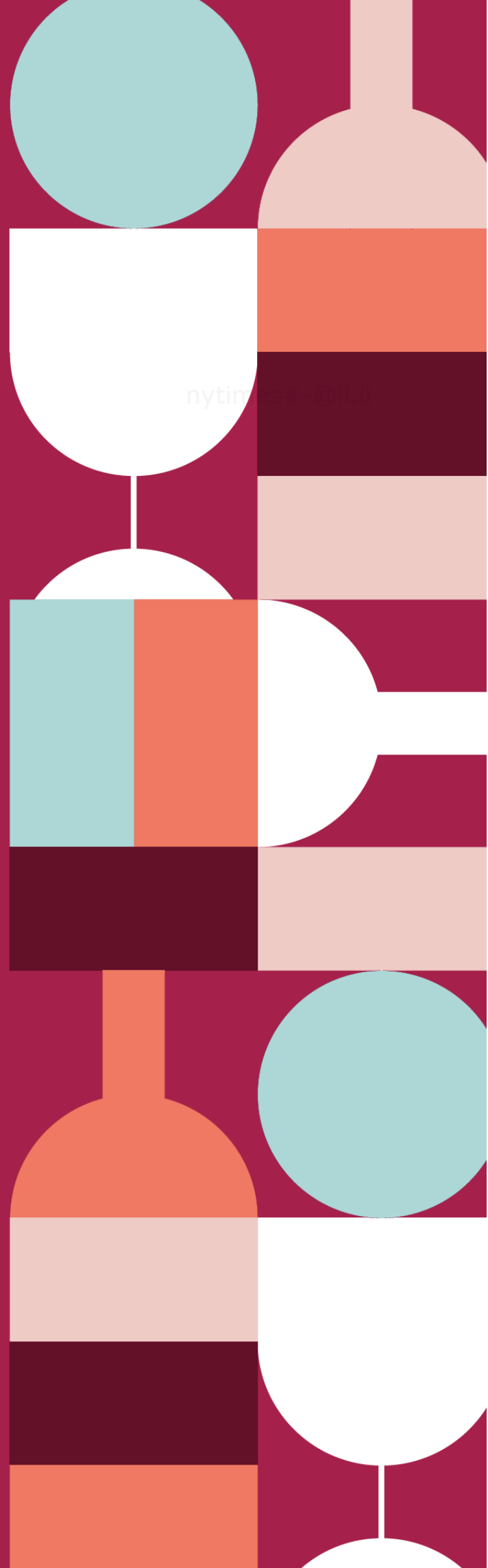
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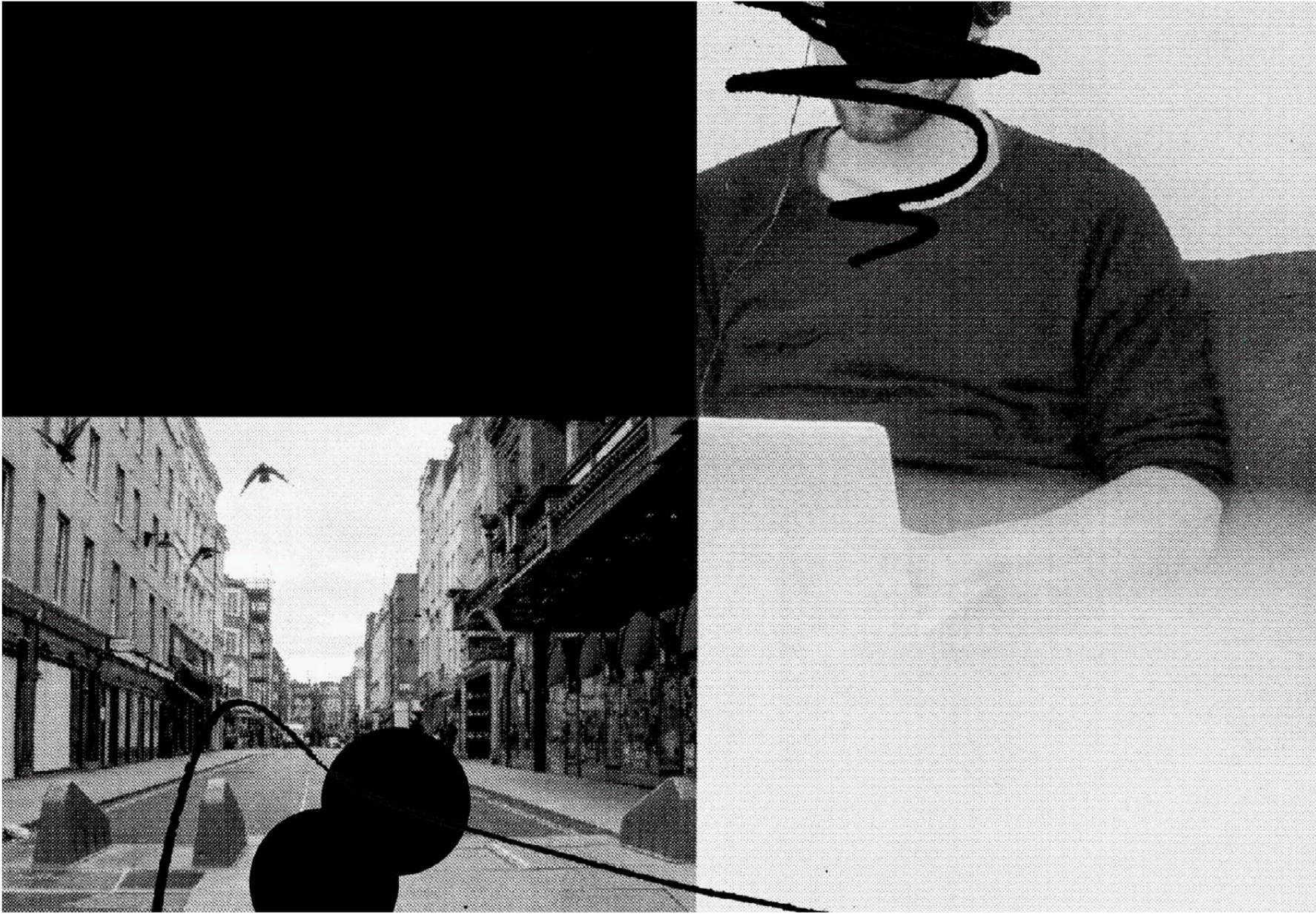
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Far Side



Concerts, beaches, crowds: Videos of New Zealand enjoying its summer feel like portals into another universe. ● *By Brian Ng* ● For months now, I have been watching videos from my home country that inspire the same cringing awe, the same guttural queasiness, as watching someone eat a Tide Pod or free-climb a crane. For instance: While much of the world welcomed 2021 from home, some 20,000



revelers in New Zealand swarmed to the Rhythm and Vines festival, held annually at a vineyard near Gisborne, which has billed itself as the first city in the world to see the sunrise of a new year. The festival is practically a pilgrimage site for teenagers and 20-somethings, who get drunk at neighboring campgrounds and then congregate for a bacchanal, including questionable acts behind the sparse coverage of the vines.

All par for the course at a music festival. But the videos from this year's event are so jarring that they might as well be a rip in the time-space continuum. A local Instagram account posted one striking clip: masses of partiers, thousands upon thousands of young people, packed tight

against one another, seemingly without even the thought of masks, bopping in unison to the D.J. duo Lee Mvttthews's spin on a Flume remix of the Disclosure track "You and Me" — one of the big songs of summer back in 2013, when I attended the festival myself. In another video — this one at Rhythm and Alps, a sister event on the country's South Island — we see another scene that Americans might find impossibly distant from their own recent experience: two female police officers sitting on the shoulders of their male colleagues, mixed in among drunken revelers and fist-pumping along to a hit by the local band Six60.

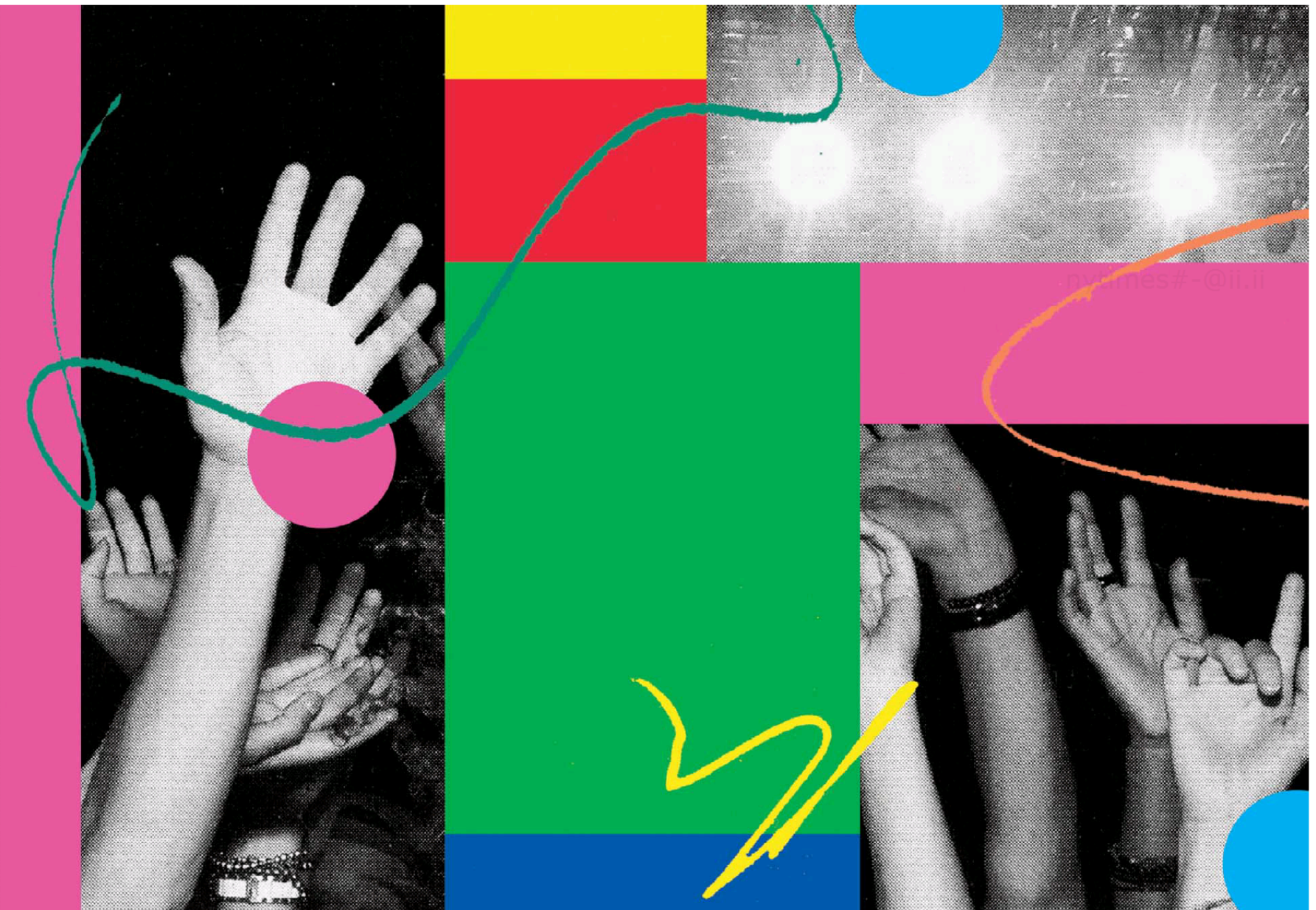
This is what life has been like in New Zealand since June 8, when the country's

We hold the memory of doing identical things, and yet seeing them now feels like watching an alternate reality.

first national lockdown was lifted. (There have been other lockdowns since, but they've been temporary and more regional.) As for Kiwis who don't do festivals, you can see a steady stream of pictures and videos of them clubbing, going on group hikes, lounging on busy beaches — the start of the year being, in New Zealand, the middle of summer.

I, and plenty of others, have watched with disbelief. We hold the memory of doing identical things, and yet seeing them now feels like watching an alternate reality. Where I was living, in London, the pandemic meant that the British quickly took the national pastime of queuing and moved it to the few outlets that remained open: the supermarket, for

Source photographs: Vuk Valicic/SOPA Images/LightRocket; via Getty Images; Nicolas Balcazar/EyeEm, via Getty Images; Flashpop, via Getty Images; Senia, via Getty Images.



instance, which soon resembled being at Disneyland, waiting to ride Space Mountain. Going to cafes could mean being served through a window while other patrons milled in a loose semicircle, waiting for their names to be called. Socializing was already stratified by our various postal codes; now friendship groups self-edited even further. Back home: none of this.

The instinctive reflex, in both the U.S. and Britain, has been to explain away New Zealand's success at containing the pandemic as a function of its uniqueness: its remote island geography, its smaller landmass, its smaller population. (Of course, its landmass is similar to that of Great Britain, which is also

an island nation.) Something similar has been true of East Asian countries, whose success is often attributed to some supposed cultural difference: a different approach toward collective action, or a willingness to sacrifice personal liberty, and so on, until we reach theories about Confucianism that can veer into full-on racialism. (Many tend to ignore that South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam have entirely different cultures and used entirely different methods to contain the virus.) But surely it has been, on some level, the decisions made by their respective governments that mean New Zealanders can safely eat at crowded food courts while many in the U.S. and Britain order delivery or dine on chilly

Number of active Covid-19 cases New Zealand reported as of Feb. 25: 65

Number of those discovered at the border: 54

sidewalks. It is funny how, almost a year later, Britain has turned slowly toward something not unlike the New Zealand model, introducing a tiered lockdown system and hotel quarantines for most incoming travelers.

Kiwis, for their part, look out and see the world we're in, beyond New Zealand's waters, as apocalyptic and rife with contamination. The 6 o'clock news there has shown dire scenes of New York and London: skyrocketing case numbers, overflowing hospitals, empty streets. The isolation of New Zealand's experience has helped to infect its success with a note of terror; there are calls from pundits and internet commenters to fully close the borders against the

world outside. Even though returning citizens must spend two weeks isolated in hotel rooms run by the defense force, they are stigmatized by many, and expat Facebook groups have turned into support centers for life after quarantine. We, hunkered in our lockdowns, stare longingly at Kiwis enjoying crowds and summer and music, seemingly oblivious to the distance between their experience and ours; they look out and see our circumstances as not only harrowing but also threatening.

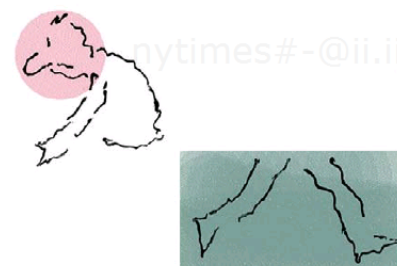
For me, the people in these videos always seem, for one brief moment, reckless, thoughtless, far too close together; the things they're doing feel alien, exotic. Then I remember that their lives have remained largely the same. It is we — the ones outside the bubble of New Zealand — who have changed, in ways that may not fade easily. With the steady rollout of vaccines, we are clearly eager to wake from our socially distanced slumber: Britain has announced a timeline for reopening, indoor dining is returning to New York and social media is abuzz with people's hopes to gather in crowds and hug one another again. But the full abandon of those videos still feels like a distant prospect. The interactions we've dreamed of may be packed with uncomfortable pauses, gingerly approached embraces, hesitations before crossing a bar's threshold.

I plan to return to New Zealand in a few months. I will be able to once again join my friends in crowded restaurants and go dancing with strangers under the cover of darkness. But I'm also aware that I will need to break many of the habits I've learned over the past year: of double-checking that I have a mask before going out, of balking when I see a bare face in the supermarket, of taking long detours around people on footpaths when out running. I know that what we on the outside have now accepted as normal will sound to people like tales from some far-off dystopia. I will tell people about quests to find flour and pasta, about puzzling out the times we might have contracted the virus and about how we walked around in freezing temperatures, bellowing to one another from several feet away, for the purpose of social connection. They might look at me the same way we watch videos of them: with awe and disbelief. ♦

The people in these videos always seem reckless, thoughtless, far too close together. Then I remember that their lives have remained largely the same.

Poem Selected by Reginald Dwayne Betts

Carl Phillips turns the syntax of a sentence into something like the chords of a bagpipe. To the unfamiliar, the beauty of it feels strange. Phillips turns loss into more than another sad song, into sorrow, which feels heavier and seems to matter more. I might be wrong about bagpipes and Phillips's poetry and how they each remind me of Luther Vandross. But they do. And this one reminds me that I, too, have "reached that point in my own life/where there's so much I'd rather not remember." There is sorrow in admitting that. But a bit of joy in being able to say it aloud.



Pale Colors in a Tall Field

By Carl Phillips

Remind me to show you where the horses finally got freed for good — not for the freedom of it, or anything like beauty, though their running was for sure a loveliness, I'm thinking more how there's a kind of violence to re-entering unexpectedly a space we never meant to leave but got torn away from so long ago it's more than half forgotten, not that some things aren't maybe best forgotten, at a certain point at least, I've reached that point in my own life where there's so much I'd rather not remember, that to be asked to do so can seem a cruelty, almost; bad enough, some days, that there's memory at all, though that's not exactly it, it's more what gets remembered, how we don't get to choose. For example, if love used to mean rescue, now it's more gladiatorial, though in the end more clean: Who said that? Not the one whose face I've described somewhere as the sun at that moment when, as if half unwilling, still, to pull itself free from the night's shadow-grove of losses, it first begins to appear. No. Not that one. And not the one whose specialty was making a bad habit sound more excusable by calling it ritual — since when do names excuse? Wish around for it hard enough, you can always find some deeper form of sadness where earlier — so at least you thought — mere sorrow lay ... I'd been arguing the difference between the soul being cast out and the soul departing, so I still believed in the soul, apparently. It was that long ago.

Reginald Dwayne Betts is a poet and lawyer. He created the Million Book Project, an initiative to curate microlibraries and install them in prisons across the country. His latest collection of poetry, "Felon," explores the post-incarceration experience. In 2019, he won a National Magazine Award in Essays and Criticism for his article in *The Times Magazine* about his journey from teenage carjacker to aspiring lawyer. **Carl Phillips** is the author of 15 books of poetry, including the 2020 collection "Pale Colors in a Tall Field," from Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He is a professor of English at Washington University and served as the judge for the Yale Series of Younger Poets from 2010 to 2020.

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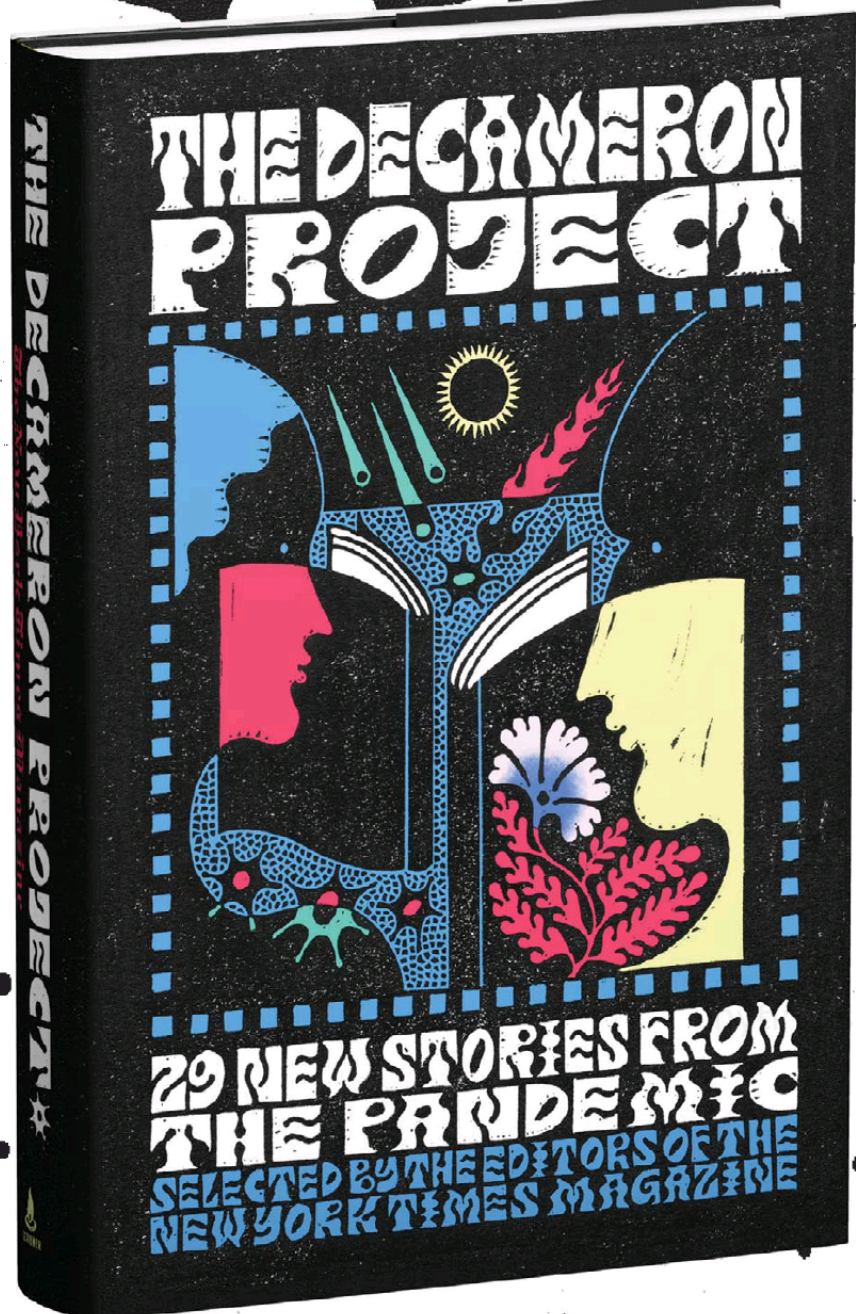
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I Have Reason to Distrust Police Testimony. Can I Lie to Get on a Jury?

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Years ago, I happened to witness an incident in which police arrested a young Black student who was in a fight with a white student, who was not arrested. Subsequently I saw the boy being beaten in the back of the police car, and I, along with a teacher who was also a witness, took the policemen to court. After many delays and total denial by the police, we “won” our case and they were mildly disciplined.

Recently I was part of a jury pool, and when we were asked if anyone had reason not to believe police testimony, I raised my hand and was (not surprisingly) dismissed. A friend insists that I should not have confessed to my skepticism: Had I been chosen, I could have used my experience to try to convince my fellow jurors of my mistrust in police testimony. I disagree, but I am eager to hear whether you think I was remiss in not using my experience on behalf of others struggling for justice.

Marvin Hoffman, Chicago

Given the general fallibility of human perception and memory, we always have

to be cautious about what weight we give to the uncorroborated testimony of a single eyewitness. The police, certainly, can have a professional incentive to misrepresent facts in order to justify a search or to obtain a conviction. There’s a reason the word “testilying” was coined; as an article in this publication a few years ago pointed out, there’s clear evidence that police officers in New York sometimes lie under oath. Last year, in Chicago, where you live, a civilian review board called, unsuccessfully, for the dismissal of an officer whose lies were revealed by a surveillance video. And there’s no reason to think New York or Chicago is unusual in these respects. Although research does not consistently show the eyewitness testimony of police officers to be more accurate than that of civilians, some jurors will assume otherwise; certainly, police officers may be more confident in their testimony, and so more persuasive.

All of which is to say that every reasonable person should be open to the possibility that police testimony is wrong. Yet the facts that witnesses can be unreliable

and that the police sometimes lie or shade the truth aren’t reasons to disbelieve police testimony in general. Such testimony should be weighed in light of the situation and the evidence that’s presented.

The question you were asked was, in a way, badly phrased — and perhaps tactically so, given the prosecutor’s aims in jury selection. There can always be reasons not to take the testimony of police or other witnesses at face value. That’s consistent with thinking that you could also have reason, all in all, for believing a particular officer. What matters is whether you can evaluate the totality of the evidence fairly and with an open mind. You could have interpreted the question as asking whether you would discount all police testimony — in which case your truthful answer might (and I hope would) have been: no.

Your friend, though, was wrong to have suggested that you should have been dishonest. We don’t want people on criminal-case juries with any other aim than helping a group of their fellow citizens to come to a reasonable judgment as to whether the evidence presented establishes a crime beyond a reasonable doubt. Your experience, so far as I can see, was not a barrier to your participating in this important task.

I am a student at a small liberal-arts college that is open for on-campus students. It’s hard to connect with people during a pandemic, because the usual campus events do not take place and personal interactions are greatly limited. A couple of girls on my swim team want to give one another stick-and-poke tattoos. I think this is a really fun bonding idea, but it has been drilled into me not to get a tattoo because I am Jewish. My family always told me that if I get a tattoo, I can’t be buried in a Jewish cemetery. I recently learned that this is not true.

Although I have never been religious, I am very culturally Jewish, and never thought I would get a tattoo. I am struggling because it seems like a fun way to connect with people and commemorate this year, but it feels very taboo. Why does eating the occasional piece of bacon feel OK, when this feels so illicit?

Maya, New York

When my father was in his early adolescence, he got himself circumcised. This



Bonus Advice From Judge John Hodgman

Emily writes: Whenever I start whistling, my husband will immediately begin whistling a different tune. I always have to stop! He says he just wants to join in, but always thinks of something else he’d rather whistle. Please order him to refrain from this habit.

I used to be on TV sometimes. Working on set is amazing, as you get to see so many hypercompetent crew members work efficiently and without ego, all to compensate for the on-camera talent, who exist solely to mess it up. One rule I learned on set was about whistling, which I did constantly between takes, until the boom-mic operator whispered this powerful truth in my ear: “The only person who enjoys the sound of whistling is the whistler.” I think your husband is lying. I think he is punishing you, justly. On behalf of boom-mic operators everywhere, I applaud his revenge.

To submit a query: Send an email to ethicist@nytimes.com; or send mail to The Ethicist, The New York Times Magazine, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018. (Include a daytime phone number.)

was a very big deal: He was Ashanti, from West Africa, and circumcision was taboo for his people. It rendered you ineligible for a chieftaincy. But he'd heard a group of girls from the neighborhood repeatedly sing a song that encouraged it, and he, along with his friends, may have considered it a modern thing to do. (Also: He didn't realize how much it would hurt.) As it happened, the old Ashanti prohibitions seem to have relaxed in time. There came to be Ashanti men with chieftaincies and without foreskins. And that's the usual way with rules and identities. They're less fixed than we imagine.

Rabbinic scholars disagree about whether Jewish law, based on Leviticus 19:28, really proscribes tattoos, and yes, the supposed cemetery ban is an urban legend. (Once again, this very newspaper has reported on the matter.) What it means to be Jewish isn't up to just you, but your way of being Jewish is very much something you have a say in. Even when my father became — in the formulation he favored — “half alive and half buried,” he remained a full Ashanti.

Yet, as much as you approve of the proposed group ritual in spirit, the actual prospect is still making you uncomfortable. The truth is, our beliefs, values and preferences will never be fully coherent. Don't sweat it. There are tattooed Jews who won't eat bacon, bacon-eating ones who won't get tattooed. If the ink doesn't quite sit well with you, you shouldn't think twice about giving it a miss. There are ways of bonding that don't involve needles, or knives.

I work in a New Jersey school district that has in-person learning. My school administration was alerted that a local health care conglomerate was offering the vaccine to educators. They made appointments for themselves, then shared the information with only a handful of fellow administrators and a select group of teachers. There was no priority given to the oldest employees. In fact, most of those who managed to get the vaccine are under the age of 40.

Those of us who found out about this later and were unable to get appointments feel like kids hearing about last weekend's kegger. “Man, I just thought everyone knew Ken's parents were out of town. It was EPIC!” But of course it wasn't a party we missed but the opportunity to inoculate ourselves against something that could kill us or our families.

When the principal was asked about this, he said that he didn't know if the link would work so he didn't tell many people. Clearly, however, it did work for him and several others. His logic eludes me. Does someone in a leadership position have a responsibility to staff members when it comes to vaccine distribution? Should those who have the most contact with students have been given priority? Should the oldest have been given priority?

Name Withheld

Because the vaccine is a public good, it's especially important that it be distributed fairly and efficiently, on the basis of reasonable criteria of priority. The situation you describe looks to have been unfair. That doesn't mean the larger system, for all its deficiencies, is unfair. You ask about priority. Access to the vaccination has been opened to broad groups of people, and once you're eligible, no further

That's the usual way with rules and identities. They're less fixed than we imagine.

distinctions are made. The systems aren't designed so that if, say, teachers and people over 65 are both eligible, you first vaccinate teachers over 65. A priority procedure that's finely discriminating is hard to administer, and so the decision to proceed with larger segments of the population wasn't unreasonable.

I suppose your principal could have tried to devise some heuristic based on age or contact with students or both, but he wasn't obliged to. A fair approach would have simply been to share the information among all staff members who were eligible for vaccination. Your principal's explanation for his actions doesn't make much sense, I agree. Responsible leadership doesn't reserve opportunities for itself and its cronies. ♦

Kwame Anthony Appiah teaches philosophy at N.Y.U. His books include “Cosmopolitanism,” “The Honor Code” and “The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity.”



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It started when she noticed that her right eyelid was drooping. Soon her hands were too weak to button her clothes. What was this?

nytimes#-@ii.ii



The voice on the phone was kind but firm: “You need to go to the emergency room. Now.” Her morning was going to be busy, replied the 68-year-old woman, and she didn’t feel well. Could she go later today or maybe tomorrow? No, said Dr. Benison Keung, her neurologist. She needed to go now; it was important. As she hung up the phone, tears blurred the woman’s already bad vision. She’d been worried for a while; now she was terrified.

She was always healthy, until about four months earlier. It was a Saturday morning when she noticed that something seemed wrong with her right eye. She hurried to the bathroom mirror, where she saw that her right eyelid was drooping, covering the top half of the brown of her iris. On Monday morning, when she met her eye doctor, she was seeing double. Since then she’d had tests — so many tests — but received no answers.

The woman walked to the bedroom where her 17-year-old granddaughter was still asleep. She woke her and asked for help getting dressed. Her hands were too weak for her to button her own clothes or tie her shoes. When she was completely dressed, she sent the girl to get her mother. She would need a ride to the hospital. She hadn’t been able to drive since she started seeing double.



Dozens of Tests

The events of the past few months had left the woman exhausted. First, she had seen her eye doctor. He took one look at her and told her that she had what’s called a third-nerve palsy. The muscles of the face and neck, he explained, are controlled by nerves that line up at the top of the spine. The nerve that controlled the eyelid, called the oculomotor nerve, was the third in this column. But he didn’t know what was affecting it or how to fix the problem. She needed to see a neuro-ophthalmologist, a doctor who specialized in the nerves that control the eyes.

That specialist saw her right away, but he couldn’t tell her what had caused her double vision either. And since then, she had seen many specialists and had dozens of tests: blood tests, CT scans, M.R.I.s, biopsies. No one could tell her what she had, but she now knew a long list of terrible diseases that she didn’t have. It wasn’t a brain tumor or an aneurysm. She hadn’t had a stroke. There was no sign of a vasculitis.

All that testing was draining. She felt so weak, so tired. She was a salesperson in a department store and often had to move items on the floor. It wasn't a strenuous job, but lately it was a lot harder. Her hands seemed to lack strength; she bought a brace for her wrist, but it didn't help much. It got so bad that it was hard to even open a door.

When she told Dr. Alissa Chen, her primary-care doctor, about it, Chen got worried. She was still in training, but the patient trusted her. Chen examined her hands and arms closely. Her muscles were very weak.

That's when she ended up in the hospital the first time. Chen sent her straight from her office to the emergency room. She spent three days in the hospital. There she met Keung, a specialist in diseases of the nerves and muscles. He ordered more blood tests, another M.R.I. and a spinal tap. By the time she went home, he had only added to the list of diseases that had been ruled out. It wasn't multiple sclerosis or Guillain-Barré syndrome. It probably wasn't sarcoidosis. It probably wasn't cancer, though she was supposed to go see an oncologist to make sure.



400 in a Million

When she got home from the hospital, Chen called her. She had a theory about what the patient might have. Had she ever heard of a disease called myasthenia gravis (M.G.)? In this rare disorder, the body's immune system attacks what's called the neuromuscular junction, the point where the nerves connect to the muscles to tell them what to do. It often starts in the eyes — with a droopy eyelid and double vision. But then it usually spreads to other parts of the body. Patients with myasthenia have muscles that tire out much more quickly than normal. There are fewer than 400 cases per million people, and Chen had never seen a case; still, she thought there was a strong chance the patient had it. A simple blood test could give them an answer. She had ordered it already, and she urged the patient to go to the lab and get it.

Three weeks later when she went back to see her doctor, the patient still hadn't gotten the test. And now she had a new problem: Her mouth felt weak. Talking was hard; her voice was different. By the end of even a short conversation, her words were reduced to whispers. She couldn't smile,

and she couldn't swallow. Sometimes when she was drinking water, it would come out of her nose rather than go down her throat. It was strange. And scary.

Chen wasn't there, so she saw a colleague, Dr. Abhirami Janani Raveendran, who was also a trainee. Raveendran had never seen M.G. either but knew that it could affect the muscles of the mouth and throat. She urged the patient to get the blood test, and she sent Keung a note updating him about the patient's disturbing new symptoms and the possible diagnosis.

When Keung saw the message, he was alarmed. He agreed that these symptoms made myasthenia gravis a likely diagnosis. And a dangerous one: Patients with M.G. can lose strength in the muscles of the throat and the diaphragm and become too fatigued to take a breath. He called the patient. Her voice, he noticed, was nasal and thin — signs of muscle weakness. She said she wasn't having any trouble breathing, but Keung knew that could change. That's why he told her to go to the hospital right away. He scared her. He meant to.



A Series of Small Shocks

After the patient got Keung's urgent call, her daughter drove her to the emergency department at Yale New Haven Hospital, and she was admitted to the step-down unit. This is the section for patients who are not quite sick enough to need the

I.C.U. but might get to that point before long. Every few hours a technician came in to measure the strength of her breathing. If it got too low, she would have to go to the I.C.U. and maybe end up on a breathing machine.

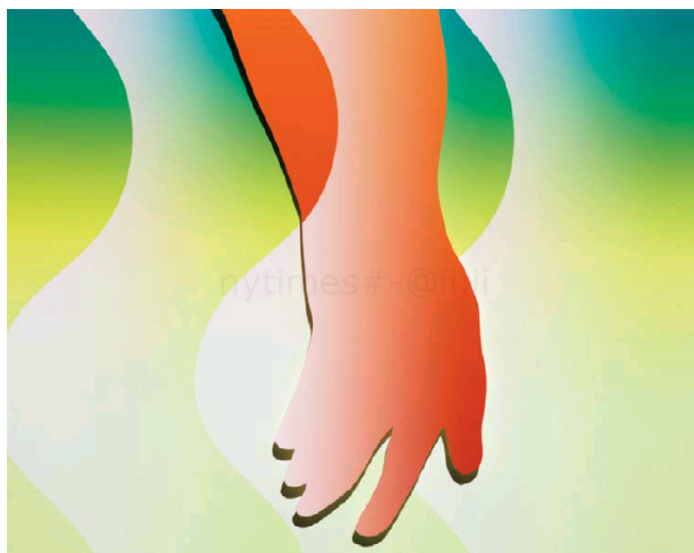
Keung wasn't certain that the patient had myasthenia. Her eyelid was always droopy, her vision always double. With M.G., he would expect those symptoms to worsen after using the muscle and improve after resting. And M.G. usually affected the muscles closest to the body. He would expect her shoulders to be weak, not her hands. Despite his uncertainty, he decided to start the treatment for M.G. He didn't want to risk having her become even weaker. She was given high-dose steroids and intravenous immunoglobulins to suppress the parts of the immune system attacking the connection between her nerves and her muscles.

The next day Keung performed a test that would show whether the patient had M.G. In the repetitive-nerve-stimulation test, a tiny electrode is placed over the muscle, in this case the abductor digiti minimi, the muscle that moves the pinkie finger. A series of small (and uncomfortable) shocks is delivered in rapid sequence, each causing the muscle to contract. In someone with normal nerves and muscles, each identical shock will produce an identical muscle contraction. In this patient, though, the first shocks produced weak contractions and then they became even weaker. That drop-off is characteristic of M.G. The blood test that Chen had been urging her to get was done in the hospital. It was positive. She had myasthenia gravis.

The patient stayed in the hospital for nearly two weeks. That first night her breathing was so bad she almost ended up in the I.C.U. And there were days when her arms were so weak she couldn't even feed herself. Her daughters and granddaughters took turns coming to see her in the hospital to help her eat and care for herself.

But slowly her strength began to return. Her voice came back, and she was able to swallow. She graduated from puréed foods to chopped and ultimately back to a normal diet. And finally she went home. That was four months ago. She will probably need to take immune-suppressing medications for the rest of her life. And she still has double vision in bright light. But, she told me when I saw her recently, she can smile again. That's important, too. ♦

Lisa Sanders, M.D., is a contributing writer for the magazine. Her latest book is *Diagnosis: Solving the Most Baffling Medical Mysteries.* If you have a solved case to share with Dr. Sanders, write her at Lisa.Sandersmd@gmail.com.



Head Wraps

By Nadia Owusu



Seven years ago, at my grandfather's funeral in Kumasi, Ghana, my extended family and I all wore matching outfits, as is the custom. In our tradition, fabric patterns have distinct meanings, and ours was printed with a symbol that resembles chain links, representing the unbreakable bonds between the living and the dead. There was a key variation, though, between the older and younger generations: While my female cousins and I left our heads uncovered, my aunts wore

glossy black head wraps, tied in small bows at the center of their hairlines.

My grandmother and aunts own head wraps for every occasion. As a child, I loved watching my Aunt Violet produce glamorous, turbanlike creations from stiff, exuberantly patterned wax-print fabric. Sometimes she would let me add the finishing touches: a tighter twist, a smoothed crease. When my grandmother is overdue for a visit from the hair braider, she gossips with guests wearing soft

Tying a wrap becomes an everyday celebration of Blackness. Try it.

cotton wraps in bright colors, knotted simply at the nape of her neck.

At the funeral, the elder women were beautiful as they danced under the searing afternoon sun, sending off my grandfather to the ancestral world. I admired one woman's architectural head wrap that added at least three inches to her height. Despite the heat, these women all looked fresh. Bare shoulders. No hair in their faces. I longed for that kind of freedom — from the blow dryers and curling irons

I used to keep my hair straight and long; from the daily battle with my damaged, brittle hair that now stuck to my sweaty neck. I fantasized about chopping it all off and growing a lush Afro. Later during that trip, at a hotel restaurant, I saw a woman around my age wearing a leopard-print head wrap twisted around her fluffy hair like a crown. I loved her style, but I wondered if I could get away with it.

There were reasons I had never worn a head wrap myself. Though I'd spent many glorious holidays bounding about Kumasi with my cousins, I didn't grow up in Ghana. My father worked for the United Nations, and we moved back and forth between Europe and East Africa. In Italy, I was one of a few Black students at my school, and my coiled hair made me stand out even more than I already did. So, in middle school, I relaxed it. At first, I was pleased with my straight hair. But it soon broke off, leaving me with spiky sections that I disguised with headbands, clips and gel.

At 18, I moved to New York where I paid for college in part by working as a nightclub bottle-service girl. One Black woman who trained me instructed me to wear my hair long and straight. Later, working at nonprofits, I noticed that most of the Black female executives straightened their hair. Wherever I worked, I received messages — if not in so many words — to play down my Blackness and Africanness.

But around the time of the funeral, America was facing a racial reckoning. At a protest after George Zimmerman was acquitted of murdering Trayvon Martin, I was captivated by a Black woman leading us in chants who wore a casual white tank top and a bold red head wrap.

After that, I noticed that Black women of all ages were wearing them. Once, I saw a woman with hers tied into a big pink-and-white, polka-dot bow. I saw a kente-cloth tower from which dreadlocks flowed. A delicate silk turban. Online, I found a company owned by a Black woman that offered a lot of choices. My first purchase was a bright yellow cotton one. Then I bought more. A burgundy one in stretchy T-shirt material. A satin-lined blue one. A wax-print one with a purple-and-green geometric pattern. One in glittery black and gold.

I spent hours experimenting with different ways of tying them. Laid out on the bed or on the floor, a head wrap looks like just a long, rectangular strip of cloth, but with some experience, you can do magic

There were reasons I had never worn a head wrap myself.

Nadia Owusu
is the author of the memoir *"Aftershocks."*

with it. Once you master some layering, twisting and tucking techniques, every outfit becomes more interesting. Tying a wrap becomes an everyday celebration of Blackness. Try it. After a while, you'll develop muscle memory in your tying, and you'll feel connected to your mother, aunts, grandmothers and the ancestors you never met. You might even feel connected to those strangers passing on the street who happen to be acquainted with the meanings embedded in the fabrics' patterns: the one depicting a flying bird that is known in my community as Money Has Wings; the one with sugarcane-like lines that we call I Love You Like Sugar Cane.

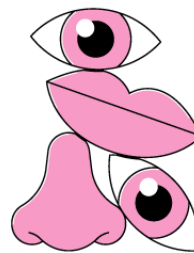
There are practicalities to think of, too. In the summertime, a light cotton wrap keeps your hair up and your neck cool. In

the winter, a thick one relieves you of the need for a winter hat, which can wreak havoc on natural hair. In all seasons, maybe more than any other accessory, a satin-lined head wrap is an ally to Black women, offering our hair rest from styling and protection from the elements. Maybe, like me, once you start wearing head wraps, you'll straighten your hair less often and rediscover your natural coils or curls.

The first time I wore my yellow head wrap to work, I was nervous, but I held myself with confidence. I got some double-takes but also some compliments. Soon a few of my Black women colleagues started rocking head wraps. Today I own a drawerful. My favorite has a pattern that looks like a stone dropped into a well. It's called Ripple Effect. ♦

Tip By Malia Wollan

How to Communicate With Facial Expressions



“Be comfortable using your face,” writes Regan Thibodeau, 42, a certified deaf interpreter who translates statewide coronavirus briefings in Maine and was interviewed via email. Don't view facial expressions as an afterthought; think of them as an essential tool for communication. “Hearing children are conditioned not to make faces because it is ‘rude’ in the hearing culture along with pointing,” Thibodeau says. “It is the opposite for the deaf culture.” Thibodeau didn't learn to sign until she was 6, because, she says, her mother was in denial of her deafness. All she had were facial expressions.

As a species, humans are highly face-attuned. In any language, your face serves as a powerful tool for social communication, wordlessly transmitting a whole range of messages about things like pain, love, fear and pleasure. Shake off your

straight-faced indoctrination and let the full range of human experience play out on your features. A face is capable of more than sneers and smiles; expressions can be a form of advanced linguistics. In American Sign Language, the face conveys both affect and grammar. With practice, your features can perform discrete tasks simultaneously, like, say, opening your eyes wide to indicate surprise while also communicating conditional tense through gaze shifts.

One way to improve your facial repertoire is by taking an American Sign Language course. In class, Thibodeau directs her hearing students to act out a story in silence, using only their faces. She draws pictures illustrating each mouth morpheme — the lip and tongue postures that act as adjectives and adverbs. Signing isn't moving English onto your hands; about 80 percent of the grammar happens elsewhere, mostly on your face. To best train for these more complex facial exercises, immerse yourself in what Thibodeau calls the languaculture of American Sign Language by living with, learning from and working alongside deaf people.

Those most fluent in facial language tend to be born deaf. Among the hearing, even A.S.L. interpreters struggle to communicate with their faces, and most retain what Thibodeau calls a “hearing accent.” Thibodeau interprets in “a deaf-centric way,” making a combination of morphological, syntactic and emotive meaning with her face that could only come from a lifetime of practice. ♦

Improv Night at the Stove: Trust yourself, follow the prompt and wing it. You don't need a recipe to create a fantastic dinner.



Cooking without recipes is a kitchen skill, no different from dicing vegetables or flipping an omelet.



I spend a fair amount of time writing recipes, instructions for how best to prepare specific dishes. (It's a living!) These recipes take a familiar shape: I explain the reporting that went into each dish's development, then provide a list of ingredients and step-by-step directions for their use. I think of these texts as a kind of sheet music, notation that allows home cooks to recreate the work of others, just as a printed chord chart allows Mike from Sheboygan to play a Beatles song passing-ly well in his den.

But I don't cook only with recipes. Indeed, I've discovered that cooking without recipes is a kitchen skill, no different from dicing vegetables or flipping an omelet. It's a proficiency to develop, a way to improve your confidence in the kitchen. It can also make the time spent there feel more like fun when it can occasionally seem like a chore.

You begin with a prompt — like the one I offer below, or the inspiration that comes from simply staring into your refrigerator until the muse alights on your shoulder — and then proceed to make a meal out of what you have or what you desire, guided by your experience with actual recipes. This is improvisation, not unlike what jazz musicians and jam bands do. They know the scales. They know the rules. And knowing them, they can let the music take them where it takes them.

You can do the same in the kitchen, even if you don't consider yourself a particularly good cook. Many of us have, after all, been cooking a lot more during the pandemic. We've roasted and sautéed, braised and fried, prepared salad dressings and simple desserts, assembled sandwiches, made soups, baked muffins. And in so doing, we've built up pantries and stockpiled staples where before we might have stored takeout menus: flour and beans, dried fruit and pasta, rice and onions. There are tubs of gochujang in some of our fridges now, jars of chile crisp, containers of oil-cured olives. People who never cooked more than once or twice a week now have a lot of stuff on hand to make delicious food daily: anchovies, tahini, roasted peanuts, Parmesan, eggs, a few vinegars, a couple of different oils, some Yukon Golds in the larder. Using these, using whatever ingredients we have at hand, we've gotten a sense of the basic conventions and how to combine them in the kitchen and on the

stove, wielding mixtures of salt, sweet, bitter, sour and savory. You're better at this than you think, I'd wager. It's time to capitalize.

Here's a jumping-off point, a no-recipe recipe that takes less than an hour: meltingly tender pork chops in an onion gravy, with lemon-bright mashed potatoes and sautéed greens. It's a bulwark against cold weather, one of the great winter feasts.

Start with the pork chops, as many as you need, on the bone if possible. Dredge them in flour that you've mixed with chili powder, salt, black pepper, smoked paprika and red-pepper flakes, or with Lawry's seasoned salt or Old Bay seasoning or any spice you like, really. (Save what's left of the flour; you'll use it later.) Then sear the chops, in batches if you have to, in an oil-slicked Dutch oven or heavy cast-iron pan, over fairly high heat. (I'm sorry, but if you don't have a Dutch oven, one of those big, heavy numbers in which you can burble beans, bake bread and make gumbo and stew, I really think you ought to try to get one. This recipe will reward the effort amply. And you'll have that Dutch oven for the rest of your life.) Attend to the browning carefully. You want a big, flavorful crust on the meat before you braise it with the onions, to enhance the taste of the sauce and provide a little texture at the end as well.

Set the seared chops on a platter. Throw away what oil is left in the pot, and wipe it out. Return the pot to the stove, and set over medium heat. Add some butter, and when it melts and foams, use it to sauté an enormous number of sliced onions, allowing them to wilt and soften and almost (but not quite) start to go brown. Sprinkle a scant handful of the leftover dredging flour over the onions, and stir it around, then keep cooking and stirring for a few minutes to dampen the rawness of the flour. Add about half an inch of chicken stock to the pot, if you have any, or water if you don't, along with a bay leaf, perhaps, then stir to thicken and combine. If the sauce is too thick for your liking, add a little more liquid. Nestle the pork chops into the sauce, remove from heat, cover the pot and put it into a 350-degree oven for 45 minutes to an hour.

While the pork cooks, make the mashed potatoes. I like to peel and

quarter them in this situation, but you may feel differently. Either way, boil them in salted water until they're soft and cooked through. (Stab one with a fork to check.) Then crush them with a masher or whip them in a stand mixer if you have one of those — or use a sturdy fork if you don't. Add hot milk and melted butter and plenty of salt. How much butter and milk? In some French restaurants, the ratio would almost be equal parts with the potatoes. You needn't go that far. Then, to finish everything off, whisk enough lemon zest into the potatoes to give their taste a real brightness. Start with a teaspoon and work your way up, sampling as you go.

So: pork, gravy, potatoes. I like some hearty sautéed greens moistened with chicken stock to go along with them, and perked up with red-pepper flakes. Maybe a drizzle of red-wine vinegar too? You'll know what to do when you get there. This is not a recipe. It's your dinner. Make it however you like.

Adapted from "The New York Times Cooking: No-Recipe Recipes," by Sam Sifton, to be published by Ten Speed Press on March 16. ♦

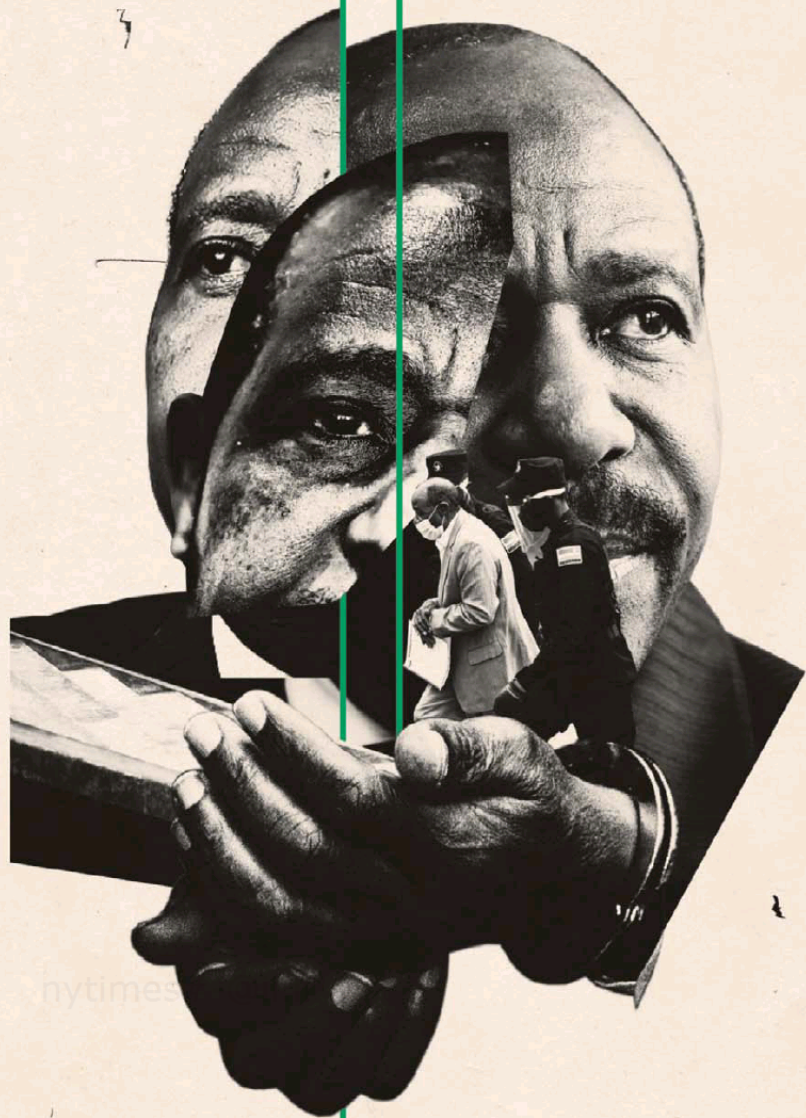
Long hailed for his bravery during the Rwandan genocide, he is now charged with being a terrorist leader. Did Rwanda change, or did he?

By Joshua Hammer Illustrations by Cristiana Couceiro

WHAT HAPPENED TO PAUL RUSESABAGINA ?

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arly in the evening of Aug. 27, 2020, Paul Rusesabagina stepped off a flight from Chicago and walked into Terminal 3 at Dubai International Airport. He had been in the air for 14 hours, but his journey wasn't done: Later that night, he planned to travel on to Bujumbura, the main city in the small Central African nation Burundi. Passing through immigration, Rusesabagina — who lived in San Antonio, Texas, but was originally from Rwanda, Burundi's neighbor — texted his wife to let her know he had arrived in Dubai. "Are you safe?" she wrote back. "I'm fine," he replied. Then he checked in at a nearby Ibis Styles hotel.

A friend was waiting for him there: Constantin Niyomwungere, a prominent Burundi-born pastor who ran a dozen evangelical churches in Burundi, Rwanda, Belgium and elsewhere. It was at Niyomwungere's invitation that Rusesabagina had come, ostensibly to talk to the pastor's congregations in Burundi about a dramatic series of events that happened a quarter century ago. During the Rwandan genocide of 1994, when Rusesabagina was the manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, some 1,300 people sheltered there for more than two months while murderous ethnic violence convulsed the country. The steps he took to safeguard this desperate group of guests were later heroicized in the acclaimed 2004 film "Hotel Rwanda" — Don Cheadle's portrayal of him earned an Oscar nomination for Best Actor — and Rusesabagina himself became a minor celebrity in the global human rights community. He gave paid speeches at universities, think tanks and corporate gatherings; he started the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation; he collected awards and honorary degrees, including the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005, the citation for which praised his "remarkable courage and compassion in the face of genocidal terror."

But the invitations had dried up in recent years, and making money became even harder after the pandemic struck in March. "He had four kids, two

just out of college, he didn't have a regular day job, he'd just had cancer, the speaking engagements were few and far between," says Kitty Kurth, a senior adviser and spokeswoman at his foundation. Rusesabagina had reason to be grateful for any work he could get, including church presentations in Central Africa. Yet traveling came with its own risks: In the years since leaving Rwanda, Rusesabagina had become a harsh critic of its leader, President Paul Kagame, denouncing him as a dictator and accusing him of carrying out extrajudicial killings. The Rwandan government, for its part, accused Rusesabagina of supporting a rebel army along the country's borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi and claimed he was involved in deadly attacks that took place inside Rwanda in 2018.

"I thought: Paul, why do you want to go to Burundi? It's way too close to Rwanda," Kurth says. "Kagame has people all over Burundi." Rusesabagina hadn't told his family that he was flying to Burundi, saying only that he was going to "see some people" in Dubai. "I asked him, 'Can you please send me your coordinates, all the meetings, all the telephone numbers?'" his wife, Taciana, told me. "I didn't have a good feeling about this trip."

At the hotel in Dubai, Rusesabagina bathed, napped for about three hours, then left for his next flight with Niyomwungere. At the airport, the pastor took his passport and steered him through immigration. Then the two men clambered onto a private jet that had been chartered. Once airborne, they toasted each other with Champagne. Five hours later, most of which Rusesabagina spent asleep, Niyomwungere shook his friend awake. "We're landing in Bujumbura," he said.

As Rusesabagina stepped onto the tarmac, a half dozen armed men emerged from the predawn darkness. Identifying themselves as agents of the Rwanda Investigation Bureau — the country's equivalent of the F.B.I. — they handcuffed him and hustled him into a waiting vehicle. It was only then that Rusesabagina realized that he had fallen into a trap. The plane hadn't landed in Burundi. Their real destination was declared by a sign on the terminal: KIGALI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

THE ORIGINS OF the Rwandan genocide stretch back to Belgian rule. In the first half of the 20th century, the colonial overseers deepened divisions between the Hutu, then mostly farmers, who make up a vast majority of the population, and the minority Tutsi, who were mostly cattle herders. The Belgians put Tutsi overwhelmingly in charge of the country, which meant jobs in the bureaucracy, access to higher education and other privileges. But as the Hutu came into power — the country achieved full independence in 1962 — its leaders promoted brutal discrimination against the Tutsi; hundreds of thousands fled the country. In 1990, a Tutsi-led rebel movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, advanced from Uganda to within 45 miles of Kigali before the Rwandan military,

backed by French troops, pushed them back across the border. As pressure grew on President Juvenal Habyarimana to come to a power-sharing arrangement, Hutu extremists who opposed any compromise began to mobilize.

On the night of April 6, 1994, as Habyarimana flew back from negotiating a peace deal in Tanzania, assailants in Kigali blew up the presidential plane using two shoulder-fired missiles. It has never been conclusively determined which faction carried out the assassination, but the attack set in motion a plot to exterminate the Tutsi. Over the next hundred days — as the outside world looked on, unwilling to intervene — Hutu soldiers, militia-men and even ordinary civilians massacred some 800,000 people, according to a United Nations estimate. The Rwandan government, after it came under Tutsi control, would later put the total number of dead at more than a million — more than 97 percent of whom, it said, were Tutsi — although it included deaths going back to 1991.

As Newsweek's Nairobi bureau chief at the time, I had an intimate view of the violence, which began to unfold just hours after Habyarimana's murder. On April 13, 1994, I joined five other reporters on a six-hour road journey from Bujumbura to Kigali in a Red Cross convoy. After crossing a muddy river that marked the entrance to the city, we drove through roadblocks manned by Interahamwe, the fanatical Hutu militias that carried out much of the killing. I saw corpses lying on the roadsides, in front of militia barricades. At a Red Cross clinic a few blocks from the Mille Collines, a European doctor was treating a Tutsi with deep machete wounds in his skull and torso; he was the sole survivor, the doctor told us, from a busload of Tutsi who were stopped at a barricade and set upon by Interahamwe.

Soon after President Habyarimana's assassination, the Dutch manager of the Mille Collines, before he and other expatriates were evacuated from the country, asked Rusesabagina — then running a sister property nearby, the luxurious Hotel des Diplomates — to take over for him. Rusesabagina, who trained in hotel management at the Kenya Utalii College in Nairobi, straddled Rwanda's ethnic divide: His father, a farmer, was Hutu, and his mother was Tutsi. According to Rwanda's patrilineal customs, this made him a Hutu, but he considered himself a moderate in the ongoing power struggle between the groups. His wife was Tutsi, and two of his brothers-in-law were guerrillas in the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Yet as a hotelier he had made a point of cultivating influential customers, including a Hutu cohort of extremist military officers and politicians who despised the Tutsi.

On April 12, Rusesabagina put his wife and children in a car and joined a government convoy headed toward the Mille Collines, a five-story structure that overlooked the city from a hillside. By then, the desperate crowd in the hotel had reached about 500, including well-connected

Tutsi and a few moderate Hutu. I myself checked into the hotel a day later, though I don't believe I crossed paths with Rusesabagina during my brief stay there. A sense of apocalypse pervaded the place. At one point, I stood beside a Tutsi family at a window and watched as a gang of Interahamwe trotted down the street, brandishing bloodstained machetes and clubs. That evening, I pushed open the door to the top-floor dining room, only to be chased away by a group of military officers. After 24 hours, United Nations peacekeepers told the reporters at the Mille Collines that they could not guarantee our safety, and they transported us to the airport.

At the hotel, meanwhile, the numbers of people seeking refuge continued to grow. Early on in the blockade, the government had cut all phone lines to the switchboard, isolating the Mille Collines from the outside world. But a fax line escaped the regime's notice, and in the following days, Rusesabagina often stayed up until 4 a.m., phoning and faxing anyone he could think of — the White House, the U.N., the Peace Corps and Sabena, the hotel's Belgian parent company — hoping to draw attention to the peril faced by those inside.

He also used flattery, bribery and subtle pressure to keep Hutu forces at bay. At 6 a.m. on April 23, Rusesabagina got a call from a military commander, giving those at the hotel 30 minutes to leave. "It was early to be calling Europe, but far too late to be calling the United States, which had been worthless anyway," Rusesabagina wrote in his memoir. "I pulled out the black binder and started calling all my generals." Eventually he reached Théoneste Bagosora, the hard-line director of the Ministry of Defense, a man later known as "Rwanda's Himmler." Rusesabagina led him to think he might shut down the Hotel des Diplomates — which he continued to manage as well, and where Bagosora resided in comfort — unless he could keep the Mille Collines open. Bagosora grudgingly complied. On another occasion, when Rusesabagina was away at a meeting with Augustin Bizimungu, the army chief of staff, he received word that machete-wielding Interahamwe had managed to get inside the Mille Collines. After Rusesabagina

asked him to intervene, Bizimungu rushed to the hotel and chased the militiamen out, declaring, "If one person kills anyone, I will kill them."

In May, according to Rusesabagina's memoir, the Rwandan military, the United Nations and the Rwandan Patriotic Front arranged to begin evacuating those sheltering at the Mille Collines. Rusesabagina and his family were among the last to leave, in June, after 76 days in the hotel; they eventually made their way to a camp outside Kigali. For 11 weeks, Rusesabagina had kept the killers at bay. "He would always say, 'I was just doing my job,'" says Tom Zoellner, co-writer of Rusesabagina's 2006 autobiography, "An Ordinary Man." "I think he didn't want to embarrass Sabena. The idea of there being bloodstains in the lobby, on his watch, played a real factor in what he did."

But according to some of the hotel's survivors, Rusesabagina also demonstrated a compassion that was seen hardly anywhere else in Rwanda during those 100 days. "Nobody had been killed, injured, beaten, tortured, expelled or retrieved from the hotel during the whole time we were refugees," Thomas Kamilindi, a radio reporter who took refuge with his family at the Mille Collines, would write in a 2,000-word testimonial in 2005. "Paul Rusesabagina managed to do the impossible to save our lives at the moment when others were massacring their own children, their own wives." The writer Philip Gourevitch, who first brought the hotelier to public attention in his award-winning book about the genocide, "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families," described Rusesabagina to me as "a canny operator negotiating with the genocidaires, until everyone could be evacuated safely behind R.P.F. lines."

Soon after the hotel's evacuation, the tide turned against the Hutu government. In July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, under the leadership of an officer in his mid-30s named Paul Kagame, declared that it had defeated the government army. Many genocidaires fled across the border into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo); thousands of civilian refugees also escaped the country. Kagame soon became the de facto leader of the new Tutsi-dominated

government, was eventually elected president and declared he would mend his country's divisions. His government eliminated ethnic identity as an official designation and removed it from the identity cards that played a key role in the genocide, and it created a community-based system of justice, known as *gacaca* courts, to try some crimes related to the genocide. Today Rwanda enjoys a prosperity and political stability that stands in sharp contrast to its turbulent, ethnically divided neighbors, Burundi and Congo.

Yet a group of Hutu-aligned critics outside the country have come to regard Kagame as a dictator, accusing his government of stifling dissent, assassinating enemies and even carrying out its own genocidal violence. And one of the most vocal critics — vexingly for Kagame and his allies — has been the celebrity protagonist of "Hotel Rwanda," Paul Rusesabagina.

IN DECEMBER, I returned to Kigali for the first time in 15 years to find an entirely different city: an immaculate place of glass-and-steel high rises, crisply uniformed traffic police officers, median strips festooned with flowers. I had come to interview former associates of Rusesabagina about his arrest four months earlier, and I couldn't help feeling his reputation had been transformed almost as radically. At Chez Lando — a hotel and restaurant where, on the first day of the genocide, the Presidential Guard executed the owner, a Tutsi leader of the Liberal Party named Lando Ndasingwa, along with his wife, two teenage children and mother — I met up with Wellars Bizumuremyi, who was working the Mille Collines reception desk when I and the other correspondents checked in. His wife and two children, trapped at home when the massacres started, died at the hands of the Interahamwe. He was evacuated from the hotel in June, but he didn't learn their fate until the Rwandan Patriotic Front seized Kigali in July.

Bizumuremyi said he warmly welcomed Rusesabagina back to the Mille Collines in 2003, when the former hotelier accompanied the filmmaker Terry George on a research trip to the hotel. But when I asked him about the role that Rusesabagina played in 1994, he shook his head. "He wasn't a hero," Bizumuremyi said. "He didn't save anybody." Those inside owed their survival to one dynamic, he maintained: the fear of reprisal and the ever-present threat that the Tutsi rebels in the Rwandan Patriotic Front might execute their Hutu hostages. Bizumuremyi had been delighted to see the images of his former boss being trotted out in handcuffs at a news conference organized by Rwandan authorities on Aug. 31, 2020. That was just days after his arrest — and less than six months before Rusesabagina would go on trial in Kigali, starting on Feb. 17. The nine charges against him include murder, abduction, armed robbery, arson, financing terrorism and being involved in the creation of an irregular armed group. "Paul wanted

'PAUL WANTED TO BE PRESIDENT. AFTER HE RECEIVED THE MEDALS AND THE CELEBRITY, HE THOUGHT HE WAS AS BIG AS PAUL KAGAME. THE FILM CHANGED HIM.'



to be president,” he told me. “After he received the medals and the celebrity, he thought he was as big as Paul Kagame. The film changed him.”

I tracked down others who endured the weeks in the Mille Collines, and I was struck by the consistency of their denunciations. Bernard Makuza, the current president of the Senate, told me that Rusesabagina extorted payments from guests — “even though Sabena specifically said he was not to charge people,” Makuza said. “Paul made them pay. And Paul threatened those who couldn’t pay with being thrown out of the hotel.” The film “Hotel Rwanda,” he said, was “pure Hollywood fiction.”

A former manager at the Mille Collines, Freddy (he asked me to withhold his full name), maintained that he could not “think of a single incident” in which Rusesabagina saved lives. “He was just a civilian. With what authority could he intervene?” He repeated an accusation made by Makuza, that Rusesabagina cut off the hotel’s running water in the last week of the siege. “If you wanted to get water, you had to go down to the swimming pool one by one,” he said. “But there were military guys just outside who were trying to identify each person who came out of the room to get water.” He said that Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, a privately owned, extremist media outlet unrelated to the hotel, would broadcast their names to the killers. “They would say, ‘Inside the Mille Collines there is this person and that person.’” Taciana Rusesabagina says claims that her

husband threatened to expel anyone who couldn’t pay or that he shut off water to the hotel are lies.

The Rwandan government has sought to undermine Rusesabagina’s reputation since at least 2006, when he turned decisively and publicly against Kagame. It was hard for me to judge whether these survivors were simply parroting government propaganda or whether the reports of Rusesabagina’s supposed crimes had prompted them to revisit the past in a new light. Tom Zoellner, the co-author of Rusesabagina’s autobiography, takes a cynical view, noting that these new denunciations closely echo the descriptions of Rusesabagina as a “fraud” and an “impostor” that appeared in the pro-government press in 2007, just after he emerged as a Kagame critic. “All these people came out of the woodwork who never said anything before,” Zoellner told me. “This is the nature of a totalitarian society. It was textbook dictator messaging.”

No one can deny that Kagame, in the 26 years since he rose to power, has helped to rebuild Rwanda from the ruins. Millions have been lifted out of poverty; the nation’s 73 percent literacy rate, according to the United Nations, represents an increase of 13 percent since the genocide, and petty corruption is nearly nonexistent. To me, having witnessed the genocide and its aftermath as part of decades of reporting in Africa, the country’s transformation seems almost miraculous. As Andrew Mitchell, a British Conservative member of Parliament and a longtime Kagame ally, put it to me, the rulers have “pulled the

country back from utter barbarity, to a position where they have a working health care system, prosperity and development.”

Yet there’s also no denying that the government’s commitment to democracy and civil society has been tenuous. It has jailed journalists and opposition candidates; it has banned certain rival political parties that it claims foment ethnic division or deny the reality of the genocide — a crime in Rwanda. Kagame’s government has been accused of orchestrating a series of deaths, between 1997 and 2014, of exiled dissidents in South Africa, Uganda, Belgium, Britain and Kenya. “Anyone who remotely appears to be a popular or potential leader of some kind, anybody who can take away his shine, becomes a threat,” says David Himbara, an economist who was Kagame’s head of strategy and policy but who broke with him in 2009 and fled abroad, ending up in Canada. “It’s total control,” he told me.

Pierre-Richard Prosper, an American lawyer who served as a war-crimes prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, between 1996 and 1998, says that Kagame has had to navigate between opening the country to free expression and tamping down the ethnic hatreds that tore it apart. “The international community expects that once you have an election, you are automatically a democracy, and that’s not realistic. It’s a journey, not a destination,” Prosper told me. “Especially when you are dealing with a country that’s just come out of a genocide.”

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Paul Rusesabagina's alienation from the Tutsi-led government began to take hold soon after the genocide ended. Whether suspicious of his ties to the ancien régime or simply out of a desire to control everything, officials subjected Rusesabagina to petty harassment, searching through his baggage at the airport when he returned from trips to Belgium, according to his son Roger, a teenager at the time. A soldier once broke into his house, tried to steal his computer and threatened to shoot him. In 1996, the family resettled in Brussels, where Rusesabagina drove a taxi and started a small transport company. Among the community of Rwandan exiles in the city, there was a coterie of genocidaires and their supporters who embraced the ethnosupremacist ideology known before the genocide as Hutu Power, which called for Hutu to run Rwanda and remove Tutsi from public life.

In justifying such aims, these expatriates had convinced themselves that the new Kagame government was even worse than its critics imagined — that it, too, was carrying out genocidal violence. I happened to be present for the immediate aftermath of one incident they point to. In late April 1995, a year after the start of the genocide, I traveled to Kibeho, a town in Rwanda and the site of the largest of several camps set up by the French military in the region to protect displaced Hutu civilians. The Tutsi government had complained that the camps were sanctuaries for Hutu guerrillas, and earlier that April, troops had moved in to shut down Kibeho and return people to their villages. But as the soldiers began screening tens of thousands of them to identify those who had taken part in the genocide, some tried to flee. Gunfire broke out. According to some estimates, as many as 5,000 people were killed. (The Rwandan military said the number of deaths was about 300.) “It was savagery,” one U.N. peacekeeper told me, as I wrote at the time; we were standing

beside the corpse of a woman who was trampled in the melee. A Red Cross official pleaded with a crowd gathered around him: “You must resume your lives. The war is finished.”

The Kibeho tragedy became one of the seeds of a dark narrative that has only grown in force since then. Even when the genocide was unfolding, the station Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines was broadcasting that Hutu civilians were being killed by the Tutsi of the Rwandan Patriotic Front as they advanced through the country. Hutu hard-liners in exile began claiming that reprisal killings of Hutu equaled — or possibly exceeded — the murders of Tutsi but were covered up by the Kagame government. This conspiracy theory has become known as the “double genocide” view of Rwandan history.

This view has found support in work done for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After the genocide, the United Nations dispatched Robert Gersony, a freelance conflict and human rights investigator with long experience in Africa, to determine whether conditions in Rwanda were safe enough for refugees (who were overwhelmingly Hutu) to return. In one of the regions he visited, Gersony and his team found that many Rwandans had already come home, and the situation appeared to be “secure, stable and peaceful.” He collected evidence of arbitrary arrests, disappearances and physical abuse in another corner of the country. But when he visited an area in southern Rwanda declared off-limits by Rwandan Patriotic Front commanders, according to someone familiar with the investigation, he encountered depopulated villages; heard credible accounts of mass executions and killers going house to house; and observed scores of fresh corpses of men, women and children.

Gersony's team delivered to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees a 14-page summary of their findings that described “systematic and sustained killing and persecution” of Hutu civilians in the south. They estimated that as many as 35,000 people had been killed in the region. Alison Des Forges, the Rwanda expert for Human Rights Watch, came to accept the report. The United Nations, seemingly concerned that it might sabotage international support for the new government, never published Gersony's account, but within weeks its findings appeared in the press. Before long, though, according to Des Forges, the United Nations had successfully pressured the Rwandan government to get its commanders to stop the killings.

Gersony's report has been widely accepted, and its implications — summary killings by Tutsi government forces, tens of thousands of Hutu dead — are an outrage and a stain on Paul Kagame's legacy. But in subsequent years, the “double genocide” theory spiraled beyond all reason. Two American professors, Christian Davenport and Allan C. Stam, relied partly on pre-genocide census figures compiled by the hard-line Hutu

regime — later characterized as shoddy by many critics — to argue that Hutu deaths had vastly outnumbered those of Tutsi. In a 2014 BBC documentary, “Rwanda: The Untold Story,” which led the Kagame regime to ban the network's broadcasts in Rwanda, Stam said, “If a million people died in Rwanda in 1994, and that's certainly possible, there's no way that the majority of them could be Tutsi.” He estimated that the Tutsi death count could have been as low as 200,000.

Judi Rever, a Canadian journalist, claimed in a 2018 book that the R.P.F. massacred and then disposed of hundreds of thousands of Hutu in secrecy in 1994, both during and after the Tutsi genocide. “It was mass murder leaving barely a trace,” she wrote. Rever told me that in areas controlled by the R.P.F., S.S.-style “mobile killing squads loaded Hutus onto trucks” by the thousands, drove them into remote areas, killed them, burned the bodies and disposed of the remains. These brazen, or gullible, revisions of history found an eager audience among groups of Hutu extremists in exile, who were looking for ways to damage Kagame's credibility, to minimize Hutu culpability and, for some, to justify attempts to retake Rwanda by force.

Despite his exposure to these ideas, Rusesabagina's transformation into a vehement opponent of the government seems to have been a slow one. As late as 2003, he was donating money to Kagame's successful campaign for president in Rwanda's first multiparty election, and he even attended a rally for the president in Kigali, according to Odette Nyiramilimo, a former senator and one-time Rusesabagina confidante, who had encouraged him to return to his homeland. Taciana Rusesabagina denies this, saying, “He never would have donated money to Paul Kagame.”

But by 2006, Rusesabagina had joined a small group of Hutu exiles to found a new political party, P.D.R.-Ihumure. According to one account, there were hopes that he would eventually challenge Kagame for the presidency. Philip Gourevitch, who wrote sympathetically about Rusesabagina in his book, told me that the former hotelier was now “more than a critic of Kagame. He was using his Hollywood-hyped reputation as a hero as cover while aligning himself with Hutu Power ideology.”

One of the most controversial questions surrounding Rusesabagina's activities during this time centers on the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (F.D.L.R.) — a rebel group based in the Democratic Republic of Congo whose fighters, among them former Hutu soldiers and Interahamwe, were carrying out many deadly attacks against Tutsi in Congo and Rwanda during the late 2000s. Rusesabagina's allies say categorically that he never had any affiliation with the group. Taciana told me that the rebel group “hates Paul because he protected Tutsis during the genocide.”

But prosecutors claim to have evidence that Rusesabagina became (Continued on Page 57)





Emergency medical workers resuscitating a man in cardiac arrest who likely had Covid-19. Opening pages: Violeta Estrada caring for her father, Cipriano Estrada, in Huntington Park. Three generations of the family live in a one-bedroom apartment.



WITH MORE THAN 10 million residents, Los Angeles County is the most-populous county in the United States. It is a world of extremes, with multimillion-dollar mansions at one end and cramped apartments housing multiple generations of the same family at the other. As the coronavirus once again tightened its grip around the region late last fall, it struck with stark precision the county's poorest and neediest residents: older Black people in South Los Angeles, Pacific Islanders in Inglewood, Latinos toiling in obscurity in essential jobs throughout the city. In the Boyle Heights neighborhood, east of downtown Los Angeles, where half of all residents live in poverty, the number of coronavirus infections in a 14-day period last month was six times as high as it was in Bel Air, one of Los Angeles's wealthiest neighborhoods.

The holidays unleashed the surge, and by Jan. 11, 10 residents in the county, on average, were testing positive for coronavirus every minute. One person was dying every eight minutes. Hospitals were overwhelmed; ambulances circled for hours, struggling to find emergency rooms that could take one more patient. That month, Barbara Ferrer, the county's health director, called it "the worst disaster our county has experienced for decades." But it has been an unequal one.

By mid-February, the virus had killed Black residents at nearly twice the rate and Latinos at nearly three times the rate of white Angelenos. It had exposed not just a sharp racial and ethnic divide but also the longstanding neglect of people who clean homes, care for the elderly and people with disabilities, sort and deliver packages and prepare, cook and serve the food we eat. "This is a public-policy conundrum and systems failure of a whole other level because of the economic and the public-health consequences," said Sonja Diaz, founding director of the Latino Policy & Politics Initiative at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Ultimately, we've failed to respond and to stop the bleeding because we've made decisions that either willfully or because of the lack of understanding have excluded the very populations that are critical to the state's functioning and are also the ones that need our help the most."

Huntington Park is one of the "Gateway Cities" in southeastern Los Angeles County, a cluster of Black, brown and Asian communities that embody the pandemic's lopsided devastation. It is the 14th-most-densely-populated city in the country, with 61,348 residents packed inside three square miles. The area is split by the 710 freeway,

Ofelia González, Cipriano's wife and Violeta's mother, being taken to the hospital. The couple would later share a room there.



a congested transportation corridor for goods offloaded at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, the busiest container terminals in the Americas. The air is thick with pollution. The streets are full of meatpacking plants, warehouses, factories and distribution centers.

Many residents are undocumented and were automatically excluded from much of the federal relief efforts. (The aid package approved by Congress in December allowed for benefits to children and spouses in mixed-status families, though children with two undocumented parents still did not qualify. President Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion package could extend benefits to all U.S.-born children, regardless of their parents' immigration status.) Eleni Pappas, assistant fire chief in the Los Angeles County Fire Department division that serves the area, said paramedics have responded to three times as many medical calls a day in recent months in Huntington Park and surrounding communities. They're summoned, Pappas said, by residents who are "hard-working people that do not have the ability to stay and work from home," who "need a paycheck every two weeks to make ends meet" and who, out of tradition, necessity or both, have "grandmothers and aunts

and uncles and everybody living together to share expenses and support each other."

Cipriano Estrada most likely brought the coronavirus home from a garment factory in South Central Los Angeles, where he spent hours sewing buttons on clothes. Estrada lives in a one-bedroom apartment in Huntington Park with five other family members, and the virus soon spread to his wife, Ofelia González, and to a granddaughter and another relative. Estrada, who is 58, most likely knew about the dangers of working in the factory, but necessity outweighed risk, as it often does for people living on the fringes. Black and Latino Angelenos are overrepresented among essential workers and have been disproportionately affected by the recovery's seesawing pattern, as the businesses that employ them have closed, reopened and closed again. "What that means is a lot of economic desperation," said Manuel Pastor, a professor of sociology and the director of the Equity Research Institute at the University of Southern California. "People then might be willing to take on work that would be risky because they haven't been working, or that they're having to stand in lines to get food, or that they're at risk of losing

Violeta Estrada watching as emergency medical workers cared for her mother.





their dwellings because they're not able to make rent."

Estrada and González's youngest daughter, Violeta Estrada, who is 34, took time off from her job as a supervisor at a school cafeteria to care for her family as best as she could, giving them sips of electrolyte fluids to prevent dehydration and wrapping them in blankets when they shivered. Three masks, a face shield and disposable gloves were her sole protection.

On Feb. 10, paramedics took González, feeble and breathless, to a nearby community hospital. She resembled nothing of the "hard-working little lady that never gives up," as Violeta described her, that woman who was "always helping without asking for a favor in return." Estrada joined González on Feb. 12; husband and wife wound up in the same hospital room, fighting for their lives.

Days later, in a text message, Violeta said, "I remain strong and with a lot of faith that my parents will heal and come out of that hospital soon with God's willing." By late February, only her father had returned home, and the fear of the unknown was very real. Her mother was still in the hospital, on supplemental oxygen.

Black and brown patients have consistently filled the beds of the Covid-19 ward at LAC+USC Medical Center. It is one of four hospitals and 26 health centers operated by the county and one the largest public hospitals in the United States, a place where doctors and nurses, schooled by the chaos of the first onslaught last spring, provide whatever help they can, in some cases prolonging life just enough so relatives can witness a loved one's final moments. Those relatives most often appear as faces on a screen. If they are lucky, they might be there in person.

María Salinas Cruz rested her hands against the glass door of her husband's hospital room on Jan. 28 as a respiratory therapist disconnected the ventilator that kept Felipe Cruz alive. "Don't be afraid, Felipe," she said in Spanish as he lay dying. "Be brave, my love, brave until the last moment." Felipe Cruz worked as an air-conditioning technician for most of his adult life, cleaning and repairing commercial and residential systems. His family is convinced that this is how the coronavirus found him. He eventually infected his wife and their three daughters, Maritza, 22; Esmeralda, 15; and Brisa, 14.

Cruz didn't have health insurance or a retirement plan. His only choice to keep his girls housed and fed was to keep working. "The whole pandemic, he worked as normal, which was something that we were grateful for, honestly, because, you know, the bills don't stop, the rent doesn't stop," Maritza said. He was admitted to the medical center

Victor Lopez, 34, being rushed to the hospital, where he would test positive for Covid-19 pneumonia. He died on Feb. 14, becoming the fourth person in his family to succumb to the virus.





on Jan. 1, his 48th birthday, and clung to life for 27 days, making progress until suddenly he wasn't.

In a hospital room nearby, Gabino Tlaxcala, 74, held on, lucid as he locked eyes with a doctor and initially told her he did not want to be intubated if his lungs stopped doing their job. "Que sea lo que Dios diga," he said afterward. Whatever God says. Tlaxcala sounded exhausted, his voice barely rising over the swish of oxygen flowing into his body. He had been a cleaner at a hotel in Beverly Hills for 18 years while providing for his wife and raising their nine children. He died on Jan. 30. What would become of his family now? What would become of Cruz's family?

Though the numbers of new infections and deaths have been dropping in recent weeks, the pandemic has had a profound impact on Latinos in Los Angeles County. They have been pummeled by high rates of unemployment in the hospitality and leisure industries, where many of them work; they are among those who have received the lowest number of vaccines, despite the staggering infection rates within their communities; and according to research published in February in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, their life expectancy has been reduced three to four times as much as that of white residents over the past year. The state has taken a step toward addressing these disparities, unveiling the health equity metric, a set of standards on reopening that would require counties to close the gap on coronavirus positivity rates between the most affluent and disadvantaged enclaves. "Covid-19 is a once-in-a-century pandemic," said Diaz, of the Latino Policy & Politics Initiative. "But wildfires and natural disasters are not, income inequality is not, housing insecurity is not. How do we make the investments now that these vulnerable communities not only survive Covid-19 but thrive in recovery?"

Even at the height of the surge, as the number of coronavirus cases multiplied exponentially around him, Cruz, the air-conditioning technician, never brought up the possibility of not going to work. He knew his family needed him. "For us," Maritza said, "it was completely necessary for him to continue to work." The weeks passed, and he held on to hope — hope that the pandemic would not last. But that is meaningless now, meaningless to a lot of families like his, because the end of the pandemic wouldn't bring back those they have lost. "There are many daughters waiting for fathers who are not going to return, many wives waiting for husbands who are not going to return," his wife said. She is one of them. ♦

Reporting by Meridith Kohut.

Dr. Benjamin Cantrill
intubating a patient
at LAC+USC Medical
Center. Cantrill previously
contracted Covid-19.





José Vidal Campos, 93, at the medical center during a video call with his family. He died of respiratory failure from Covid-19 on Feb. 10.





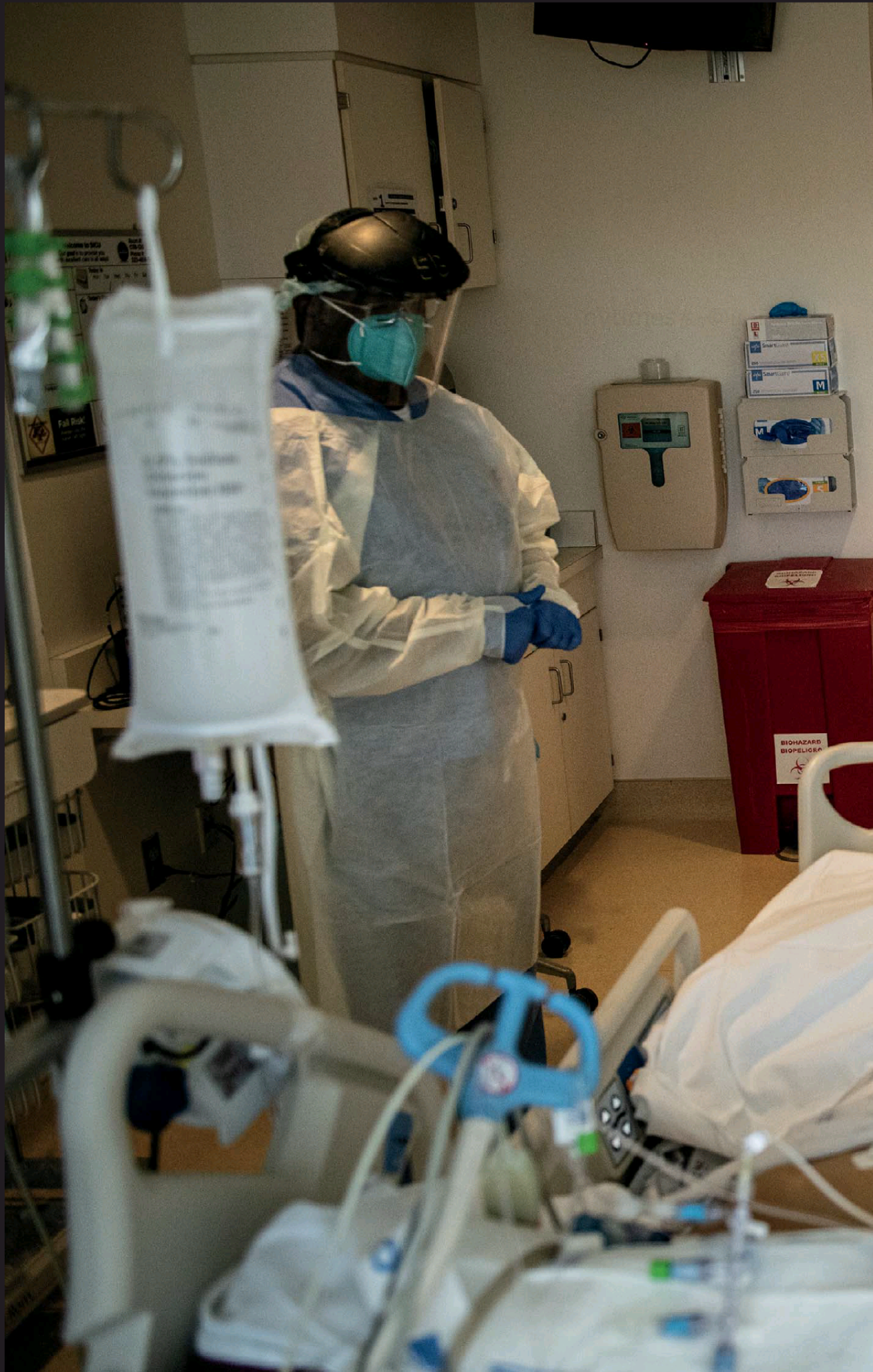
Odessa Hawkins, 75, in the Covid-19 ward at the medical center. She was discharged to a rehabilitation facility on Feb. 12.

Gabino Tlaxcala, 74,
discussing his end-of-life
care plan with a doctor.
He was a cleaner at a hotel
in Beverly Hills for 18 years
to help provide for his nine
children. He died on Jan. 30.





The final moments of Felipe Cruz's life. His wife, María Salinas Cruz, and his daughter, Maritza, watched from behind a door as doctors disconnected his ventilator. Cruz was 48 and had spent 22 days in the intensive-care unit.





THE JOURNEY

OF ONE



WRITTEN IN MARBLE



AIKINS

BY MATTHEW

STORY.



LOOTED ARTIFACT CAN TELL THE WHOLE



TRAGIC STORY OF MODERN AFGHANISTAN — AND

OF THE SYSTEMATIC THEFT OF ANCIENT HIS

curator at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg, Germany, examined the catalog for an upcoming auction by the Paris-based dealer Boisgirard-Antonini. The glossy pages offered a bevy of antiquities for sale: bronze figurines, jewelry and a statue from ancient Egypt estimated at more than 300,000 euros, or almost half a million dollars. But von Achenbach was interested in a pale marble tablet, carved with arabesques, vines and Persian script. Lot 104, an “important epigraphic panel with interlacings from the palace of Mas’ud III,” was dated to the 12th century, from the capital of the Ghaznavid Empire, in what is today Afghanistan.

Curators must be wary of buying fake or stolen art, particularly when it comes to ancient artifacts, which may have been illegally excavated in countries plagued by war and corruption. Boisgirard-Antonini’s catalog simply stated that the marble’s provenance was “a private French collection.” But von Achenbach — who did not respond to requests for an interview — may have been reassured by the lengthy description of the archaeological site where the marble was originally found, the royal palace in Ghazni, where a legal Italian-led excavation broke ground in the 1950s. Moreover, as the catalog noted, three panels from the same site were held by the Brooklyn Museum, San Francisco’s Asian Art Museum and the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. Von Achenbach decided that the marble could form part of her museum’s collection in Hamburg. She sent in a bid, the equivalent of around \$50,000, and won.

Boisgirard-Antonini shipped the panel to Germany. While it was still in storage at the museum, von Achenbach invited Stefan Heidemann, an expert on Islamic art at Hamburg University, to view the panel. Heidemann thought it was magnificent, but unease crept over him as he wondered how, exactly, it had come from Afghanistan to Europe. He had worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where, as chance would have it, a colleague of his, Martina Rugiadi, wrote her doctoral thesis on the Italian excavation in Ghazni, and the fate of the marbles during the war years that followed.

When Heidemann got in touch, Rugiadi told him the Hamburg marble had indeed been stolen from the Afghan government. Numbered C3733 during the excavation, the marble disappeared during Afghanistan’s civil war, when the country’s museums were robbed by guerrillas. Moreover, Rugiadi had already heard about the auction, and had emailed Pierre Antonini to warn him around the time of the sale. He replied asking for more information. But the auction house shipped the panel to Hamburg anyway, without informing the museum of the evidence that it was stolen.

“This I find quite a scandal,” Heidemann told me.

As it so happened, Claude Boisgirard was being investigated in connection with a series of thefts from the venerable Parisian auction house Hotel Drouot, where he spent decades as an auctioneer; he would be given a 10-month suspended sentence for fraud and conspiracy in 2016. (Boisgirard-Antonini did not respond to requests for comment.) The Hamburg museum notified German authorities, but did not pursue legal action against Boisgirard-Antonini; it kept the marble in storage and out of sight.

In August 2018, I received an email from Tobias Mörike, a curator of Islamic Art, introducing himself and the marble. Von Achenbach had retired in 2017; the museum was now planning to exhibit the marble as part of a series called “Looted Art?” — a mea culpa, of sorts — and wanted to return the artifact to the Afghan government. There were still many unanswered questions that surrounded the marble, he told me. How had it gone from the hands of looters to the showrooms of Paris? And what did this say about the other Ghazni marbles held by prestigious institutions? “It appears that not only none of these museums

cared about the provenance of their objects,” he wrote. “They all might go back to the same source.” Mörike had read my stories on smugglers and corruption in Afghanistan. Would I be interested in visiting for the opening of the exhibition?



TWO MONTHS LATER, I stood in central Hamburg in front of the three-story former vocational school that housed the MKG, as it is known by its German initials. The museum was founded in the late 19th century, when Hamburg was a thriving entrepôt for the expanding German empire, importing raw materials like rubber, sugar and ivory from colonies around the globe. Silke Reuther, the museum’s provenance researcher, led me on a tour of the collection. Dressed in a rakish jacket and trousers with piping, she explained that, like the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the MKG was intended, in an era before Wikipedia and Google, as a reference for design and manufacturing, illustrated with a collection of masterworks spanning geography and time: Kashan tiles, Etruscan vases, Coptic funerary-cloth embroidery. Occasionally, she pointed out the little orange tags she had affixed to certain exhibits — much to the irritation of some of her fellow curators — intended as footnotes about how that artifact came to the museum. “The question I ask of every object,” she said, “is, ‘Are you stolen or not?’”

If we listen, objects have their own stories to tell. Even the phones in our pockets could testify to oceans crossed and hands that labored. But works of art speak as individuals. The question of provenance — the chain of ownership from creation to the present — was originally concerned with establishing authenticity, and therefore value. You might know that a painting was really a Velázquez, say, if you could find its original bill of sale, or that a desk was a genuine antique if it was recorded in a 17th-century will. But in recent decades, provenance research has come to be wielded against the perceived wrongs of the past. Like many professions pushed by a new generation of activists and scholars, the museum world is coming to grips with thorny issues of power and inequality. One of them is the concentration of valuable antiquities from around the world in the hands of Western museums. A fierce debate is underway about whether some of these objects should be returned to their former owners or places of origin, in what is known as “restitution.”

The paradigmatic case for restitution is the Nazis’ extensive looting and expropriation of art during World War II, some of it for a grand museum that Adolf Hitler dreamed of establishing after the war in his hometown, Linz — one that would demonstrate, in a line of masterpieces beginning with classical Greece, the evolution of world civilization into its Aryan apex. At a conference in 1998, 44 countries, including the United States and Germany, reached a consensus that, if an artwork was discovered to have been stolen by the Nazis, it should be returned to its original owners or their heirs. At the MKG, Reuther and I stopped in front of a glass case full of silverware that had been confiscated by the Nazis, the first exhibit in the “Looted Art?” series. “It’s all from Jewish families,” she said gravely, and then smiled as she recounted how just two weeks earlier, a family had flown in from Vancouver to retrieve their grandfather’s kiddush cup.

The Nazis are a subject that nearly everyone can agree on. Their evil is understood. But the Afghan marble I had come to see raises uncomfortable questions about the present, and how the collection practices of museums relate to wars overseas.

Mörike, a poised young man with the beardish scruff of a doctoral student, was waiting in a hallway near the museum entrance. An orange-painted pallet with a crate had been placed on the floor, as if prepared for shipping,



ABOVE: MINARETS IN GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN, LEFT, AND THE 12TH-CENTURY PALACE OF MAS'UD III EXCAVATED NEARBY, IN ABOUT 1960. PREVIOUS PAGES: A LOOTED MARBLE PANEL FROM THE PALACE, AT AN ART MUSEUM IN HAMBURG, GERMANY.

to indicate the museum's plans for restitution. Inside, nestled amid a raft of packing material, was the carved marble panel, two feet long. Crouching down, I saw that the sandy-colored stone was delicately veined and faintly translucent. The panel was carved in relief in three sections: At the bottom, there was a delicate band of interwoven vines; in the middle, arabesques formed a pattern of three-leaved curls; and the top held a fragment of Persian, in Kufic script: *wa alam-e suffi*, "... and the world of the dead."

A thousand years earlier, the Ghaznavid emperors and their horsemen ruled an empire stretching from Iran to India. The words in stone were part of a verse extolling the dynasty that scrolled along the wall of the imperial court. It was there that the poet Ferdowsi, whose stature in Persian letters is comparable to Shakespeare's in English, presented his epic work, the *Shahnameh*, to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. The Hamburg marble was a fragment of that distant universe.

Today, pieces of the palace's architecture are scattered around the world. Using old pictures taken by the archaeological mission, as well as auction records and catalogs, Rugiadi and her Italian colleagues had compiled a database of the Ghazni marbles, listing their original location and, if known, their current one. It was available online, and browsing it, I was surprised to see more of these panels at museums in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Some had been stolen from the Afghan government; others were taken from sites in the countryside and spirited abroad.

Decades of conflict have devastated Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries. Looters have stripped its archaeological sites bare. Its rich ancient history has been sold at auction to the world's museums and private collectors. "There are tens of thousands of objects from Afghanistan that entered the market in the mid-1990s," St John Simpson, a curator at

the British Museum who studies antiquities trafficking, told me, "and all of those were almost certainly illegally exported or stolen."

If you encounter these artifacts in a museum or gallery, they may appear without much information on how they got there. Seeing a beautiful object in a glass case, you might not think of empty tombs in a faraway country. But because many of the Ghazni marbles in the Italian database are epigraphic, they can be identified by the writing unique to each of them. We can match the artifacts in museums with photos that show the marbles as they once were, installed in local mosques or arrayed at the excavated palace in Ghazni, back before the war began. We can know their past, which is also our own. The marbles tell a story of theft and violence, and pose the question: Who owns Afghanistan's history?



IN THE SUMMER of 2019, I flew to Kabul to investigate the marbles' journey. Fighting raged between the government and insurgents; even as American troops withdrew, the violence was getting worse. People fled their homes and went hungry; looters scoured the countryside for artifacts.

One day, I got a call from Ghulam Rajabi, a native of Ghazni who worked on the original Italian dig that excavated the Hamburg marble, saying that he had arrived in the capital. Amid the crowds of shoppers on Qala-e Fatullah's main street, I spotted an elderly, snow-bearded man leaning on a cane, wearing the heavy white turban of a rural elder. It was Rajabi, who had just made the short but dangerous trip from Ghazni City. We went to a restaurant nearby; he handed me a copy of the book he'd written in Persian recounting the history of the excavations in Ghazni. When I inquired about the drive,



THE HAMBURG PANEL AS PART OF THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND CRAFTS' EXHIBIT 'LOOTED ART?' OF 2018.

he shook his head. "It's terrible. There's been so many explosions that the road is destroyed."

Rajabi was a young man when they unearthed the marbles; he was 81 now. He grew up the son of a poor cobbler, and expected to follow his father's trade until the Italians arrived, offering good wages to those who could work carefully with a pick and shovel. "I was with them from the beginning to the end," he told me. Legal archaeological excavations began in Afghanistan after the 1919 war of independence freed the country from the diplomatic isolation imposed by the British. At the time, little physical evidence existed to back up the fabulous legends of the country's three millennia as a crossroads of empire. When the Italian archaeological mission arrived in Ghazni in 1956, it was a sleepy provincial capital several hours from Kabul, with mud-walled homes that lacked electricity and running water. But it was known, from historical sources, to have been the seat of Sultan Mahmud and his heirs; it was there that, after centuries of Arab dominance, the Persian language was revived in literature and government. The only visible traces that remained were two elaborate brick minarets that dominated the arid plain below the town.

Three hundred yards to the east of the largest minaret, the archaeologists discovered the remains of a complex built around a courtyard, with pillars and vaulted passageways. When they unearthed its splendid marble décor, the Italians were convinced they had found the royal palace constructed by Mas'ud III, Mahmud's great-grandson.

Under the agreement between the Italian mission and the Afghan government, a portion of the excavated antiquities were shipped to the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome. The remainder, including the Hamburg panel, numbered C3733, belonged to Afghanistan; some were displayed in the new Rawza Museum housed in a 16th-century mausoleum in Ghazni. Other marbles were shipped to Kabul, where they were exhibited in the Islamic gallery at the National Museum of Afghanistan.

"The special thing about the museum was that all its exhibits were from Afghanistan," Omara Masoudi, its retired director, told me. The government's collection contained an extraordinarily diverse array of artifacts: neolithic tools, Bronze Age statuary and Greek, Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic masterpieces. They were used to tell a new story about the Afghan nation; some were sent on traveling exhibitions to Europe, Japan and the United States. "Afghan art, history and culture were being introduced to the world," Masoudi said. "This was our biggest achievement."

But Afghanistan's archaeological treasures also stoked appetites in the West. In the spring of 1978, Johannes Kalter, head of the Oriental Department at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart, set off to visit Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan on what he called a "collecting trip," which, he wrote in the museum's journal, "at comparatively low prices brings a wealth of otherwise scarcely obtainable and well-documented material to the museum."

Today, the Linden Museum owns a number of marbles from Ghazni, five of which were photographed in Afghan holy sites by the Italian mission. When

the locals foraged for bricks in the mounds that dotted the plain, sometimes a piece of carved marble turned up, often bearing Quranic inscriptions. These were given places of pride in shrines and mosques, which the Italians documented but for the most part left in situ as they were integral to the sites, like the marble niche with a carved oil lamp that was placed as the *mihrab*, which indicates the direction of Mecca, at a mosque in Ghazni.

Afghanistan had laws to protect its cultural heritage, but they were not well enforced. At the time, a trade in illegally excavated antiquities was carried out openly in Kabul's bazaars, which were crowded with foreign buyers, some of them backpackers off the Hippie Trail. You could walk through downtown's Chicken Street and, along with hand-woven rugs and lapis lazuli bracelets, browse artifacts thousands of years old — if you weren't shown one of the many fakes on offer.

In Kabul, I spoke to Sayed Jafar, a carpet seller and the son of an antiques dealer. When I showed Jafar photographs of Ghazni marbles, he recognized them immediately. Both his father and their neighbor, Noor Shir, sold antiquities to foreigners during the 1970s, and Jafar recalled seeing such marbles in Shir's shop. "Noor Shir would encourage people to bring them from Ghazni, to steal them from the shrines and graveyards, and to dig for them," he told me.

Exporting antiquities required permission from the government, but border controls were lax, and bribery common. It was easy to smuggle artifacts out of the country, if you knew what you were doing. "They would mix old and new items and ship them in metal trunks from the airport, or by land to Pakistan," said Jafar, who bears a scar on his jaw from the rocket strike that killed his father during the civil war. He recalled that many customers came from the embassies and could smuggle artifacts out of the country as diplomatic cargo, a time-honored method of moving contraband. They would pay prices that astonished the Afghan shopkeepers, the equivalent of thousands of dollars. "Not just Ghaznavid items," he said. "Buddhist sculptures, Greek items from the north, Nuristani wood carvings."

During his visit to Kabul, Kalter, who died in 2014, was helped by a young German antiquities dealer named Joerg Drechsel. Jafar didn't recognize Drechsel's name, but a senior Afghan archaeologist told me that he remembered Drechsel dealing with the shopkeepers in town: "He was working with Noor Shir."

When I contacted Drechsel, he denied being involved in illegally exporting antiquities. "In fact I was not involved in the export of objects at all," he wrote, "since I acquired objects from established dealers and the export clearance and shipping was entirely their responsibility." He said that his last visit to Afghanistan was in either 1978 or 1979. "The Ghazni marbles were offered to me much later by an intermediary in Germany."

According to the Linden Museum's archives, Kalter returned to Stuttgart in 1978 and, over the next two years, arranged for the purchase of more than 20 Afghan marble objects from Drechsel. "This process was done in full transparency and in accordance to the law," Drechsel wrote to me. "I shared all relevant documentation with the museum."

Annette Krämer, who is preparing an exhibit on the history of the Linden's Afghan collection, told me the museum has no record of how the marbles acquired from Drechsel were exported. Drechsel, who worked closely with a number of prominent German institutions, also obtained a Ghazni marble that is currently held by the Reiss Engelhorn Museums in Mannheim, according to the scholarly volume "Islamic Art in Germany"; the museum said its marble was donated by a local carpet dealer in 1988.

The Italian database shows that several other museums besides the Linden hold marbles taken from holy sites. The David Collection, a private museum in Copenhagen, owns the marble *mihrab* from the mosque in Ghazni, acquired in 1979. In the United States, the Brooklyn Museum and San Francisco's Asian Art Museum both acquired panels in the 1980s that the Italians had photographed in situ. The Brooklyn Museum said it had no information on how its panel came to the United States; the David Collection said it did not acquire its marble from Drechsel but provided no further details. Zac Rose, a spokesman for the museum in San Francisco,

said that when the panel was donated close to 40 years ago, the museum presumed the piece left Afghanistan legally, but today "our response is categorically different — now we would not accept any artwork without thorough documentation of the path it took from its place of origin to the museum." He added that the museum is "systematically reviewing" objects with unclear provenance in its collection.

Could these marbles have been legally exported from Afghanistan? Selling cultural property to foreigners was completely forbidden by Afghan law after 1980; before that, exporting antiquities required written permission, which, according to Carla Grissman, who worked with the Kabul Museum and who died in 2011, the government stopped issuing in 1964.

"Our main objective was preserving an endangered cultural heritage for future generations," Drechsel wrote to me, adding that he'd long since left the antiquities trade. At the Linden Museum, Krämer's project, titled "Entangled: Stuttgart-Afghanistan," will solicit participation from both Afghans and Germans, in an attempt to address the "highly ambivalent facets" of the past.



IN 1979, THE Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The countryside rose against it, and American-supplied arms fanned the flames of war higher. The Italian mission stopped coming to Ghazni; Rajabi traded his shovel for a Kalashnikov and joined the guerrillas. After 10 years of bloodshed, the Soviets withdrew, but the civil war continued. In 1992, the Afghan communist government collapsed, and the mujahedeen entered Kabul. The rival parties turned on one another, and the capital was divided up by checkpoints run by aggressive fighters. It became too dangerous for the staff to work in the National Museum, on the southern edge of the city. "The museum closed, and the area fell under the control of the parties," said Shirazudin Saifi, a retired conservator at the museum. "Nobody could go there."

Fortunately, the museum staff had been preparing for such a day. In the early 1980s, as security deteriorated in the countryside, the Afghan government transferred objects from the provincial museums to the capital. Around 150 crates packed with marbles and other artifacts came from the Rawza Museum and were stored in the basement.

Then, in 1988, as the Soviets prepared to depart and it became clear that Kabul could fall to the mujahedeen, the museum staff hid some of the most important objects in government facilities closer to the center of town. The Bactrian Hoard, a collection of 2,000-year-old jewelry and weapons, was stashed in the depths of the presidential palace. The museum's staff kept its secret for the next decade, successfully safeguarding the finest treasures. But there wasn't enough space to move the remainder of the museum's collection, including the Islamic wing.

One morning, Saifi and the others woke to a pillar of smoke rising in the distance. Fighting had broken out between two rival groups, and the museum was hit by rocket fire. An inferno raged on the top floor; in the galleries, metal and wood were reduced to heat, light and ash; stone cracked and shattered.

Not everything was destroyed in the blaze. Afterward, fighters in the area began stealing from the museum. "They went for the low-hanging fruit," said Jolyon Leslie, who was working for the United Nations in Kabul. The museum's coin collection, the remains of the Islamic gallery, and its remarkable Begram Ivories, delicate and portable, were all taken. At first, it was opportunistic: ragged, hungry men stumbling off with what they could carry. Leslie recalled driving past street sellers flogging items fresh from the museum, displayed among vegetables on a sheet of newspaper in the mud. "My God, that's a Buddha, that isn't an onion," he realized. He'd stop and pay the equivalent of a few dollars, and take them for safekeeping.

But as time went on, the looting became more organized. Leslie was part of a group that tried to preserve what it could at the museum by welding iron bars onto the windows. The thieves came back with crowbars. One night, two massive schist reliefs in the entrance hall, which had seemed too heavy to remove, disappeared, presumably by truck. "There were anecdotal

reports that the mujahedeen were in cahoots with Pakistani dealers,” Leslie said. Certainly, many of the museum’s looted artifacts turned up for sale across the border in Peshawar.

During the war, almost 100 Ghazni marbles, including the Hamburg panel, disappeared from the government’s possession. “The pieces that were missing were the big, complete pieces,” Rugiadi told me. Though we cannot be certain, it seems probable that the Hamburg marble ended up on the black market in Pakistan, which was awash with Afghan antiquities. During the ’90s, commanders and other wartime entrepreneurs invested in heavy machinery and labor to systematically excavate the richest sites. “That’s when you have the looting of sites across the whole country,” Simpson, the curator at the British Museum, said.

As tragic as the looting of the museum was, such illicit excavations were worse in an important sense, because they destroyed the archaeological record. At least we know something about the original site of the Ghazni marbles. But each illegal dig meant that information about the past was lost forever. Shorn of their connection to their sites of discovery, a rich stream of antiquities crossed Afghanistan’s borders, destined for world markets, many via the Persian Gulf, where the mujahedeen had well-established connections with wealthy patrons of the jihad.

According to the Italian database, the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait holds four of the Ghazni panels taken from the Afghan government collection; others have ended up at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization and the Islamic Art Museum Malaysia. The Sharjah Museum did not respond to a request for comment. Eric Delpont, director of the Paris museum, said that its panel was acquired from Hotel Drouot in 2003, and that the museum was unaware that it came from the Afghan government collection, believing it to be from “a mausoleum in the Ghaznavid capital.” Salam Kaoukji, the collection manager at al-Sabah, said that she was aware of their panels’ provenance but that she didn’t know if there were plans for restitution, adding that it was up to the governments of Kuwait and Afghanistan to decide.

Rekha Verma, the Malaysia museum’s head of collections, said it acquired its panel from an “established dealer” in Britain. After I presented her with evidence the panel was stolen, she expressed dismay and said the museum had removed the marble from view, and subsequently handed it over to the Afghan Embassy. “We take it seriously when it comes to looted pieces from any part of the world,” she wrote. “We will return this panel without any hesitation to its rightful owner.”

The Ghazni marbles are not the only artifacts from the Afghan government collection that have turned up abroad; Buddhist items from Afghanistan are also highly sought after. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, there is a room dedicated to the art of Gandhara, the ancient region that straddled present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. One bust is particularly striking, characteristic of Gandhara’s unique blend of Classical and Buddhist influences: a terra-cotta Buddha depicted as a Grecian-looking youth, his hair a mass of finely worked curls. Most unusual, his eyes are made of garnet stones; an amber light shifts in their depths. “Afghanistan, probably Hadda,” reads the inscription. On the Met’s website, you can find a little more information on its provenance: The statue was purchased by the museum in 1986, from the London dealer Spink & Son. (The auction house, which has since changed ownership and no longer deals in ancient art, said it had no records of the object, but no reason to believe that the previous owners hadn’t complied with the law.)

Six years after the Met’s purchase, Chaibai Mustamandy, the former head of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, who had come to America as a refugee, recognized the statue. His team excavated it a decade earlier from the archaeological site at Hadda, in eastern Afghanistan. Soon afterward, the depot where it was stored was looted by the mujahedeen. Mustamandy informed the Met that the bust was stolen; he died in a car accident in California the following year. According to Lyndel Prott, a former UNESCO official involved with the case, “there was no doubt” the item belonged to the

Afghan government. The Met confirmed it had been in touch with Mustamandy, and said it “assured UNESCO that the object is safe at the Museum.”



HISTORICALLY, COLLECTORS AND museums in the West were rarely concerned with — or challenged over — the provenance of antiquities, as long as they were legally bought and sold in their own destination countries. In other words, finders keepers. That began to change after 1970, when a UNESCO treaty against antiquities trafficking made buyers responsible for checking that artifacts were legally exported from their countries of origin. The United States ratified the treaty in 1983, but it took Britain until 2002, and Germany until 2007. Norms and national laws changed slowly, spurred by high-profile court cases, like that of the Italian dealer Giacomo Medici, who was accused in 1997 of running a ring of tomb raiders and convicted in 2004.

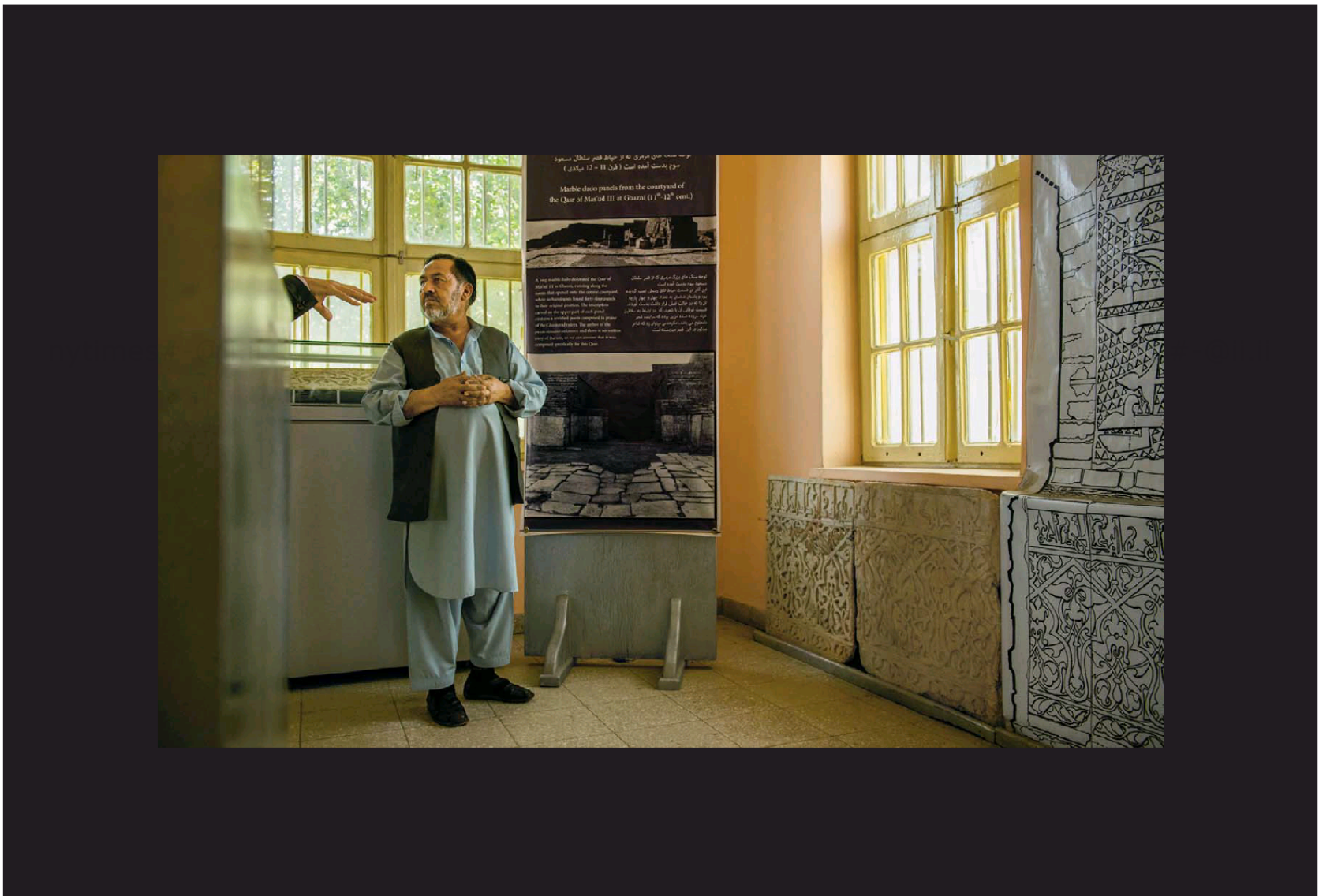
“In a world that is well on its way to becoming one vast quarry,” Susan Sontag wrote in her essay “Melancholy Objects,” “the collector becomes someone engaged in a pious work of salvage.” London is a hub for the antiquities trade, and there I visited John Eskenazi, a prominent dealer specializing in South Asian art, to ask how Afghanistan’s artifacts were handled after war broke out there. “I think the conflict was always very far away,” he told me, as we sat in his studio near Regent’s Park; an enormous, 2,000-year-old terra-cotta orb loomed over us, depicting village scenes from Chandraketurgarh in present-day Bengal. Eskenazi — whose father was a Ladino-speaker from Istanbul — began his practice in the 1970s; during the war years, he told me, Afghan artifacts were commonly sold in London. He recalled visiting Spink in London, where the Met acquired the garnet-eyed Buddha. “It was a train station, with Indians and Pakistanis and everybody bringing in objects,” he said. “Of course everything was illegal, but there were no laws in the U.K.”

Eskenazi told me that he abhorred the behavior of dealers like Medici, and that he had always done due diligence to ensure that the antiquities that he sold were not stolen. But he also felt that once objects were on the art market, they should be preserved by collectors and museums. “Let’s face it, art belongs to whoever can take care of it, and for now, it’s the West,” he said. “The world is a dance of Shiva, it’s all about destruction and re-creation, continuously. So what we’re doing here is we’re trying to pick up what’s left, the relics of the past, and make some order.”

Eskenazi brought up the influential 2008 book “Who Owns Antiquity?” by James Cuno, the president of the Getty Trust, which defends the traditional idea of the encyclopedic museum, “the museum dedicated to ideas, not ideologies, the museum of international, indeed universal aspirations, and not of nationalist limitations, curious and respectful of the world’s artistic and cultural legacy as common to us all.” Today the encyclopedic museum happens to be in New York or London; in the future it may appear in new concentrations of capital like Doha or Shanghai. “Although it is true that encyclopedic museums are primarily in the West,” Cuno asks, “does that discredit the principle of their existence?”

The encyclopedic museum, it seemed to me, was a place where the cosmopolitan could contemplate history in a kind of innocence. The past is gone — why should it haunt the present? In Cuno’s view, the British have as much of a claim to the legacy of classical Athens as the Greeks; as for modern and ancient Egyptians, “all that can be said is that they occupy the same (actually less) stretch of the earth’s geography.” Eskenazi expressed a similar sentiment about Buddhist art: “You tell me what Afghanistan has to do with Gandhara — I mean, modern-day Afghanistan.”

When I recounted the story of the Hamburg marble to Eskenazi, he said he had been appalled by the destruction of the Kabul museum in 1993, and alarmed to find its artifacts for sale on the antiquities market. In the 1990s, while on a trip to Peshawar, Eskenazi was offered some of the stolen Begram Ivories, wrapped in pink toilet paper. He contacted UNESCO, who told him they couldn’t buy hot materials. Finally, he decided to risk purchasing them himself. He also bought a Buddha statue from a collector in Japan that had



SHIRAZUDIN SAIFI, A LONGTIME CONSERVATOR AT THE MUSEUM IN KABUL, IN A ROOM DEDICATED TO THE GHAZNI PANELS.

been looted from the museum. In 2011, with the assistance of the British Museum, he donated them, anonymously, to the Afghan government. (I'd heard through the grapevine that Eskinazi was the benefactor, which he confirmed.)

Eskenazi served us more oolong tea from a black cast-iron pot and fixed me with a wry smile. He half-expected me to write a sensationalized story about looting, he told me, proclaiming the “pseudomorals” of a new generation that sought to purify itself by disavowing the old. The art world had indeed changed since his youth. But he felt he had done his small part to preserve the spark of the divine that was carried by great art.

“I feel like a criminal because of what I have, or had, done,” he said. “While on the other side, I feel I’ve helped humanity conserve its own history and culture. I feel like that much more, of course.”



FOR THE MARBLES that were taken from the countryside, the lack of an identifiable former owner makes the question of restitution more difficult. But the Hamburg panel had both a clear legal case for its restitution and someone to return it to — a “classic theft,” as Reuther, the MKG’s provenance researcher, termed it. In October 2019, at a brief ceremony in Hamburg, the museum returned the Ghazni panel to the Afghan Embassy.

Between the Afghan and German governments, it had taken more than a year to arrange the paperwork. “There was a feeling of relief that this piece was finally repatriated,” Mörike, the curator, told me. He hoped that other museums with similarly stolen objects would consider returning them. “What the Ghazni case shows is that recent acquisitions are as problematic as historical acquisitions,” he said. He questioned why museums needed to acquire new antiquities from the art market at all. “The storehouses of the museums are full. We’re already in possession of millions of objects.”

This view, once heretical, has been gathering currency in mainstream institutions, prompted in part by repeated scandals in the antiquities market, as well as more aggressive law enforcement over fears that trafficking funds organized crime and even terrorist groups in places like Syria and Iraq. At the end of 2019, after an extended internal debate, the Metropolitan allowed individual departments to cease pursuing antiquities, what it termed a “recognition of a change in practice.” The Ancient Near East department was the first to do so. “Now that things have gotten as bad as they’ve gotten in the Middle East, we haven’t purchased a thing, we haven’t gotten any gifts,” Kim Benzel, who became the department’s head curator in 2016, told me. “It’s the right thing to do.”

In the near future, the Hamburg marble will complete its circular journey by jet aircraft, returning to the National Museum *(Continued on Page 56)*

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SPRING PREVIEW

Rendering: Noe & Associates | The Boundary

New properties in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Boca Raton are welcoming buyers as the high-end real estate market in New York and Florida starts to come back to life.

The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria

Closed since 2017, the world-renowned Waldorf Astoria is on schedule for a grand relaunch in early 2023 as one of New York's most elegantly historic residential towers. The 375 new condominium residences, designed by Jean-Louis Deniot, will have the exclusive use of 50,000 square feet of amenities, including an 82-foot pool under a massive skylight, overlooking Park Avenue, and V.I.P. access to all the hotel amenities.

The new plans call for two double-height porte cocheres, one for hotel guests on 49th Street, and another, just for residents, on 50th Street. "Deniot wanted the sense of arrival at the Waldorf to be magical and exclusive for its residents," explained Dan Tubb, senior director of sales for The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria. "The entrance sets a tone that continues through all the entrances, corridors, elevators and private residential amenities in the condominium tower, each of which are completely separate from the hotel. At the same time, all of our residents have access to everything that the hotel has

to offer, including housekeeping services and in-room dining, as well as the hotel's expansive spa and wellness center."

Highlights include the Winter Garden (rendered above), which harkens back to the European conservatories of the 1700s and 1800s with tropical plants that bloom year-round, and the residents-only pool, surrounded by double-height windows and planted terraces that allow for moonlight and sunlight to stream in as residents swim day or night on the 25th floor.

"The key to the experience of a valuable branded residence like this one is that you have everything that the hotel has to offer — in this case with all the history, glamour, lifestyle and service elements of the Waldorf — while enjoying your own private world as the residents of The Towers, with your own private amenities and your own service staff. And while there were always large residences at the top of the building, inhabited by celebrities who lived in the towers on long-term leases, they could never own those spaces. Now they are all a part of our ultraplush residential offerings, each one even better than at the height of the glamour days."

Prices start at \$1.7 million. Douglas Elliman Development Marketing is the exclusive sales and marketing agency for the building. For more information, call 212-872-1267 or visit waldorftowers.nyc.

11 Hoyt

Developed by Tishman Speyer, 11 Hoyt is an architectural marvel rising 620 feet and spanning almost an entire city block in Downtown Brooklyn. The prime location, with 11 subway lines within a five-block radius, includes a new elevated, private park for residents atop a two-story base that is unlike any other landscaped private outdoor space in New York City.

The 57-story tower's facade, which appears to shimmer from a distance, was designed by celebrated architect and MacArthur Fellow Jeanne Gang. London-based Michaelis Boyd Associates has designed each of the 481 studio to four-bedroom residences with a nod toward Brooklyn's traditional brownstone sensibility. New York City-based Hollander Design, one of the nation's most esteemed landscape architecture firms, designed the outdoor spaces.

The total of 55,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenities, along with an additional 40,000 square feet of retail, includes the Park Club, with a fitness and aquatic center designed and curated by The Wright Fit. The club features a 75-foot saltwater pool, squash court and men's and women's locker room facilities, steam showers, sauna, massage and relaxation rooms and a yoga/group fitness studio. Additional 11 Hoyt amenities include a game room, maker studio, children's playroom, salon

ABOVE: The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria



Rendering: Binyan Studios



Photo: Luxhunters Productions

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lounge, catering pantry, a co-working lounge featuring coffee service and A.V.-connected private meeting rooms.

The Sky Club, located on the 32nd floor, features private dining and entertainment spaces with panoramic city views, along with a music studio, catering kitchen, library, cinema and performance space and a virtual golf/gaming room. Additional amenities include a 24-hour doorman and concierge, package delivery room, dry-cleaning valet, refrigerated delivery storage, bicycle and stroller storage. Private storage lockers and attended on-site parking are available for purchase.

“Since closings have commenced, 11 Hoyt continues to attract discerning buyers who are drawn to the world-class design, luxurious apartment features and incredible value,” said Erik Rose, managing director at Tishman Speyer. “Now as spring and warmer weather approaches, we are excited for residents and guests to experience the unparalleled outdoor amenities featured at 11 Hoyt’s private rooftop park, including outdoor fitness deck, barbecue kitchens, rolling lawns, children’s butterfly-themed play area, sundeck and spa pool.”

Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group is the exclusive sales and marketing agency. Current

availability ranges from \$710,000 for a studio to \$4,300,000 for a premium four-bedroom apartment. For more information, call 347-752-5125 or visit 11hoytbrooklyn.com.

Alina Residences Boca Raton

Residents have begun to move into Alina’s community of private residences, penthouses and villas in the center of downtown Boca Raton, a short mile from the beach and next to the iconic Boca Raton Resort and Club golf course. The 121 residences range from just under 1,400 to more than 4,800 square feet, with 32,000 square feet of outdoor amenity space dedicated exclusively for residents and their guests on the nine-acre grounds. Besides the beach, the location is within comfortable walking distance of Boca’s top dining, shopping and entertainment options, including the Boca Raton Museum of Art and Mizner Park Amphitheater.

Seven of the residences are one-story villas designed for buyers who want the convenience of a condo with the square footage of a single-family home, and with a full menu of private on-site amenities. The expansive villas offer 2,000 square feet of private landscaped backyard space. One of the largest residences within the nine-story building is a 4,579-square-foot four-bedroom, five-bathroom plus den residence,

priced at just over \$5 million, with sunset and sunrise views to the east and west.

Alina’s amenities include a rooftop pool deck with ocean views; private cabanas and summer kitchens; an outdoor yoga space and a dog park; a generously sized club room; dual spas with a dry sauna, steam room, treatment rooms and relaxation rooms; and a fitness center fully equipped with smart on-demand technology and sport-specific equipment.

The location, midway between Palm Beach and Miami, is key to its popularity among full-time and seasonal South Florida residents. “Our location, in a safe lock-and-leave environment, gives residents the opportunity to walk or drive a short distance to the beach, or cross the street to some of the best restaurants in Boca Raton — with easy access to three international airports. Our biggest attribute is our abundant green space as part of a vibrant, growing city. Our landscaped amenity deck is a true oasis, with sculpture gardens, walking paths and an outdoor fire pit area — with the backdrop a beautiful golf course.”

Prices range from just under \$1 million for a one-bedroom/two-bathroom plus den, to \$6 million. A three-bedroom, four-bathroom, 2,884 square foot villa, with more than 2,000 square feet of private exterior space, is priced at \$2,811,000. For more information, email sales@alinabocaraton.com, call 561-544-7811 or visit alinabocaraton.com. ■

ABOVE LEFT: 11 Hoyt

ABOVE RIGHT: Alina Residences Boca Raton

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in Kabul. But will it be safe there? The specter of past destruction hangs over Afghanistan's future. During my trip to Kabul, I walked around the museum with Saifi, the conservator, and he pointed out where the smoke marks had been painted over, the discoloration still visible. The fire left the museum roofless, its windows gaping holes. "You can see up top, right there, how the museum burned," he said. "From the outside, it was just a ruin." By the end of the civil war, much of Kabul looked the same way. Saifi spoke with pride of his country's ancient history, and the work the museum had done to preserve it. After 2001, the museum was rebuilt with international assistance. Today it receives around 25,000 visitors each year, nearly all of them Afghans.

By risking their lives, the museum's staff members had managed to preserve many of the most important items from its collection, like the Bactrian Hoard, now touring as an exhibition abroad, and they were actively seeking the return of more stolen objects like the Hamburg marble. "Restitution is important to us," Fahim Rahimi, the museum's current director, told me. He alluded delicately to the involvement of some of his country's power brokers in looting. "We have to struggle against a very difficult situation." The museum continues to depend on international funding and support — a drop in the bucket, it must be said, compared with the amount foreign countries have spent on arms and ammunition here.

Entering the museum's lobby, Saifi and I passed the limestone statue of Kanishka, a second-century Buddhist emperor, which had been smashed by the Taliban and later restored, shard by shard. A case on the ground floor held items confiscated from smugglers at Afghanistan's borders, and there was a roomful of looted antiquities returned by the Japanese government, including a famous relief of the Kashyapa Brothers' adoration of the Buddha. Until recently, there was a gallery nicknamed the Heathrow Room, filled with objects seized in Britain. Hundreds of important objects had been returned to the Kabul museum; hundreds more were still at large. Rahim told me they were establishing a cultural-protection office that would pursue restitution claims abroad. The museum's archives had burned, making it difficult to know exactly how many objects were missing, but a project to catalog its holdings, assisted by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, was nearly complete. "You have to bear in mind what happened to this museum," Alejandro Gallego, the project's field director, told me. "That the museum is still standing, and that it still has its objects and artifacts — it's the epitome of resilience."

When Gallego showed visitors around the museum, he would shuttle back and forth among the various donor rooms, trying to link

the objects into the familiar story line from Stone Age to Medieval Age. But amid the reconstructed, preserved and restituted artifacts, an alternate narrative would emerge: of cycles of human endeavor in the face of repeated destruction, with the scars of the building and the people themselves as the exhibits. "There's the story that the museum tells," he said. "But sometimes the story that the museum doesn't tell is more interesting."

To conclude the story of the Hamburg marble, I wanted to go to the spot where the Italians dug it up. Even though the palace site had been destroyed by decades of looting, war and urban encroachment, I thought I could imagine things as they once were, when Rajabi was a young man with a shovel, and the country was still at peace; perhaps I'd see visions of sultans and poets. But though Ghazni was only a few hours from Kabul, driving there meant risking your life: The insurgents kidnapped people from the highway and fought gun battles with the government. A temporary exhibition that included Ghazni marbles, staged at the governor's compound there, came to grief when the office was attacked by a suicide bomber in 2014, shattering some of the panels — a cautionary tale against linking art to counterinsurgency. So I couldn't go back to the beginning.

Instead, at the end of my trip to Kabul in June 2019 I went with a photographer and our drivers to a new archaeological dig, at a relatively safe site two hours north of the city. In a narrow valley in Parwan Province, up a series of gravel switchbacks, we arrived at a bullet-shaped stupa, an ancient Buddhist shrine. The north side of its base was boxed in with scaffolding; as I approached, I could see the laborers toiling to restore the monument, carting sand in barrows and hoisting buckets with rope and pulley.

I was met by Azizudin Wafa, from the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, who was overseeing the excavations. Thirty-eight, with a degree in archaeology from Kabul University, Wafa was shaggy and fervent, dressed in a sweaty collared shirt and khakis with cargo pockets. He pumped my hand excitedly. "I'm so glad you came," he said. "I want the world to know about this."

The structure loomed overhead: It was more than 100 feet high and about 70 feet in diameter. "It's the largest stupa we've found," said Wafa. "When we started, the base wasn't visible. It was a happy surprise."

In 2016, the stupa was a crumbling stub poking up amid a mound of detritus, its elaborate patterns of arches nearly worn away. The Afghan Cultural Heritage Consulting Organization, in partnership with the Afghan government and with funding from the U.S. State Department, has since begun a restoration project. When they excavated the mound, they found a buried, square pediment with staircases on its east and west side. Now the archaeologists were

excavating a site just up the hill, which seemed to be the attached monastery; construction on the stupa likely began around the year 400. Workers with scarves tied around their heads were excavating four-meter grids with hand trowels, one 10-centimeter layer at a time. The project was a valuable source of income for the locals. "All the workers are from the area, that's our system," Wafa said.

Below us, the steep valley was terraced with fields, and dotted with apricot, mulberry and pomegranate trees. One terrace up, there was a farmer, stooped with age, cutting hay beside three cows tethered amid purple flowers. He said his name was Baba Aziz. "I don't know anything about it, and neither did my grandfather," he said, waving his scythe at the stupa. "Maybe his grandfather did."

Nearby were holes where, he said, some armed men had come during the civil war and burrowed, looking for antiquities. "The smugglers are as skilled as we are," Wafa interjected. "The difference is that they destroy, and we protect."

All the restoration work on the stupa was being done according to surviving examples on the building's symmetrical exterior. In some places — a badly eroded band all the way around the base, or whatever spire had sat atop the round cap — the design had been lost forever. But in a stroke of luck, the western staircase was completed much later — perhaps two centuries after — when, Wafa believed, the monument began to sag on that side. As a result, the intricate decorative work of the pediment, made with stacked slabs of schist, had been covered up and preserved, allowing them to faithfully restore the rest of the monument. It was astonishing, Wafa said, to apprehend the thoughts of people who stood here more than 15 centuries earlier. "I feel like they're speaking to me. Others can't hear them, but I can."

Looking down toward the main valley, we could see two helicopters flying toward the immense American base at Bagram, low above the mud-walled villages, across a tableau in motion in different scales: The harvest ripening, the foreigners with their looming deadlines, the locals struggling for the next generation, the plant species evolving with the climate, the mountains eroding, the sun burning itself out in the sky.

The story of the marbles, I realized, had no end; the return of the Hamburg panel meant a new chapter was beginning, one that would be written by Afghans themselves.

Wafa spoke of how the hills here had been filled with stupas and monasteries, with the royal city on the plains below, where Kanishka had his summer capital filled with splendors.

"They accomplished great things with very limited means — it can inspire us to do the same," he said, and smiled. "These people were Afghans, too." ♦

Rwanda

(Continued from Page 29)

personally involved with fund-raising and procuring arms for the group. The prosecutor-general's office told me that during the trial, it will produce emails from 2007 between Providence Rubingisa, an expatriate P.D.R. leader, and an F.D.L.R. field commander in Congo. In them, the party leader indicates that Rusesabagina is in direct contact with Ignace Murwanashyaka, the F.D.L.R.'s leader, and reassures the field commander of the party's backing: "We are going to do mobilization so that we can start sending you the support at the end of December," he promises. (The emails are in Kinyarwanda, Rwanda's national language.) He goes on to say that he has informed Rusesabagina about "the other equipment you've been asking for." He adds, "Please continue to update me on the news of the battlefield." Other indications of Rusesabagina's involvement with the F.D.L.R. emerged in text messages from Murwanashyaka that were intercepted by German intelligence and submitted as evidence when, in 2011, Murwanashyaka went on trial in Stuttgart for war crimes.

By the mid-2000s, Rusesabagina was spending more time in the United States and cultivating a group of media advisers, politicians and academics to help him start his post-"Hotel Rwanda" career as a human rights speaker, one who staked out peaceful, pro-democracy positions in public. One of the most active of these new advisers was Kurth, a media consultant and Democratic Party activist in Chicago who met him in 2007, while he was looking for help delivering a letter to former President Bill Clinton in support of an international truth and reconciliation commission in Rwanda. (The Rwandan government says that its internal system has already filled that role.) Kurth knew little about Rwanda before her association with Rusesabagina, she admits, but she soon came to share his hostility toward Kagame, blaming Kagame for "lighting the fuse" of the genocide by "taking down the president's plane" in April 1994.

Kurth brought in Brian Endless, director of the African studies and Africa diaspora program at Loyola University Chicago, as a senior adviser to the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation, a nonprofit set up to give assistance to orphans and widows in Rwanda. Endless, who has never visited Rwanda, told me that "400,000 Tutsis and 600,000 Hutus" died during the entire year of 1994 and argues that Kagame "invented" the "Tutsi genocide." He says he has arrived at these conclusions after meeting exiles, following court cases and studying reports by Allan C. Stam and other historical revisionists. "It's the Rwandan government's goal to say, 'No Hutus were killed, only Tutsis,'" Endless told me. "It's creating a picture of Tutsi victims and Hutu oppression."

Rusesabagina's most prominent ally in the United States has been Robert Krueger, a former U.S. representative and senator from Texas. In the early 1990s, Krueger served as the U.S. ambassador to Burundi, where a Tutsi military ruled over an oppressed Hutu majority and carried out several widespread massacres. The experience introduced Krueger to the violent ethnic politics of the African Great Lakes region and helped shape his antipathy toward the powerful Tutsi leader across the border; Krueger would later call Kagame "the most murderous dictator in all Africa." Kathleen Krueger, the ambassador's wife, recalled to me a 1995 visit she made to a refugee camp in Burundi for Hutu fleeing what they described as reprisal killings by the Rwandan Patriotic Front. "It was a counter-genocide," she told me, though she provided no evidence to support those claims.

Rusesabagina met Bob Krueger in 2007 after a referral from Oprah Winfrey, Kathleen Krueger says, and appeared with him at speaking engagements across the United States. Two years later, after a series of break-ins at his Brussels home — for which Rusesabagina blamed Kagame's agents — he and his wife relocated to San Antonio, near the Kruegers' home in New Braunfels. Together with Krueger, Rusesabagina portrayed Rwanda as a lawless dictatorship, in which extrajudicial executions and disappearances were commonplace, and advanced the double-genocide theory. "Paul had begun to go after Kagame, in ways that I thought were really irrational," Zoellner says. "He refused to see the nuanced picture of Kagame, as an iron-fisted authoritarian like Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia, who put a lid on the murderous currents in his society. I told him: 'Paul, you need to be more like Nelson Mandela. You are criticizing Kagame too hard.'"

Rusesabagina articulated his position in a disjointed 2007 interview with Keith Harmon Snow, an American freelance journalist and self-described "war crimes and genocide investigator." He insinuated that Kagame was the culprit behind the assassination of President Habyarimana and agreed with Snow that one motivation for the murder was to provoke a wave of killing and depopulate the country of much of the Hutu majority. "Who benefited from Habyarimana's death?" Rusesabagina said. "It is Kagame and his people." He claimed that Tutsi fighters had infiltrated the Interahamwe militias and that some Hutu fighters "were not aware that they" — meaning the Interahamwe — were "working for" Kagame. "Most of those guys who were just on the roadblocks were Kagame people." Other victims, he argued, were randomly targeted by enraged civilians who had been displaced during incursions by the Rwandan Patriotic Front in the early 1990s. "All those refugees who surrounded Kigali, who had been angry for four years, who had lost their family members, killed by the rebels — they started

revenge on everyone," Hutu and Tutsi alike, he said. Kagame, he declared, "is the one responsible for the death of a million people."

Today the successors to the Hutu Power movement are spread across three continents — Africa, Europe and North America — and at least two generations. They include exiles and fugitives who served in the ancien régime, as well as some of their children. Adherents propagate the double-genocide story and claims of Kagame atrocities via Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and online-media sites. One prominent outlet is Jambonews. It was founded in 2010 in Brussels, and its contributors have included Donatien Nshimyumuremyi, whose father, Félicien Kabuga, reportedly was a top financier of the genocide; he spent a quarter of a century as a fugitive and is currently at The Hague, awaiting trial. Nshimyumuremyi, a data scientist based in Belgium, typifies the educated second generation of Rwandan expatriates who embrace and promote denialism. A website affiliated with the family proclaims his father's innocence and includes testimonials from prominent revisionists in Europe and the United States, including Keith Harmon Snow.

The Hutu Power exiles do far more than declare moral equivalence between the 1994 genocide and the supposed crimes carried out by the Kagame government. Some raise funds and provide other material support for the ragtag militias along the Rwandan border, who share their dream of replacing Kagame with a Hutu regime. Since 2017, their hopes have rested on the National Liberation Front (F.L.N.), a militia of a thousand or so men, based in bush camps in Burundi and Congo, that has been patched together from aging F.D.L.R. fighters and a new generation of disaffected Rwandan and Congolese youth. The rebel group is the armed wing of the Rwanda Movement for Democratic Change (M.R.C.D.), a Brussels-based coalition of parties in exile. There's no question, Keith Harmon Snow told me, that Rusesabagina "supports an armed overthrow of the Rwandan government" to stop what Snow calls "the Kagame killing machine."

In late 2018, Rusesabagina uploaded a YouTube video in English that declared the Rwandan Patriotic Front to be "the enemy of the Rwandan people" and pledged "unreserved support" for the National Liberation Front. The statement was especially shocking because the F.L.N. had just carried out a brutal attack inside Rwanda in June 2018. A group of armed men entered Nyabimata, a town near the Burundi border, and killed three people; six months later, guerrillas ambushed three buses traveling through the nearby Nyungwe Forest, killing at least six and injuring dozens. Around this time, Rusesabagina gave an interview to the Voice of America's Kinyarwanda service. "Aren't you afraid that you will be arrested?" the reporter asked. Rusesabagina replied: "We are paying a lot of attention. We have passed

difficult roads, and we will survive.” The interviewer asked if his forces were still encamped in the Nyungwe Forest. “We are angry. We did not enter it to abandon it,” Rusesabagina replied. He added, “We are there to demand our rights as Rwandan natives.”

When I read these statements to Kitty Kurth and Brian Endless, they each questioned the accuracy of the translation. “It doesn’t sound like anything that Paul would say,” Kurth told me. She acknowledged that, if true, it would be damning evidence of Rusesabagina’s role in fomenting the insurgency. But Kurth later told me that the attack was probably “a false flag” operation staged by the Rwandan government to incriminate Rusesabagina. She insisted that “even if the F.L.N. engaged in the alleged terrorist activities and attacks,” Rusesabagina “had no connection to or responsibility” for them. Taciana Rusesabagina told me that the words were “taken out of context by the Rwandan government.”

By 2019, the government was determined to capture Rusesabagina. Two violent attacks had taken place in Rwanda the year before, and according to the prosecution, Rusesabagina had seemed to endorse them publicly. This led the Belgian Federal Police to summon Rusesabagina — who kept his house outside Brussels after moving to Texas and lived there intermittently — for questioning. Two Rwandan investigators flew in from Kigali to observe. Rusesabagina, accompanied by a lawyer, refused to answer many questions. A few days later, according to Taciana, four police officers searched his home, seizing a laptop, smartphones and documents. “They looked under the mattresses, everywhere,” she told me. “They went up to the attic and down into the garage.”

In Kigali, according to Prosecutor General Aimable Havugiyaremye, investigators analyzed WhatsApp messages between Rusesabagina and another person in which they discussed the 2018 attacks. “Was that ‘little thing’ yours?” the then unidentified correspondent had asked in Kinyarwanda, using an expression that connoted admiration. The correspondent was soon identified as Constantin Niyomwungere, and in early 2020, the police arrested the pastor on charges of abetting terrorism while he was visiting his churches in Rwanda. Niyomwungere, the prosecutor told me, expressed contrition under interrogation: “He said he felt bad that his friend was committing crimes — killing innocent people and burning houses.” Niyomwungere insists that he was secretly outraged all along by Rusesabagina’s role in the rebel attacks. “Paul said, ‘These are my guys, they had killed all those people in Rwanda,’” he told me. “When I discovered that Rusesabagina had carried out these terrorist activities, I was determined to help.” The prosecutor says that the pastor, to spare himself a jail sentence, offered to help set a trap.

Niyomwungere proposed telling Rusesabagina that he could escort him to meetings with F.L.N. leaders in Bujumbura and at camps in Cibitoke Province, near the Rwandan border. Havugiyaremye told me, “He said, ‘If you can hire a private jet, I can convince him that it was hired by the government of Burundi.’” As Niyomwungere himself told me: “I work with the authorities in Burundi. I know the government. I speak to the president.” The Rwandan government went along, and the Rwanda Investigation Bureau chartered the business jet from a longtime contractor with Kagame’s government. (Rusesabagina and his family maintain that Niyomwungere invited him to speak at local churches.)

On Aug. 25, the day before Rusesabagina set off from San Antonio, Niyomwungere boarded a flight to Dubai. The prosecutor general’s team viewed his departure with trepidation. “We thought, What if this man is lying and wants to run away?” Havugiyaremye told me. “He said: ‘I can assure you I will honor my promise. I have churches I want to run. I do disagree with what they did. Trust me.’ So, we took that risk.” Rusesabagina and Niyomwungere rendezvoused as planned at the Ibis Styles hotel and then went to the airport. There was an anxious moment aboard the business jet, when a flight attendant announced that they would be heading “to Kigali” — but they were talking and “he didn’t hear it,” the pastor told me. When Rusesabagina was whisked off to a Kigali jail cell, he thought Niyomwungere had been arrested, too; it was only several days later that he realized he had been betrayed.

Family and friends, as well as human rights groups, denounced Rusesabagina’s detention as a “kidnapping” and an “extraordinary rendition.” An American Bar Association Center for Human Rights background briefing released in January this year expressed concern about the lack of procedural safeguards surrounding his transfer to Rwanda, though the briefing made no conclusive judgments about whether it violated international law. Johnston Busingye, Rwanda’s justice minister, maintains that his government was acting within its rights. “If this man could dare do what he did, we had every right to go after him by any means necessary,” he told me. “We thought, If we could lure him into coming to Kigali, believing he was going somewhere else, and get him arrested at the airport, that would be wonderful.”

Rusesabagina is now being tried alongside 20 others who are accused of being F.L.N. organizers and combatants; the proceedings could last several months. The prosecution plans to present 80 victims of F.L.N. attacks, as well as three witnesses who are said to have worked alongside Rusesabagina, including Niyomwungere, who has been kept under watch for months in a hidden location. “I am happy to testify against a terrorist, someone who killed people,” he told me. “He deceived me. I want to help justice.” In

a brief courtroom appearance in September, Rusesabagina said the F.L.N. had broken from its initial mission of defending civilians under threat from the Rwandan Patriotic Front. He had nothing to do with the attacks, he insisted: “I do not deny that the F.L.N. committed crimes, but my role was diplomacy.” Rusesabagina’s attorney Gatera Gashabana has challenged the prosecution on procedural grounds, claiming his transfer was unlawful, but hasn’t publicly indicated any other defense strategy before the trial’s start. (Officials refused to grant me a meeting with Rusesabagina during my eight days in Rwanda in December, citing an outbreak of Covid-19 at the prison.) es#-@ii.ii

Rwandan prosecutors are hoping to prove that Rusesabagina was a major force in the rebel movement, but just how much influence he wielded is open to question. According to emails provided by the prosecution, the Rwandan exiles who backed the F.D.L.R. seem to have regarded him as a useful pawn at first — a celebrity who could lobby Washington, raise money and propagate their ideology on his speaking tours under the cover of his heroism. But over time, prosecutors claim, he took on more of a hands-on role. In the pastor’s telling, he was deeply involved in F.L.N. planning and logistics. One rebel leader on trial with Rusesabagina has referred to him in court as his “boss.”

Whatever Rusesabagina’s level of involvement, the F.L.N.’s ragtag guerrillas have never constituted a serious threat. But the Kagame regime, made up of many former guerrillas of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, knows from experience the dangers of letting a rebel movement fester along its borders. And despite continuous attempts over two decades to reintegrate the Hutu guerrillas, the insurgency has still not been defeated. Theogene Rudasingwa, a former field doctor with the Rwandan Patriotic Front and former Rwandan ambassador to the United States, who turned against Kagame and fled the country in the early 2000s, told me that he considered Kagame to be a “violent and insecure” dictator. But the alternative presented by Rusesabagina and his ilk, he said, was far worse: “I would rather have Kagame in power than these miserable groups like the F.L.N.”

One sunny afternoon in mid-December, I met Odette Nyiramilimo, the Rwandan senator and former close friend of Paul Rusesabagina, at the outdoor bar at the Hotel des Mille Collines. In late April 1994, a sympathetic major in the Rwandan police who was bunked at the hotel rescued Nyiramilimo, her husband and their four children from their home in Kigali. “It wasn’t Paul himself who came for me, but he did find someone who did,” she told me. We were sitting beside the swimming pool in the rear garden that provided water for the hotel’s occupants after someone cut off the water supply *(Continued on Page 61)*



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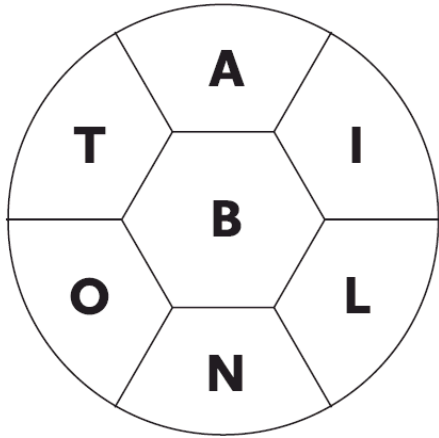
SPELLING BEE

By Frank Longo

How many common words of 5 or more letters can you spell using the letters in the hive? Every answer must use the center letter at least once. Letters may be reused in a word. At least one word will use all 7 letters. Proper names and hyphenated words are not allowed. Score 1 point for each answer, and 3 points for a word that uses all 7 letters.

Rating: 10 = good; 22 = excellent; 34 = genius

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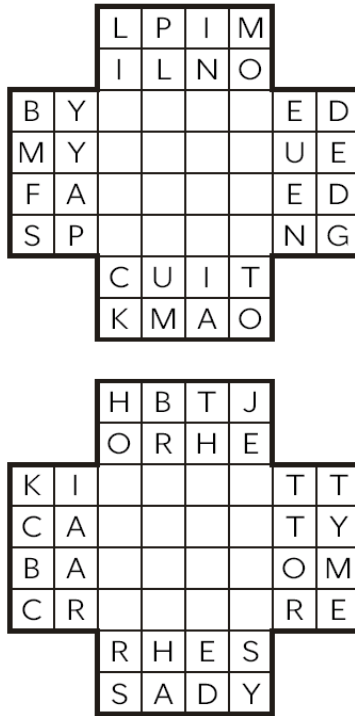


Our list of words, worth 38 points, appears with last week's answers.

CRAZY EIGHTS

By Patrick Berry

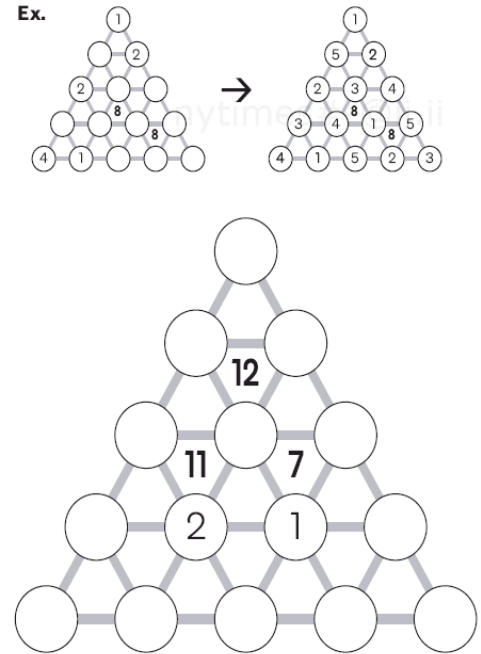
Fill the empty spaces to form eight-letter words reading Across and Down.



TRIANGULUM

By Wei-Hwa Huang

Enter the digits from 1 to 5 in the circles so that no digit is repeated along any line, and so that the bold numbers inside the grid equal the sum of the digits in the three adjacent circles. Some figures have been placed for you.



TWO-FOR-ONE CROSSWORD

By Derrick Niederman

Each clue in this crossword has two answers. One goes in the grid on the left, the other in the grid on the right. A few letters are positioned to help.

ACROSS

- 1 1970s bandmate of Nash and Young
- 4 Major Asian river

- 8 Earns, as money (5,2)
- 10 Damage, as a reputation

- 11 ___ of the litter
- 13 A world capital
- 16 Sword in fencing

- 17 Garment that drapes

- 21 One of the top-selling albums of the 1970s-'80s

- 22 Certain light in the night sky

- 24 ___ Station (train spot in Washington, D.C.)

- 26 Type of cheese

- 28 Things at the bases of Christmas trees

- 29 Rue

DOWN

- 1 Anagram of SPACER

- 2 Black liquid from a well

- 3 Word helping to complete the phrase "save the ___ for ___"

- 5 Sounds of hesitation

- 6 Popular dog breed whose name has a "foreign" part (5,4)

- 7 One of the four seasons

- 9 Classic hair-removal brand

- 12 Ancient Egyptian queen

- 14 ___ Friday

- 15 A first lady's first name

- 18 Steps ostentatiously

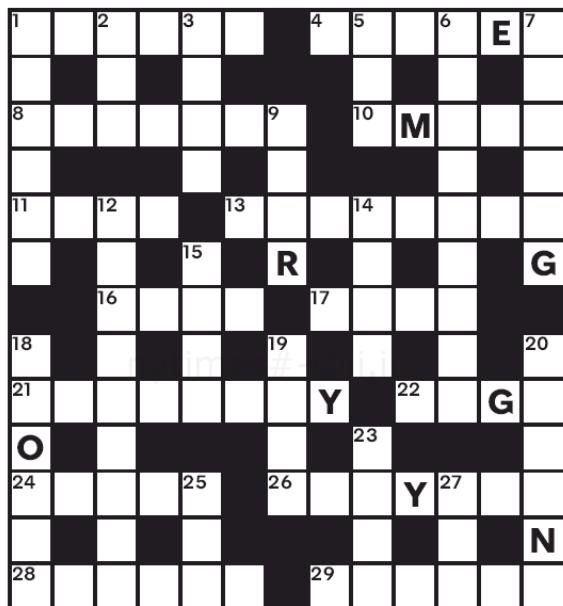
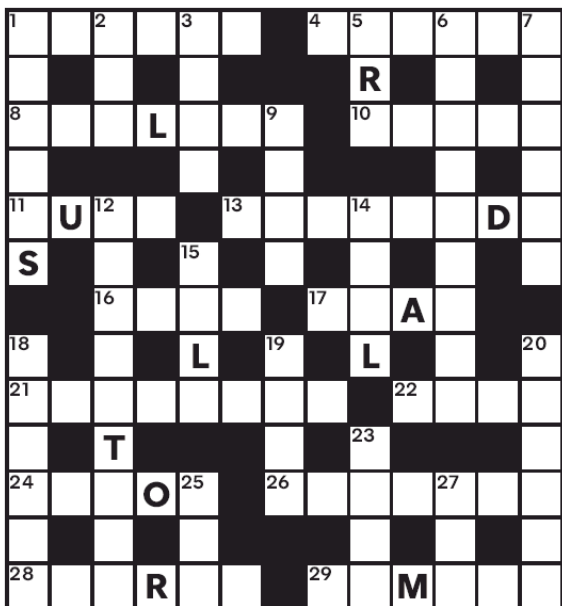
- 19 Follower of "leap"

- 20 Anagram of TREPAN

- 23 N.C.A.A. men's basketball powerhouse

- 25 ___ King Cole

- 27 Body part that can fill both parts of "___ to ___"



TAKE TWO

By Celeste Watts and Jeff Chen

Celeste Watts, of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., is a retired elementary school teacher. After years of solving puzzles in her spare time, she decided to try making one herself. Her first 14 attempts for The Times were rejected, but she persevered. For this one, she collaborated with Jeff Chen, a writer and professional crossword constructor in Seattle, whom she calls “a gifted, patient mentor.” The theme idea is Celeste’s. Jeff helped her execute it. Finally, success! “One off my bucket list!” — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 After the fact, as a justification
- 8 Co-star of “The Golden Girls”
- 17 Knock over, so to speak
- 20 Quaker fare
- 21 Go poof
- 22 Drop the ball
- 23 ILLUS_RA_ORS
- 25 What a third wheel might see, in brief
- 26 Setting for most of “Life of Pi”
- 27 Tests the weight of
- 28 One of the Greats?
- 30 Oscars of the sporting world
- 33 Good sign for an angel
- 34 Intl. org. headquartered in Geneva
- 37 Some bad sentences
- 39 ACC_L_RATOR
- 44 Grapple, in dialect
- 47 Exercise too much, say
- 48 A as in Arles
- 49 LUXUR_ _ACHT
- 54 “___ Agnus Dei” (Mass phrase)
- 55 Peak in Turkey mentioned in both the “Iliad” and the “Aeneid”
- 56 Runner Sebastian who once held the world record for the mile
- 57 What you might get from a trailer
- 59 Sport played at British boarding schools
- 60 Post production?
- 64 ___ mater, membrane surrounding the brain
- 65 Popular 90-min. show
- 66 ENDANGER_EN_
- 70 Man’s name that coincidentally is Latin for “honey”
- 73 Word with small or fish
- 74 Weak
- 75 What may result in a handshake

- 76 Help to one’s destination
- 82 The Blue Jays, on scoreboards
- 83 Comeback to a challenge of authority
- 84 Bitter
- 85 CONFIG_ _ATION
- 90 Actor Somerhalder
- 91 Most in the style of comedian Steven Wright
- 92 Unfocused
- 93 POL_T OF _IEW
- 100 Go all out
- 101 French fashion inits.
- 102 “Kinda sorta”
- 103 Pan-cook, in a way
- 107 Supermodel Bündchen
- 109 Pepé ___ (cartoon skunk)
- 111 Drop off
- 112 Admit (to)
- 113 _OTIC_
- 120 Hit the weed?
- 121 Have guests over
- 122 Guest, e.g.
- 123 Place full of guests
- 124 Start of a seasonal request
- 125 Some kitchen utensils

DOWN

- 1 Entourage
- 2 Hall’s partner in pop
- 3 Part of a thong
- 4 “OK, you can stop the story right there”
- 5 Old-fashioned “cool”
- 6 One might speak under it
- 7 Co-star of Kline in “A Fish Called Wanda”
- 8 Start of a compilation heading
- 9 Times for some vigils
- 10 Letters on many towers
- 11 Busy mo. for C.P.A.s
- 12 Go bad
- 13 Three-sport event, for short
- 14 A chest often has a large one
- 15 States

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- 16 Recharge
- 17 Photocopy, e.g.
- 18 It’s the law!
- 19 Item said to have been burned in protest, once
- 24 Musical prefix with beat
- 29 Memphis-to-Nashville dir.
- 31 Emphatic assent
- 32 Lively dance genre
- 34 Hone
- 35 Contract details
- 36 Beehive State city
- 38 Aerodynamic
- 40 Bishop’s jurisdiction
- 41 Antagonist
- 42 Hotel-room staples
- 43 Top-notch
- 44 Booties
- 45 Playwright Chekhov
- 46 Garbage
- 50 Drink similar to a slushie
- 51 About 460 inches of rain per year, on Kauai’s Mt. Waialeale
- 52 HBO satire starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus
- 53 ___ bar
- 54 Org. that takes the lead on lead?

- 58 Baby fox
- 60 How a flirt may act
- 61 Football stat: Abbr.
- 62 NaOH
- 63 Radio broadcaster: Abbr.
- 66 Legislation that was part of F.D.R.’s New Deal
- 67 Ethnic group of Rwanda and Burundi
- 68 Two, for four
- 69 Coin with 12 stars
- 70 “Zoom-Zoom” sloganer
- 71 Hollywood composer Bernstein with 14 Oscar nominations
- 72 Guarded
- 73 Like pets and parking meters
- 75 ___ Slam (tennis feat)
- 76 Julius Caesar’s first name
- 77 Words of hopelessness
- 78 Mature naturally, in a way
- 79 ___ Writers’ Workshop
- 80 Electronic Hasbro toy
- 81 One side of the coin
- 83 Arias, typically
- 86 Scottish folk dance

- 87 Alternative explanation for a lucky guess, in brief
- 88 Ear: Prefix
- 89 Letters on some badges
- 94 “Stillmatic” rapper
- 95 Seen
- 96 Kind of skate
- 97 Brown shade
- 98 Kids’ observation game
- 99 Hit musical with an “Emerald City Sequence”
- 104 Yoke
- 105 HP product
- 106 Narrowly beats (out)
- 108 Singer James
- 109 Drink for un bébé
- 110 A full moon will do this
- 112 Life force, in China
- 114 ___ Majesty
- 115 Hosp. areas
- 116 The Jazz, on scoreboards
- 117 Brown shade
- 118 Things for happy campers?
- 119 Picky person’s pick?

Puzzles Online Today’s puzzle and more than 9,000 past puzzles: nytimes.com/crosswords (\$39.95 a year). For the daily puzzle commentary: nytimes.com/wordplay.

3/7/21

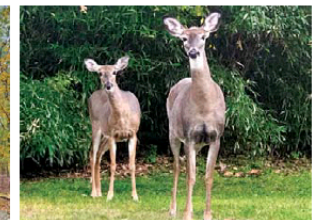
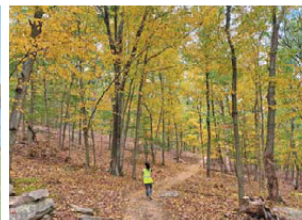
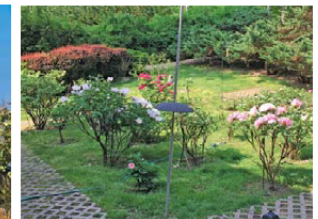
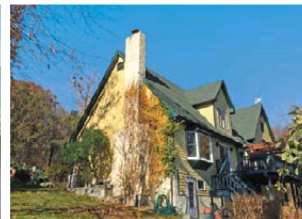
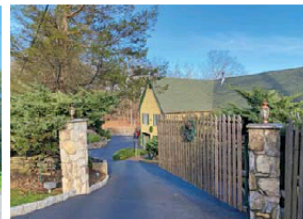
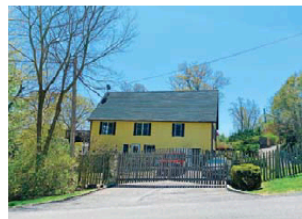
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